

IOWA HOUSE REPUBLICANS

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IowaHouseRepublicans.com

Appropriations

When Democrats Controlled the Budget

For Iowa House Democrats, math is hard. Not only are they unable to tell Iowans how many genders there are, but they also have trouble balancing the state budget.

Democrats controlled the Iowa House for four legislative sessions (2007-2010). During that time, they increased spending, used one-time bailout money to cover shortfalls in revenue, borrowed over \$800 billion to fund projects that didn't have funding available and implemented a 10 percent across the board cut that impacted schools, health care and law enforcement when they couldn't make the numbers work in the end.

Here are some details:

When House Democrats took over in January 2007, they immediately went to work raising government spending. By the end of that session, they had increased General Fund spending by 9.37% in the Fiscal Year 2008 budget. The following session revealed a problem of their own making. Their increase in state spending was too much too fast. State revenue was not growing as fast as they needed. Their spending plans were greater than what was allowed under Iowa law. Naturally, they chose to ignore the law and keep spending. The Democrat-controlled legislature passed a provision that year which by-passed the state's expenditure limitation.

Without a plan against a loss in state revenue, Democrats were in a bind when the Great Recession hit. By December 2008, it was clear state revenue would not meet the spending plan passed by House Democrats. Governor Culver was forced to issue a 1.5 percent across the board cut to all state spending. Once the Legislature had convened in January 2009, they took action to enact a further series of cuts totaling \$30.3 million. Medicaid and School Aid appropriations were reduced.

With revenue dropping, House Democrats decided the best path forward was to use one-time money to patch up the state's budget. Federal bailout cash was answer. General fund costs were shifted to this one-time revenue source. Things like Medicaid and schools were now dependent of one-time revenue.

But that wasn't even the most questionable decision. That was Gov. Culver's bonding boondoggle – the I-Jobs program. In three separate bond issuances, the state suddenly had \$765 million to spend on infrastructure projects. The total cost to state taxpayers of this folly - \$1.7 billion in bond payments over the next twenty years.

As revenue continued to fall, their next move was to transfer \$45.3 million from the Economic Emergency Fund to get the state's books to balance for the year.

By the fall of 2009, it became clear further reductions in the budget were necessary. Instead of calling back the Legislature to make tough decisions, Governor Culver implemented a 10 percent across the board cut to all parts of the budget, including schools. When the Legislature reconvened in January 2010, another round of cuts was enacted. How did House Democrats react when the 2010 session began? They went right back to using one-time sources of revenue. More federal bailout cash was put into the budget, with a total of \$638 million being spent on on-going

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programs. Other state funds were raided. The Senior Living Trust Fund, which was established earlier in the decade to help create more alternatives to nursing homes for seniors, was emptied. The Cash Reserve Fund, the state's bank account used to ensure on-time payments, was also tapped for a donation.

And the insatiable appetite for spending didn't end there. Another round of I-Jobs bonds was issued that year, raising the total amount borrowed to \$810 million.

According to LSA, \$817.9 million of General Fund spending had been shifted to non-General Fund sources including the one-time federal stimulus funds from the federal government. Plus property tax credits for homeowners, farmers, veterans, and seniors were underfunded. Iowa already know what happens when you put Democrats in charge of the state's budget – too much spending, reckless borrowing and cuts to schools.

(Contact: Brad Trow 1-3471)

Agriculture

President Trump Announces His Continued Support For Year-Round E15

On Tuesday, in President Trump's speech in Iowa, he reiterated his support for year-round E15, a policy priority for the last decade for corn growers and ethanol advocates. Because of a long standing administrative rule regarding admissions, E15 sales in the summer months have technically been prohibited since E15's first use and has required annual EPA/administrative action for a waiver to E15 for its sale in the summer. This administrative problem has caused uncertainty in the marketplace and led to some fuel sellers to not bothering with offering E15.

But what does President Trump's statement this week actually mean for Iowa? The President's public support for any policy would likely lead to greater interest by the majority party in both the U.S. House and Senate for passage. Unfortunately, President Trump cannot, by administrative order or EPA Rule, make changes to E15 year-round. During the President's first term he did just that via an EPA rule only to see it struck down in court. In a practical sense, the best effect is the Presidential "seal of approval" to encourage Congress to act in favor of E15. President Trump's statement is still of great importance to Iowa, because the issue needs some new energy for Congress to prioritize passage of year-round E15.

