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Beth Malicki Interviews Gov. Branstad

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By Aaron Hepker
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On Goals as Governor:

“Jobs, restoring the size of government so it’s sustainable, restoring our leadership position in education- those are our goals.”

On Education:

A lot of their [Rockwell Collins’] people are coming from Asia and other parts of the world because of the focus they've had on math and science. That's why we've needed to focus on in this country so students know how important it is if that's where the really great job are and we want more of those jobs to go to people who grew up in Iowa and want to stay here."

"We need to focus on quality teachers and rewarding good teachers, and having assessments that show us: are we making the progress we need to? If not, we need to make some adjustments so we can achieve. I believe it can be done. We have a great opportunity here in Cedar Rapids to see a significant rebound in achievement scores as well as raising family incomes which will hopefully make it easier for many families to support themselves and their children."

"If you look at what they do in other countries, you look at Japan, Korea, Finland, you see much more focus on academic achievement than you use in this country. We've got to get back to focusing on academic achievement and I think that's critically important especially in places like math and science- Iowa is very well positioned to grow the bio tech industry. We need to make sure the young people growing up here have the skills to be employed in that field in the future. Those are great paying jobs and we want more if it in Iowa and having quality education and high achievement will be a great opportunity to grow that industry."

"Yes, but you can only do so much with consolidation cause you don't want the kids to spend

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half the day on the bus. In Anamosa and Monticello six school districts are working with Kirkwood Community College and providing high level math and science and some vocational classes. They're working with community colleges and also we have an opportunity to do multi-class where they get college credit while in High School. In Boone I saw three students in one family get two years of college in High School and went into Des Moines Medical School. Using Iowa Communications Network, distance learning, I think we can give that opportunity. The more opportunity we can give students with a computer, distance learning in addition, it makes a lot of sense."

"We want to give individual schools the option of how they achieve that- the state needs to set clear standards and set assessments and reward good schools and good teachers for achievement. But give some flexibility to local schools in how they can achieve that. It may be different in one school district then another, but I think the result needs to be higher achievement across the board, but especially in math, science and reading."

On the Iowa Film Office

"I think it was ill conceived and badly managed that while tax credit- I think that was a mistake."

"I think we can have film in Iowa. I don't think we need to give a big tax break to people who don't live in Iowa and don't pay taxes in Iowa. We need to revamp it. I want to restore the film office. I want to do it in a way that's efficient and economical and I believe that based on that we can attract film. But if we spend more than we benefit, it doesn't make sense."

On Flood Recovery in Cedar Rapids

"I'm certainly open to looking at that [tax financing} and seeing how that would work. Obviously we want to do what we can to expedite getting the state and federal resources here as quickly as possible. I think it's been delayed too long and we need a clear accountability and as quickly as we can eliminate a lot of the impediments and roadblocks of the past year."

On Budget Cuts

"I think it was a mistake to do across the board cuts. I think it's better to do selective reductions

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and eliminate programs that are outmoded and unnecessary, use technology more effectively and focus on more economic development and education and we're going to eliminate some programs. Reduce staff in the governor's office, reduce the governor's security detail, you've got to lead by example. We're going to ask other agencies to look for efficiencies and have shared sacrifice to meet the needs of our people."

On Passenger Rail from Iowa City to Chicago

"Now the question is- can we get passenger service will it be cost effective? And what will the benefits be and the cost be in the long term?"

"I'm concerned with an ongoing subsidy and how much is expected in terms of an ongoing subsidy. So we need to look at all of these things. One of those benefits with the line that they're talking about is it's already in use for other things- freight- so it's not just for passengers. I was the Lt. Governor that got the funding for Iowa Interstate and kept the Rock Island line from being abandoned and ended up creating the Iowa Interstate. That turned out to be a wise decision we made back in 1980, that loan was all paid back. "