

## A New Airport?

### Confidential Instructions for the Senator from Pancake County (Republican)

You have not publicly taken a position on the question of a new airport, because your constituency is divided, and because you anticipate being able to negotiate a better deal for Pancake County if no one takes your agreement for granted.

Many assume that Pancake will be eager to be the site of a new airport because Pancake is a relatively poor county comprised primarily of farms and cattle ranches that are increasingly struggling with drought. In fact, there is considerable truth in that assumption. Most of those who would be displaced by expanding Silver Dollar Airport are ready to sell for a fair price.

On the other hand, many Pancake County residents are less than enthusiastic about a huge increase in the noise of airplanes taking off and landing at all hours, as well as air pollution from flights and increased traffic. Another important opposition group consists of those farmers and ranchers who will not be displaced by the Silver Dollar expansion, and who want to continue in their agricultural way of life, both because it has been the mainstay of their families for generations, and because they believe that under the right conditions, doing so can still be sufficiently profitable that they can remain on the family land.

On balance, you have concluded that having the new airport located in Pancake County will be a net benefit to the county and the state. Accordingly, you have decided to support the expansion of Silver Dollar Airport, although you do have reasonable conditions for doing so. Both you and your constituents believe strongly that the county should be compensated for taking on the burden of a project that will benefit the entire state, and that other counties would certainly pay to avoid.

One important issue for Pancake County, like many rural areas in the state, is health care that is inadequate and overwhelmed by almost any measure. While Pancake County health care has been insufficient for decades, the opioid epidemic has tipped it into crisis mode, with doctors and facilities completely overwhelmed. You would like the state to fund the construction and operation of two additional clinics (\$50 million up front, and \$25 million annually thereafter) and increase staff for the

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hospital to expand the emergency department and add a few needed specialties (\$25 million up front, plus \$15 million per year thereafter).

Another Pancake County interest is to receive state assistance for the repair and upgrading of the county roads in the vicinity of the proposed new airport. SB101 provides funding for high-speed access roads to and from the airport, but there is no provision for repair and upgrades of the local roads near the airport, which will undoubtedly carry vastly more traffic than they did when the area around Silver Dollar was primarily agricultural. Whatever may be said of the demands of the other rural counties for assistance with road repair and upgrade, Pancake's demand is directly related to the airport. The airport will benefit the entire state, and its local road expenses should not be borne entirely by Pancake. Road repairs and upgrades in the area surrounding the airport would require a minimum of \$50 million, although that amount could be provided over years 2-5 of SB 101.

In addition, for \$30 million up front and \$15 million per year thereafter for operating expenses, the county could purchase enough buses to create an adequate public transit system. (You would be willing to accept the proposed Faraway County plan to use minivans for public transportation in lieu of your plan, if the Faraway system were more appealing to the Committee.)

As far as the proposals contained in SB 101, including those that direct the ATA to study various options, you support nearly all of them to the extent they can all be funded within the annual \$500 million budget surplus. Most deal with increasing access to the new airport, and maximum access is consistent with serving the citizens of Ames and insuring a profitable airport. The access proposal that is most likely to be subject to attack on budgetary grounds is Emerald's request for a tunnel under the Ames River. The \$500 million cost of such a tunnel is higher than any other transportation expenditure, and even without the tunnel, the residents of Emerald County will have high-speed road and rail access to the new airport. You will support the tunnel proposal if it does not create a significant budget deficit; otherwise you will have to oppose it, hoping that the Senator from Emerald County will realize that even without the tunnel, Emerald's interests will be better served by having a new airport with easy access from Emerald County than by continuing to rely on Curly.

The only financial proposal in the bill that is not for airport access relates to redeveloping Curly, and you oppose that (unless it is necessary to obtain a 5-person majority for the airport). Tidal Flats has profited greatly over the years from the presence of Curly, and it should not be necessary for residents of other counties to pay for the costs associated with redeveloping Curly.

On the issue of where to site a new state biotechnology research center, you prefer Emerald City over Tidal Flats. Emerald is at least as good a candidate, and the economic boost resulting from placing the center in Emerald City is more likely to spill over into nearby Pancake County than would be the case if the center were placed in Tidal Flats. All that said, this issue is less important than your other interests.

### **Summary of Your Interests and Priorities**

In sum, your primary interest is in having the new airport built with adequate road and rail access to and from Pancake County. You also have a strong interest in state financial support for road repairs and

public transit in Pancake County, as well as in financial assistance in dealing with the effects of the opioid epidemic

Ultimately, you will support and vote for a proposed agreement for a new airport in Pancake County only if you decide that agreement, considered as a whole, contains provisions that would satisfy your constituents' interests more than would the "no deal" alternative.