(Contact: Mindy Larsen 1-3096)

Commerce

Commerce Committee Advances Legislation on Financial Exploitation, Electric Transmission Lines, Insurance

Over weeks 2 and 3 of this legislative session, the House Commerce Committee has advanced 9 bills. Below are some of the bills on financial exploitation, electric transmission lines, and insurance.

- Financial Exploitation – House Study Bill 516 comes from the Department of Insurance and Financial Services to allow for delaying disbursement of funds by insurers when financial exploitation is suspected. The bill includes notifications to permissible third parties and the insurance commissioner, timelines for delay, and requires insurers to train employees on financial exploitation. DIFS says that they are seeing a rising number of victims liquidating their life insurance policies or annuities and sending that money to scammers, and in some cases, losing their entire life savings.

- Agricultural Land Restoration – House Study Bill 526 requires certain agricultural land restoration following the construction of a 200-kilovolt electric transmission line. Requirements include tile repair, removing rock, soil compaction, restoration of soil conservation practice, and providing a point of contact for landowners. This language originally came from the Governor’s 2025 Energy Bill.
- Transmission Lines Right of Way – House File 736 requires DOT to coordinate with utilities and transmission line developers regarding the use of highway/interstate right of ways for transmission line construction.
- Health Savings Accounts - House File 2185 comes from the Department of Insurance and Financial Services to clarify when cost-sharing applies to an individual’s high-deductible health plan health savings account.

(Contact: Natalie Ginty 5-2063)

Economic Growth

Iowa Film Rebate Program Applications Open Next Month

Last year the legislature passed the Iowa Film Program. This program offers rebates to qualified production facilities creating productions in Iowa that result in overall long-term positive impact to the state and provide education, training, and recruitment opportunities to residents. The film rebate program is operating as a two-year pilot program. Four million dollars is available through a fund with the expense period ending June 30, 2027. Applications for the program will be accepted from February 2, 2026, through March 16, 2026. The application window may be shortened or extended depending on availability of funding for the program.

In-state studios may apply to determine if they are a qualified production facility. Facilities may apply for funding for more than one production, which can receive a maximum rebate of 30 percent on eligible expenses. Awarded funds will be paid as a rebate after the project is completed and all contractual requirements have been met. More details on applicant eligibility and expense eligibility can be found in the [Film Rebate Fact Sheet](#).

(Contact: Kristi Kiouss 2-5290)

Cost of Living in Iowa Still Below National Average

A January 28, 2026 Axios article titled, “Iowa’s income growth lags that of most other states” highlights a finding from an Urban Institute analysis showing Iowa's median household income *grew* by just over 20% in real (inflation-adjusted) terms from 1970 to 2023, rising from \$59,325 to \$71,433. This lagged the national increase of nearly 32% (from \$58,930 to \$77,719), placing Iowa among the 10 states with the lowest income growth over five decades. However, not only did Iowa still outpace Wisconsin and Missouri, but actual cost of living in Iowa is lower than the national average. This helps offset slower income growth. Most sources put Iowa’s cost of living index (average = 100) in the low to mid 80s to the low 90s.

- BestPlaces.net rates Iowa at 80.1 (about 20% below national average).
- World Population Review and similar indices place it among the cheaper states (often 8th-10th lowest), with housing particularly affordable (index around 76, or ~24% below average).
- Recent 2025-2026 estimates (e.g., Salary.com) indicate monthly costs around \$2,228 for a single person and \$4,905 for a family of four, roughly 10% below the U.S. average.
- Housing stands out as a major savings area: Average rent is often cited around \$900-\$1,000 (vs. national ~\$1,600+), and home prices/ownership costs are well below average.

- Other categories like utilities, transportation, and groceries are typically 3-10% below or near national levels, though some sources note slight variations (e.g., food occasionally higher in specific reports).
- Iowa ranks highly for affordability in rankings like U.S. News & World Report (e.g., top 10 for lowest cost of living).

