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METRO EDITION

75 CENTS

School tax goes statewide



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Gov. **Chet Culver** holds up a fistful of pens and explains to the Sioux City Irving Elementary School students what he does when signing a bill into law, such as the school sales tax bill he signed Tuesday. (Staff photo by Jerry Mennenga)

Formula equalizes funding, won't increase sales tax

By **Earl Horlyk** & **Charlotte Eby**
Journal staff writer Journal Des Moines Bureau

SIUX CITY — In an auditorium packed with dignitaries and school children at Irving Elementary School on Tuesday, Gov. Chet Culver signed into law a new 1-cent sales tax to pay for school infrastructure projects, characterizing it as a secure funding source for schools and a way to provide tax relief to property owners.

The new statewide tax replaces the 1-cent local option tax approved by voters in all 99 Iowa counties, so consumers won't notice a difference when they make purchases.

Supporters say the statewide tax, which goes into effect July 1, will help funnel dol-

lars more equally to school districts that don't have the retail base to generate revenue the way some urban districts do.

"The local-option tax has helped transform Iowa's schools and fulfilled our commitment to giving our children the best education in the country," Culver said in a statement. "All children in Iowa deserve the opportunity to learn in a modern, safe school building, and I'm proud to say House File 2663 will help us do just that."

On average, school districts would see an additional \$200 per pupil each year for school construction and improvements, according to Culver's office.

With his trip to Sioux City, Culver signed the legislation in the hometown of one of his chief critics in the Legislature, House Minor-

ity Leader Christopher Rants.

Rants, a Sioux City Republican, said the statewide sales tax represents a broken promise to voters.

Unlike the local-option sales tax, which needed to be approved periodically by voters in a county, the statewide tax would not need voter approval.

"Ultimately, that's my biggest problem with this bill, is that we told the voters they would always have ultimate control over it, and we're taking away voter approval," Rants said.

Rants fears the money generated from the tax will end up being used for other purposes

SEE CULVER
continued on page A3

Casino: Local smoking ban would be costly

House minority leader questions proposal's legality

By **Lynn Zerschling**
Journal staff writer

SIUX CITY — If the city were to ban smoking on the Argosy Casino in Sioux City, the gaming boat would lose income and no longer be able to contribute up to \$800,000 a year to the city, Woodbury County and the nonprofit group that holds the gaming license, according to the casino and the licensing agency.

"It has nothing to do with whether people should be smoking or not," Mark Monson, president of Missouri River Historical Development Inc., said. "We would have less income as a result of it."

Jennifer Evans, the Argosy's marketing director, said gaming boats that faced smoking bans in other states have lost between 20 and 40 percent of their gross revenues because their patrons have gone elsewhere.

On Monday, the City Council agreed to consider an ordinance banning smoking on the Argosy. A new state law going into effect July 1 exempts the 17 state-licensed casinos and 10 others from the smoking ban.

MRHD is the nonprofit organization that holds the riverboat gaming license from the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission for the Argosy. Since 1994 MRHD has distributed more than \$14 million to Woodbury County

Iowa smoking ban exemptions

The state law exempted the following from the no-smoking law:

- Iowa Veterans Home at Marshalltown.
- Hotel-motel rooms that are designated as smoking rooms.
- Retail tobacco shops.
- Private residences (except if they operate a day care or health care there).
- Private and semi-private rooms in long-term care facilities.
- Private clubs that have no employees.
- Some outdoor areas.
- Limousines under private hire.
- Smoking cessation rooms.
- Farm tractors, farm trucks.
- Gaming floors of the state's licensed casinos.

From City Attorney Andrew Mai

SEE SMOKING
continued on page A3



Clinton

Obama

Obama in strong position

Who won? Barack Obama rolled to victory in North Carolina and battled Hillary Clinton to a near tie in Indiana, taking a commanding lead in the popular vote and pledged delegates.

What was at stake? Indiana has 72 delegates and North Carolina 115, all awarded proportionately based on vote totals.

Does it change the game? Finally, there is an end in sight to this marathon race to the Democratic nomination. There will likely be intense pressure on Clinton to drop out of the race in the coming days, though she may stay in until May 20.

What's next? A protracted journey to June 3, when South Dakota and Montana voters head to the polls. On the clock is West Virginia, where 28 delegates are at stake on May 13.

See full story on page A3

Teen admits fault in Rollerama Taser incident

By **Dolly A. Butz**
Journal staff writer

SIUX CITY — A teenager who was tased during a fight outside a Sioux City skating rink last year admitted Tuesday that she assaulted a police officer.

Sina Baker, 13, admitted to the serious misdemeanor charge, which stems from a high-profile incident that occurred Oct. 19 in the parking lot of the Rollerama, 4500 Stone Avenue.

Baker was fighting with another girl in the parking lot, when police officer Robert Doenhoefer told her to stop. According to court docu-

ments, Doenhoefer said Baker jumped on his back, struck his chest and kicked his legs.

At a March 31 hearing Baker denied assaulting Doenhoefer.

However, Baker on Tuesday said that she knew Doenhoefer was a police officer and admitted she assaulted him.

"I was fighting and he told me to stop and I didn't," she said.

Sina Baker's sister Jenna Baker, 14, admitted in December to charges that she bit a police officer and another woman during the same incident. At the time of the incident, the two girls, their mother, Denise Kearnes, and

American Indian activist Frank LaMere claimed the use of a Taser on Sina Baker was unjustified and potentially motivated by race.



Baker

Baker also admitted Tuesday to two other assault charges, which occurred Feb. 11 and March 18 at East Middle School, and a charge of fifth-degree criminal mischief.

Associate Juvenile Judge Mary L. Timko put Baker on probation until her next hearing, which is scheduled for May 30.

"Let's not have any assaults and negative behavior," Timko told Baker.

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Speak out Should Sioux City ban smoking at the Argosy casino?
Sound off at siouxcityjournal.com.

'Idol' chatter

Bruce Miller is blogging during each episode of American Idol. Read his comments (and share your own) in his blog at siouxcityjournal.com/blogs.



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Baby boom
There may be a short supply of Mother's Day cards in Orange City, Iowa, this year with a record number of babies being born. Read about the hospital in Orange City in Thursday's Health section.

THE MINI

As construction has begun on Gordon Drive and is down to one lane, let's all remember what we learned in kindergarten: No budging in line.

Mary Bertram, Sioux City

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