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## Appropriations

### Governor Reynolds Unveils Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Proposal

On Tuesday night, Governor Kim Reynolds revealed her plan for state spending in fiscal year 2023. The Governor's plan proposes to spend \$8.2013 billion from the General Fund in FY 2022, which is an increase of 0.95 percent over the current FY 2022 budget. Governor Reynolds's budget spends 89.04 percent of the on-going revenue in the General Fund (\$9.2106 billion).

Among the major items in the Governor's budget are:

**Supplemental State Aid for Schools** – Governor Reynolds is proposing that Iowa's education system receive \$154.1 million in additional money during FY 2023. Schools are provided a 2.5 percent increase in Supplemental State Aid for Schools and school transportation funding.

**Higher Education** – State funding for state universities under the Board of Regents, Community Colleges, and the Iowa Tuition Grant program also receive a 2.5 percent increase in FY 2023. The three state universities receive \$12.3 million in additional funds for their general education line items, and the University of Northern Iowa receives \$1.3 million for its new program working with community college students to earn their bachelor degrees. Iowa's community colleges are recommended to receive an increase of \$5.4 million. Students at the state's independent colleges also see an increase of \$1.2 million to the Iowa Tuition Grant program.

**Medicaid** - In Fiscal Year 2023, the state will spend \$1.5039 billion from the General Fund on the regular Medicaid program and the Health and Wellness program. This amount would have been significantly higher, if not for the continued enhanced federal Medicaid match rate states are receiving in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

**Mental Health** – Another major piece of Governor Reynolds budget proposal is fulfilling the state's new commitment to exclusively funding Iowa's mental health system. Under her budget plan, the state provides \$121.3 million to the mental health regions to serve Iowans needing mental health and intellectual disability services.

**Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund** – As part of her budget proposal, Governor Reynolds also released her recommendations for the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF) for FY 2023. Among the new projects proposed to be funded are:

- \$4.9 million for Dept. of Corrections projects
- \$3.2 million for infrastructure projects at DHS facilities,
- \$6 million in FY 2023 & FY 2024 to restore the livestock barns at the Iowa State Fairgrounds

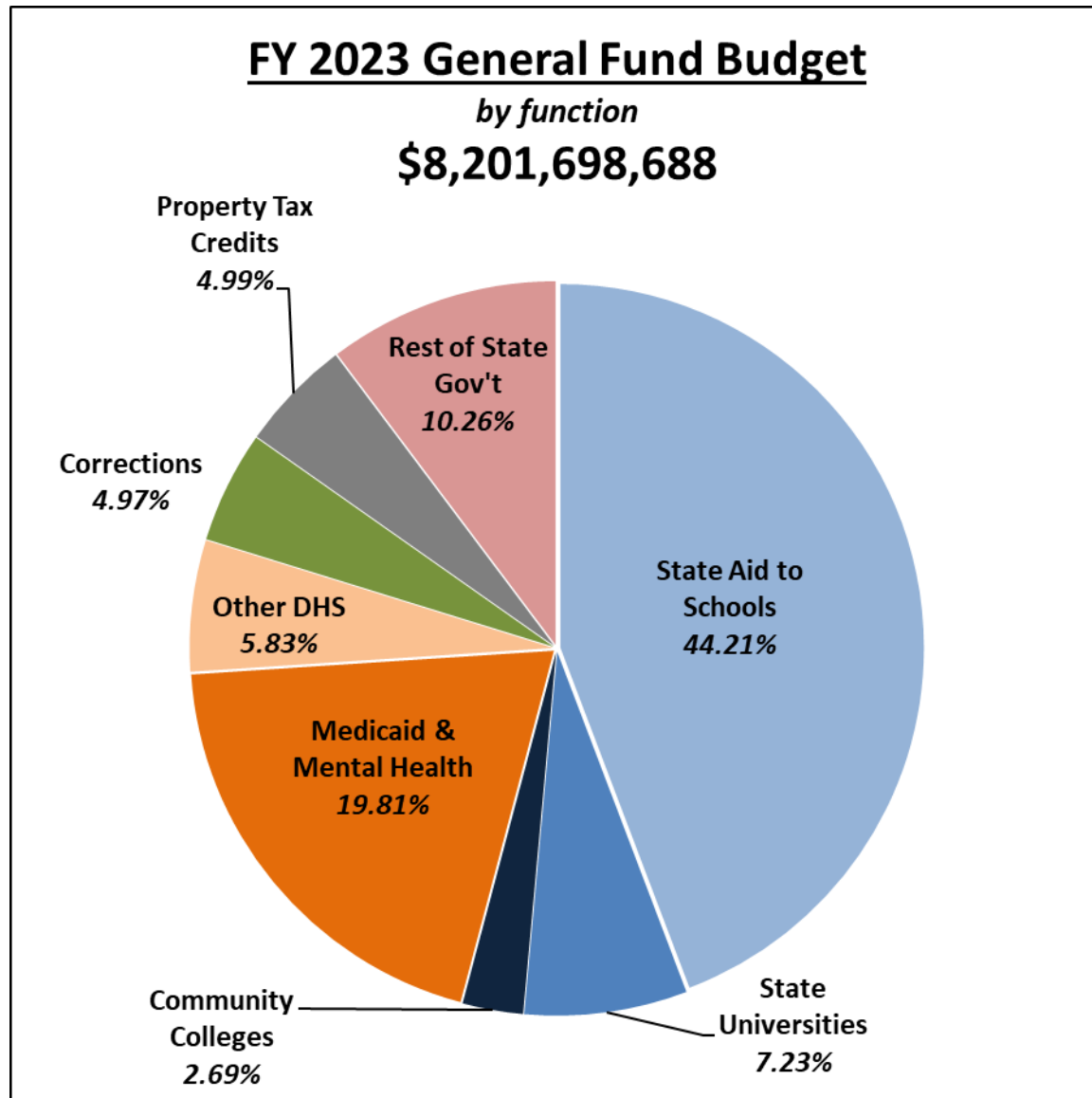
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- Creating new programs dealing with carbon and fertilizer management