Other key factors in Iowa's favor:

Iowa's strong homeownership rates (71-72%, above national), and low taxes (recent flat income tax), and stable Midwestern economy contribute to affordability in the state.

Iowa's low cost of living provides a real-world buffer, making the state more affordable than raw income numbers suggest.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Urban Institute is a left-leaning liberal think tank based in Washington, DC. It favors left-leaning causes like LGBTQ issues, higher taxes, expanded government programs while delving into woke topics like "white privilege."

(Contact: Jeff Mitchell 1-5137)

Education

Education Committee Passes Bill Requiring Cash to be Accepted at Athletic Events

High school sports events are a beloved part of Iowa communities. Members of the community along with family and friends attend a myriad of events to support their schools. But, over the past years Republicans have begun to hear about Iowans being turned away at the gate if they wanted to pay with cash.

In response, House Republicans are working to make sure this is changed. On Wednesday, the House Education committee passed HF 2079 which states that legal tender shall be accepted as a form of payment for entry into any extracurricular interscholastic athletic contest or competition. House Republicans do not want to take away the ability of someone to walk into a game with cash to support their school and their community. This bill will now be eligible to be debated on the floor.

(Contact: Kristin Rozeboom 1-3015)

After 37 Years, Regents Program Appears to Have Accomplished its Goal

House Republicans introduced House Study Bill 607 which ends the Regents Women and Minority Educator Enhancement Program after 37 years. The program was meant to increase the number of women and minorities in the faculty at Iowa's public universities.

Like many programs based on demographic traits instead of merit, there is no clear definition of success or any measurable end goal. Instead, only an imprecise aspiration for more jobs for individuals who display a preferred demographic trait.

However, the numbers clearly show the program has achieved what it was meant to achieve and therefore is no longer necessary. Concerns about backsliding are almost laughable as that would require Iowa's clearly left leaning public universities to reduce the number of women and minorities in faculty positions and replace them with white men. No one truly believes that is a realistic possibility.

Data goes back to September of 1995 on the legislative website regarding the demographics concerning women and minorities in the total workforce at the University of Iowa, Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa. The latest report to include specific data is from October of 2024.

At the University of Iowa, the total workforce numbers have risen dramatically from 13,013 in 1995 to 21,188 in 2024. 8,175 new workforce positions have been filled. The U of I's total percentage of workforce has risen from 60.5% female to 66.8% female and 6.0% minority to 16.7% minority.

Here are some key numbers at Iowa:

University of Iowa	1995					2024				
	Total Workforce	Female	% Female	Minority	% Minority	Total Workforce	Female	% Female	Minority	% Minority
Executive, Managerial, Administrative	265	74	27.9	20	7.5	421	212	50.4	65	15.4
Tenure and Tenure Track Faculty	1645	367	22.3	187	11.4	1275	466	36.5	336	26.4
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	341	132	38.7	76	22.3	1567	830	53.0	346	22.1
Professional and Scientific Staff	5194	3601	69.3	251	4.8	13255	9703	73.2	1502	11.3
Secretarial and Clerical Staff	2707	2304	85.1	69	2.5	924	704	76.2	146	13.8
Technical and Paraprofessional Staff	547	341	62.5	21	3.8	1047	810	77.4	240	22.9
Skilled Crafts	455	37	8.1	15	3.3	236	10	4.2	15	6.4
Service and Maintenance Staff	1859	1022	55.0	148	8.0	2463	1424	57.8	897	36.4
Total Workforce	13013	7878	60.5	787	6.0	21188	14159	66.8	3547	16.7
Total Increase from 1995 to 2024						+8175	+6281	+6.3	+2760	+10.7

At Iowa State University the increase in total workforce has been far less dramatic than at the University of Iowa. ISU's total workforce is up 689 from 6,318 to 7,007. Female employees have risen by 633 going from 2,982 to 3,615 or 47.2% to 51.6%. Minority employees have risen from 509 to 1,296 or 8.1% to 18.5%.

Here some key numbers at Iowa State:

Iowa State University	1995					2024				
	Total Workforce	Female	% Female	Minority	% Minority	Total Workforce	Female	% Female	Minority	% Minority
Executive, Managerial, Administrative	261	68	26.1	15	5.7	321	173	53.9	31	9.7
Tenure and Tenure Track Faculty	1275	273	21.4	132	10.4	1070	357	33.4	350	32.7
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	301	155	51.5	32	10.6	623	333	53.5	114	18.3
Professional and Scientific Staff	2086	948	45.4	238	11.4	3446	1938	56.2	633	18.4
Secretarial and Clerical Staff	1169	1078	92.2	33	2.8	422	364	86.3	29	6.9

Technical and Paraprofessional Staff	224	99	44.2	7	3.1	380	173	45.5	31	8.2
Skilled Crafts	320	18	5.6	6	1.9	113	7	6.2	6	5.3
Service and Maintenance Staff	682	343	50.3	46	6.7	632	270	42.7	102	16.1
Total Workforce	6318	2982	47.2	509	8.1	7007	3615	51.6	1296	18.5
Total Increase from 1995 to 2024						+689	+633	+4.4	+787	+10.4

At the University of Northern Iowa total workforce numbers are *down* by 197. However, the percentages for women and minorities have increased. Women are up 5% and minorities are up 3.2%.

Here are some key numbers at UNI:

University of Northern Iowa	1995					2024				
	Total Workforce	Female	% Female	Minority	% Minority	Total Workforce	Female	% Female	Minority	% Minority
Executive, Managerial, Administrative	112	27	24.1	12	10.7	81	40	49.4	6	7.4
Tenure and Tenure Track Faculty	558	198	35.5	56	10.0	301	142	47.2	69	22.9
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	74	54	73.0	6	8.1	79	55	69.6	7	8.9
Professional and Scientific Staff	378	176	46.6	37	9.8	653	304	55.7	72	11.0
Secretarial and Clerical Staff	285	280	98.2	18	6.3	177	166	93.8	15	8.5
Technical and Paraprofessional Staff	24	13	54.2	3	12.5	18	4	22.2	4	22.2
Skilled Crafts	85	3	3.5	8	9.4	41	1	2.4	1	2.4
Service and Maintenance Staff	250	146	58.4	51	20.4	219	103	47.0	46	21.0
Total Workforce	1766	897	50.8	191	10.8	1569	875	55.8	220	14.0
Total Increase from 1995 to 2024						-197	-22	+5.0	+29	+3.2

For additional context to this information, included below are a comparison of the data from the three universities with their enrollment data and census data.

Total enrollment:

	1995	2024
University of Iowa	27,597	30,779
Iowa State University	24,431	30,432
University of Northern Iowa	12,802	9,283

(Contact: Jeff Mitchell 1-5137)

Providing Public Safety and Humane Treatment

This week, the House Health and Human Services Committee considered House File 2094 to expand capacity at the state Mental Health Institutes and allow for additional federal funding to pay for that expansion. Recently, the Trump Administration signed an Executive Order titled [“ending crime and disorder on America’s streets”](#) that focused on caring for individuals with significant mental health and substance abuse conditions while balancing public safety.

In the order, the President directs his cabinet to “enforce, and where necessary, adopt, standards that address individuals who are a danger to themselves or others and suffer from serious mental illness or substance abuse, or who are living on the streets and cannot care for themselves, through assisted outpatient treatment or by moving them into treatment centers or other appropriate facilities via civil commitment or other available means, to the maximum extent permitted by law”.

In addition to the legislation on expanding the mental health institutes, the Iowa House passed legislation last year to go after this very topic – humane treatment of the mentally ill while also protecting the public from the unsafe actions of those in need of treatment. The Senate did not advance any of the below three bills last session but is able to consider them in 2026 to improve Iowa’s civil commitment laws.