The Governor also proposed for increasing funding for state park infrastructure projects, Iowa National Guard facilities, and grants for the railroad revolving fund and recreational trails.

As always, the release of the Governor's budget proposal represents the firing of the starter's pistol on the annual budget process that is the guiding factor in each legislative session. Budget subcommittees begin next week, starting with a close examination of the details of Governor Reynolds' proposal.



### **IDALS Announces Farm to Table Task Force Makes Recommendations to Iowa Legislature**

On Wednesday, December 22, 2021, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) issued a press release announcing that a diverse group of local food experts from across the state have submitted a [set of recommendations](#) to the Iowa Legislature that are intended to improve the farm to table supply chain. The Farm to Table Task force commissioned during the 2021 state legislative session and led by IDALS and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach met over the last several months. The charge was to identify strategies to improve the farm to table supply chain in Iowa, with a special focus on increasing sales to institutional purchasers, including schools.

Recommendations from the task force include:

- Improving sales of local foods to institutions, including farm to school and early care efforts, by increasing the efficiency of local food distribution and awareness of local options for institutional buyers
- Developing and supporting expanded processing opportunities for local foods
- Researching and increasing support for local food farming and scaling up local food agriculture
- Revitalizing and expanding the Local Food and Farm Advisory Council
- Increasing the usage of the Farm to Food Donation Tax Credit and exploring other food donation programs

The Task Force also determined which of these recommendations would require legislative action, funding needs, and potential timeline for implementation. To read the full report, [click here](#). For more information, contact Courtney Long, Program Manager for the Food Systems team within Farm, Food and Enterprise Development with ISU Extension and Outreach, or Colin Tadlock, legislative liaison with IDALS.

### **Artisanal Butchery Task Force Makes Recommendations to Legislature**

On Thursday, January 6, 2022, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) issued a press release in which Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig announced that the Artisanal Butchery Task Force, led by Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, has released its final report to the Legislature detailing a plan to help address workforce challenges at Iowa meat lockers

The task force, created during the 2021 legislative session, was charged with exploring the feasibility of establishing an artisanal butchery program at a community college or at a Regent institution.

In addition to the educational charge, the task force also recommends several other measures to help address workforce and regulatory challenges that lockers face, including the following:

- Establish a tool kit for meat processing businesses to find training programs and resources
- Create a talent pipeline by generating industry interest at the high school level
- Explore opportunities to reduce regulatory hurdles
- Help lockers and processors add value to their products

To read the task force's full report, click [here](#).