- **HF 312 – Psychiatric Deterioration** - This bill allows for individuals to be committed based on psychiatric deterioration (defined in Section 4 of the bill), in addition to current law which allows for commitment when they are a danger to themselves or others. According to the Treatment Advocacy Center, an organization with a mission to eliminate the barriers to timely and effective treatment of severe mental illness through advocacy, public education and support, there are over 30 states that allow for psychiatric deterioration for their commitment laws. This would allow those that are unable to understand their mental health condition and are not able to seek treatment on their own to receive long-term treatment and to protect the public.
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- **HF 313 – Commitment Hearing Testimony** - This bill allows for physician assistants and advanced registered nurse practitioners to testify at committal hearings if they witnessed the examination, reviewed the report, and the professional that examined the individual is unable to attend the hearing. Unfortunately, there are examples in Iowa where individuals have been released based on lack of testimony at the commitment hearing and then the individual harms themselves or others, rather than receive treatment.
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- **HF 385 – Commitment Discharge** - This bill is to provide help to those that are frequently through the mental health system and requires facilities that are discharging individuals committed for substance abuse or mental health to provide the following at discharge:
 - Refer the individual committed to the administrative services organization (ASO) for evaluation, case management, and post-discharge services
 - Assess for suicide risk
 - Provide a 30-day supply of medications prescribed
 - A discharge report to the individual committee or their legal representative. The discharge report will have all their appointments and medications outlined, ASO contact information, an aftercare plan with crisis prevention, and education materials developed by DHHS
 - Notify the ASO and legal guardians
 - This bill also requires the ASO to coordinate post-discharge care for individuals after commitment.

(Contact: Natalie Ginty 5-2063)

Labor

Iowa Ends 2025 with Higher Labor Force Participation, 32,400 More Workers

Iowa's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.5 percent in December, level with November and up slightly from 3.3 percent one year ago. The labor force participation rate increased to 67.7 percent in December, as Iowa gained 4,600 workers in comparison to the previous month. The participation rate was up from 67.6 percent in November and 66.9 percent one year ago. Meanwhile, the U.S. unemployment rate decreased to 4.4 percent. The total number of unemployed Iowans decreased to 61,400 in December from 61,800 in November.

The total number of working Iowans rose to 1,688,700 in December. This figure is 5,000 higher than November and 27,300 higher than one year ago.

"December's report shows that Iowa ended 2025 with 32,400 more workers than we had at the end of 2024," said Beth Townsend, Executive Director of Iowa Workforce Development. "And the numbers show that 27,300 additional Iowans were able to successfully find jobs in 2025, which is consistent with the increases we've seen over the past two months in the labor force participation rate. With almost 50,000 open jobs on IowaWORKS.gov, there are still employers looking for their next great hire, and we can help you connect."

Seasonally Adjusted Nonfarm Employment

In December, Iowa businesses shed 3,300 jobs, lowering total nonfarm employment to 1,595,500. Private industry was responsible for this decline as losses were evident in both goods-producing industries (-1,500) and private services (-2,900). Hiring at the local government level drove a 1,100 increase in jobs in the government sector, which is now up 1,600 for the year. (State government is little changed over the last 12 months, while federal government is down due to budget cutbacks (-1,000).)

Retail trade led all sectors in losses in December (-1,500). This sector had shown signs of hiring in the third quarter, but this momentum waned in the fourth quarter with 1,900 jobs shed since September. Wholesale trade continued to trend down in December (-1,000). Non-durable goods sales are responsible for most of these losses. Accommodations and food services shed jobs for the second consecutive month (-1,800). Full-service restaurants fueled most of the monthly decline. Manufacturing shed a combined 1,300 jobs. Non-durable goods factories were down 800 jobs, and durable goods shops were down 500 jobs. On the other hand, job gains were smaller and led by finance and insurance (+300). This sector is down 500 jobs versus last December. Other gains included education and health services and other services, each gaining 200 jobs.

Annually, the state is up 2,700 jobs over the past 12 months. Construction has added the most jobs during that span (+7,100). This sector has generally trended up over the past 12 months. Education and health care gained 5,900 jobs. Health care and social assistance alone has gained 3,900 jobs. Conversely, leisure and hospitality (-3,800) has pared the most jobs since last December with losses concentrated in accommodations and food service industries.

Professional and business services are down 3,400 jobs, and trade, transportation, and utilities have shed 2,300. To view unemployment data you can click here: <https://workforce.iowa.gov/press-release/2026-01-23/iowa-ends-2025-higher-labor-force-participation-32400-more-workers>

(Info from Iowa Workforce Development)

(Contact: Kristin Rozeboom 1-3015)

Local Government

Open Meeting Training Opportunities

As of July 1, a new law has gone into effect that will increase public officials' training regarding open meeting and public information and increase enforcement of violations. [HF 706](#) was signed into law by the Governor and now requires newly elected or appointed officials to complete an Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB) provided or approved course of training on their responsibilities of open meeting and public information laws. Too often when cases come before IPIB the defense given is that the official or government body wasn't aware of their legal requirements. The new law will proactively provide that information to elected officials at the beginning of their tenure.

The law requires that the training is made available and allows IPIB to approve acceptable courses of training offered by governmental bodies or other entities. For any newly appointed or elected officials looking to complete their training IPIB's website has regularly updated and provided online training sessions and can be found [here](#). In addition to the courses offered by IPIB, five training providers have been approved for training, including Iowa League of Cities and the Iowa Association of School Boards. Approved training providers can be found [here](#). IPIB's website provides additional information and guidance for governmental bodies and officials concerning the new law [here](#).

(Contact: Jason Covey 1-3626)

Public Safety

House Republicans Announce Anti-Crime Bills

Safe neighborhoods are a top priority for Iowans. The requirement that hardworking families can raise their kids without fear, safely go to work, and build strong communities rooted in time-honored American values is not negotiable.

This year the House Public Safety and Judiciary Committees will be working on three unique bills to ensure Iowa does not go the way of Illinois, Minneapolis or California. These common sense crime bills will tackle the issue from three different angles, helping ensure Iowa is not a welcome place for law abiding Iowans and not for criminals.

The first bill, which is awaiting a bill number in the Judiciary Committee, is the Career Criminals bill. This legislation creates a three strikes and you're out system for habitual offenders. These individuals will be facing a mandatory minimum of 20 years in prison without parole once they have three strikes on their record.

- 1 Full Strike: Any conviction for felonies and specific aggravated misdemeanors, including sex offenses, assaults, certain thefts and drug possession
- 0.5 Strike: All other aggravated misdemeanors and some serious misdemeanors including those involving assaults, drug possession and theft.

The second bill, which will run through the Public Safety Committee, is a pretrial accountability and bail reform act. The goal of this bill is to ensure those who are arrested and charged with a crime cannot simply skip out on bail or be released on their own recognizance in instances where they are unlikely to return to face judgement. The bill addresses four areas of bail reform:

- **Inflation-Adjusted Bail Schedules:** Require an update to the statewide bail schedules to adjust for inflation.
- **Justification for Deviation:** Any judge who departs from the Supreme Court’s established bail schedule must document their specific reasoning on the record.
- **Restricting 'Promise to Appear' (PTA):** PTA release will only be allowed if an individual has been charged with a nonviolent, nondrug-related simple or serious misdemeanor.
- **Fact-Checking Pretrial Release:** Requires the Department of Corrections to independently verify claims regarding residency, employment, and criminal record before release can be considered.

Law and order can’t exist without a reliable Judiciary. [House Study Bill 631](#) aims to help the public to better understand the Judicial system and specifically Judges. The bill creates a dashboard to provide Iowans with objective data on how judges exercise their discretion. It requires the state to collect and publish information including:

- **Bond & Sentencing Decisions:** How often a judge departs from standard bail schedules or statutory sentencing recommendations.
- **Legal Accuracy:** The frequency with which a judge’s decisions are overturned by higher courts for legal errors.
- **Efficiency:** How quickly a judge rules on motions and cases.

This information will help Iowans make educated decisions when it comes time to vote on judicial retention. Helping the general public understand the role and responsibility of Judges is one more way to increase confidence in the Judiciary and increase safety in our state.

These three bills will be debated in subcommittees and committees in the coming weeks. House Republicans are looking forward to hearing from those in the community and in law enforcement to ensure these bills truly make Iowa a better place.

(Contact: Amanda Wille 1-5230)

State Government

Modernizing Iowa’s Alcoholic Beverages Commission

This week the State Government Committee advanced a piece of good governance legislation to modernize Iowa Code governing the Alcoholic Beverages Commission and the department employees. Iowa is an alcoholic beverage control state. This means the Alcoholic Beverages Commission, within the Department of Revenue, is solely responsible for the regulation and control of alcoholic beverages in the state.