## Commerce

### Commerce Committee Ready to Work

It is the beginning of a new legislative session here at the Capitol! The first week is focused on getting organized and drafting legislation. The Commerce committee focuses all types of insurance, energy (natural gas, electricity, solar, wind, etc.) issues, and other that impact business and commerce in our state.

In the coming weeks, Commerce will assign, consider, improve, and pass bills impacting business and commerce in our state. Once legislation has passed the committee, it is eligible for the entire House of Representatives to consider. The bulk of committee work is done before the first funnel deadline (this year - February 18<sup>th</sup>), which is one of the Legislature's self-imposed deadlines for bills to be considered by a committee. You can see all the legislation the House Commerce Committee is working on by visiting

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/committee?ga=89&groupID=696>.

## Economic Growth

### Grant Applications Coming for New Sports Tourism Program

The Enhance Iowa Board announced they will accept applications for the new Sports Tourism program starting February 1. The program provides financial assistance for projects that market or promote professional, collegiate, and amateur level sporting events in Iowa. Funding for the program was appropriated during the 2021 legislative session in the Economic Development Budget Subcommittee. Republicans cast all of the 54 votes in favor of the bill.

Cities, counties, Iowa not-for-profit economic development organizations, or other Iowa not-for-profit organizations, including those that sponsor or support sporting events, are eligible to apply for assistance up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to actively promote or market an eligible sporting event. Grant requests may not exceed \$500,000. The application form and additional information are available at <https://www.iowaeda.com/enhance-iowa/sports-tourism/>. Applications will be accepted on the first of the month, starting on February 1, through June 1, 2022, or until the \$1,500,000 in program funds are fully allocated.

The Enhance Iowa Board oversees the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) and Sport Tourism programs. CAT provides financial incentives to communities for the construction of recreational, cultural, educational or entertainment facilities that enhance the quality of life in Iowa. To date, 99 CAT grants have been awarded by the board, totaling \$31,508,183.

## Education

### Governor Reynolds Launches New Teacher and Paraeducator Apprenticeship

Gov. Reynolds announced the launch of a first-in-the-nation Teacher and Paraeducator Registered Apprenticeship Grant Program Tuesday during her annual Condition of the State Address.

The grant program will provide opportunities for current high school students to earn a paraeducator certificate and associates degree and paraeducators to earn their bachelor's degree all while learning and working in the classroom. The program will begin in the 2022-2023 school year.

“This is a transformational opportunity that puts our schools at the center of growing their future workforce,” said Gov. Reynolds. “I can’t think of a better place to recruit our future generations of teachers and paraeducators than in our own classrooms. Through this first-in-the-nation experience today, we’ll be shaping our educators of tomorrow.”

The Iowa Department of Education (DOE) and Iowa Workforce Development Agency (IWD) will use \$9M in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief (ESSERIII) funds to create the model program which will train and educate current high school students and paraeducators for the next step in their teaching careers while they learn, work, and get paid in Iowa schools.

Through the grant program, school districts will be required to partner with local community colleges or four-year colleges/universities to provide the required education and training. The DOE and IWD will provide up to \$40,500 over a three-year period for each high school student that completes the Paraeducator Certificate or Associates degree model. The DOE will provide up to \$47,000 over a two-year period for each paraeducator that completes the bachelor’s degree model. Funding will support:

- Tuition and fees up to \$7,000/year for up to three years at a community college.
- Tuition and fees up to \$17,000/ year for up to two years at a public or private four-year college/university.
- Hourly rate of \$12 for high school aides while still in school and 50% of wages that districts currently pay for aides and paraeducators for up to 30 hours per week for 36 weeks.

The grant application, deadlines and further information can be found [here](#).

*(Info from Iowa Department of Education and the Office of the Governor)*

## **Governor Reynolds Announces Iowa Health Careers Apprenticeship Grant**

During the 2022 Condition of the State Address, Gov. Reynolds announced the new Iowa Health Careers Registered Apprenticeship Program aimed at both providing high school students with the opportunity to explore health care careers while getting paid and helping to address the health care workforce shortage.