The Alcoholic Beverages Commission is a five-member body appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the Senate. The Commission is the policy-making body and serves an advisory role to the Director of Revenue. [House Study Bill 587](#) is a modernization of current code to better suit the current times.

The bill expands what defines an “interest” in alcoholic businesses for the commission members to include indirect holdings through marriage or relatives and businesses that indirectly involve the manufacturing or sales of alcohol. On the five-member commission, two commissioners are allowed to have business interests. This update in language will help ensure that the majority of the commissioners do not have an interest in alcohol businesses.

Additionally, the bill references Iowa’s government ethics and lobbying chapter of code to allow more individual decisions to be made on employees of the Alcoholic Beverages Commission to allow freedom in their personal lives

outside of their employment. Currently, employees are prohibited from being employed or having an interest in any business holding a liquor license. If enacted, HSB 587 allows the department to create conflict of interest policies and prohibit such employees from decision making or licensing/permitting of businesses or individuals related to the conflict of interest.

(Contact: Jason Covey 1-3626)

Transportation

“Iowa’s America 250 Scenic Byways Road Trip” Series begins Sunday, celebrating state’s role in shaping the nation’s history

To mark the 250th birthday of the United States, the Iowa Department of Transportation is partnering with [Iowa’s Scenic Byways](#) to kick off a series of educational presentations celebrating several historical locations across the state from January to June. Six monthly events, scheduled along Iowa’s Scenic Byways, will invite the public to learn about Iowa’s unique and memorable contributions to our nation’s past.

The celebration begins Sunday, January 18 with [“An Assessment of Iowaville \(1765–1824\)”](#) at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park Lodge from 1:30-2:30 p.m. Attendees will explore the fascinating story of Iowaville, an Ioway (Báxoje) Native American Tribe village in Van Buren County. Cindy Peterson, Research Director with the University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist, and Alan Kelley, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, will lead the presentation.

Peterson and Kelley will bring to life the insights from a research effort supported by the State Historical Society of Iowa, offering a compelling look at the Báxoje occupation of the area and the village’s historic significance. The presentation will also include information about area artifacts, stories about tribal members, and a discussion about this remarkable place on the Iowa landscape which has been recommended as a National Historic Landmark.

A number of additional historical activities and tours are scheduled in the Van Buren County area January 18-19 through [Pathfinders Resource Conservation and Development](#).

Monthly presentations will continue through June 2026, each spotlighting a different [Iowa Scenic Byway](#) and historical theme – from Governor Larrabee’s home at Montauk to Iowa’s Underground Railroad connections. These events are free and open to the public, offering a welcoming space for Iowans of all ages and backgrounds to connect with their heritage.

Iowa’s America 250 Scenic Byway Road Trip Schedule:

- **January 18, 2026** – 1:30-2:30 p.m., Lacey-Keosauqua State Park Lodge, [Historic Hills Byway](#): An Assessment of Iowaville (1765-1824) with Cindy Peterson and Allan Kelley.
- **February 28, 2026** – 1:30-2:30 p.m., Clermont Opera House, [River Bluffs Scenic Byway](#): *An Overview of Montauk (1874–1912)* with Nurit Finn.
- **March 22, 2026** – 1:30-2:30 p.m., Fort Madison Riverfront Pavilion, [The Great River Road National Scenic Byway](#): *Fort Madison and the War of 1812* with State Archaeologist John Doershuk.

Events for April, May, and June will be announced in the near future.

(Contact: Brad Trow 1-3471)

Governor Reynolds visits Iowa National Guard Soldiers, Airmen Serving in the Middle East

The following was provided by the Governor's Office:

Governor Kim Reynolds and Iowa National Guard Adjutant General, Major General Stephen Osborn, concluded a five-day visit across the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, meeting with Iowa Soldiers and Airmen deployed in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

The visit spanned Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait and focused on recognizing service, honoring sacrifice, and reinforcing Iowa's commitment to the nearly 1,800 Iowa National Guard members currently deployed throughout the region

"It was an honor to visit our deployed Soldiers and Airmen in the Middle East and personally thank them for their service on behalf of a grateful state," said Governor Reynolds. "I am incredibly impressed and proud of the Iowa National Guard's vital contributions to this global mission."

"Seeing our Soldiers and Airmen reinforces why this mission matters," said Iowa National Guard Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Stephen Osborn. "Across the region, they are executing with professionalism, precision, and purpose. Their dedication—often far from home—demonstrates the very best of our force and the critical role we play in protecting regional stability and our national security."

The delegation first traveled to Al Tanf Garrison, Syria, a strategic U.S. outpost, where they met with Soldiers assigned to Task Force Armadillo (1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment). During the visit, the Governor presented the Purple Heart to an Iowa Soldier wounded during the Dec. 13 attack that claimed the lives of two Iowa National Guardsmen. The Purple Heart is awarded to service members who are wounded or killed as a result of enemy action, recognizing sacrifice and courage in combat. Governor Reynolds also administered the oath of reenlistment to two Soldiers, reaffirming their continued service while deployed.

In Jordan, the Governor and the Adjutant General visited a deployed medical team from the 185th Air Refueling Wing. The team included Lt. Col. Niles, who was recognized by the Governor during her Condition of the State address. The Airmen provided critical medical care to casualties from the Dec. 13 attack, underscoring the vital role Iowa Airmen play in joint and medical combat operations.

The delegation then traveled to Erbil, Iraq, where they remained overnight and received briefings from Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division (Task Force Guardian). Leaders discussed accomplishments and current operations within the Combined Joint Area of Operations. While in Erbil, Governor Reynolds also reenlisted an Iowa Soldier, highlighting continued service in support of the mission.

The final leg of the visit included Ali Al Salem Air Base and Camp Buehring, Kuwait. At Ali Al Salem, Detachment 6 of the 641st Operational Support Airlift Command, a small unit of Army fixed-wing aviators, briefed the Governor and Adjutant General on their mission and the scope of aviation support provided across the region. A group of individually deployed Airmen from the 185th Air Refueling Wing also met with the delegation to discuss their highly technical and specialized roles supporting air operations.

At Camp Buehring, the Governor and Maj. Gen. Osborn visited Soldiers from Task Force Nyala (334th Brigade Support Battalion) and Task Force Redleg (1st Battalion, 194th Field Artillery), thanking them for their professionalism and sustained operational tempo in support of regional security and stability.

Throughout the visit, Governor Reynolds and Maj. Gen. Osborn emphasized Iowa pride, service before self, and the enduring connection between deployed Guard members, their families, and communities back home.

(Contact: Natalie Ginty 5-2063)

Ways & Means

Tax Filing Season is Upon Us

This week marks the start of tax filing season. The Internal Revenue Service announced that the 2026 tax season started on Monday, Jan. 26, 2026. It is expected that more than 164 million individual tax returns will be filed—which is much more than the 140 million returns filed last year.

Most refunds from the IRS are issued in less than 21 calendar days. Taxpayers can use Where's My Refund? to check the status of their 2025 income tax refund within 24 hours of filing their tax return electronically. Refund information is normally available after four weeks for taxpayers who filed a paper return. Information on the site will update overnight so there is no need to check the tool more than once a day.

2026 tax season: What's changing?

This is the first filing season reflecting changes from the One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed into law last summer. Here are some of the biggest changes:

- Senior tax deduction—Americans 65 and older who pay taxes on Social Security income can claim a new \$6,000 federal deduction, available through the 2028 tax year. Married couples where both spouses qualify can deduct up to \$12,000.
- No tax on overtime, tips, and car loan interest.
 - Eligible workers can deduct qualified overtime pay, capped at \$12,500 per return (\$25,000 for joint filers), with the benefit phasing out at higher incomes.
 - The law temporarily eliminates federal income taxes on tips, allowing tipped workers to deduct up to \$25,000 a year, and interest paid on qualifying car loans.
- Higher SALT deduction limits
 - The law temporarily raises the cap on the state and local tax (SALT) deduction, allowing some higher-income filers in high-tax states to deduct more on their federal returns.

Standard deduction 2026?

- \$15,750 for single filers
- \$31,500 for married couples filing jointly
- \$23,625 for heads of household

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