“Solving Iowa’s health care work force shortage requires a broad and wholistic approach comprised of both short and long-term strategies and investments,” said Gov. Reynolds. “There’s no better place to start than in our high schools—introducing students to simulated and hands-on learning in the health care field that could potentially turn into a life-long career. Our communities and health care industry will benefit greatly from developing these public-private partnerships and innovative collaborations.”

The grant recipients will establish a new, or expand an existing, high school-based Registered Apprenticeship program modeled on the Patient Care Registered Apprenticeship Program launched last year at the Career Academy of Pella.

The WorkSMART Connector Patient Care Registered Apprenticeship -- the first of its kind in Iowa -- takes advantage of virtual reality training and real-world work experience with a local nursing facility and hospital. Before they leave high school, students can become a certified nursing assistant and be qualified for employment in a variety of health care careers, including medical surgical tech, lab tech, and phlebotomist. With some additional education after high school, they can also become qualified for employment as an OB tech or emergency department tech, become an RN or earn a BSN degree — all while getting paid.

Award amounts may vary depending on the scope of the project, but can be utilized to purchase equipment, training materials, uniforms and other costs required to implement the program. Awardees will receive supplemental assistance from the State of Iowa to acquire simulation software and hardware to further enhance apprentices’ educational

experience and readiness for the field.

The application process will open beginning January 12. Applications and further information can be found [here](#).

*(Info from the Office of the Governor and [earnandlearn.iowa.gov](http://earnandlearn.iowa.gov))*

## Environmental Protection

### DNR Reminds Iowans About Notable Livestock Environmental Regulations

On Monday, December 21, 2021, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued a series of press releases dealing with state law concerning the environmental regulation of animal feeding operations. The first release reminds Iowa livestock farmers that confinements with liquid manure—have application restrictions that start on December 21, 2021. DNR observed that dry conditions and warm weather provided an early harvest and manure application season. But here are a few reminders, if winter application is still necessary.

Runoff into our streams is more likely to occur during winter manure application. State law limits liquid manure application for confinement operations (roofed facilities) with more than 500 animal units. Restrictions on applying manure to snow-covered ground began December 21<sup>st</sup> and continue until April 1<sup>st</sup>. Liquid manure cannot be applied to fields covered with 1 inch of snow or 0.5 inches of ice, except in an emergency. Starting February 1<sup>st</sup>, applying liquid manure on frozen ground is also restricted until April 1<sup>st</sup>. Call the local DNR field office prior to any emergency application. Be sure to update your manure management plan records. Other limits may apply if you took credit for injection or incorporation as part of a construction permit application using the Master Matrix. Winter land application of liquid manure from confinements is allowed when producers can inject or incorporate manure on the same date, and when the ground is not frozen or snow-covered.

#### *Rules for all producers*

While limits on winter land application do not apply to open feedlots, dry manure and small confinement producers, all producers must prevent water quality violations. Often, they can help protect water quality by using common sense, and choosing application areas far from a stream on flat land with little snow cover. All surface land application must follow setbacks from buildings and environmentally sensitive areas. Look for more information on winter application rules on DNR's animal feeding operations webpages. When winter application is necessary, find 10 more tips for safe application in the [Iowa Manure Management Action Group's November 2019 newsletter](#).

A second press release concerned manure applicator training that begins in January for commercial and confinement site applicators. Commercial manure applicators had the opportunity to fulfill annual training and certification requirements at most county Extension and Outreach offices, on January 6, 2022. The two-hour training for confinement Site Applicator training begins in January and continues through late February. Most county Extension offices offer training, but you must preregister. Dry and solid manure handlers can pick from six training sessions in February, which meet the requirements for both commercial and confinement manure applicators. Sessions begin at 1 p.m. and preregistration is required. Those unable to attend a scheduled session can:

- schedule a training session at a county Extension office.
- make an appointment to take a test at DNR field offices
- or take training online.

To find out more about manure applicator certification on DNR's animal feeding operations [webpages](#).

The third press release noted that DNR reminded the Iowa State Association of Counties in early December that counties interested in evaluating construction permits for proposed animal feeding facilities must adopt a construction

evaluation resolution. Kelli Book, DNR attorney commented--“Although county boards must submit the resolution to DNR between January 1st and 31<sup>st</sup> of 2022, this reminder allows extra time for boards to consider their decision.” On average, 88 counties pass a resolution each year, allowing them to review construction permit applications required for larger, totally roofed animal feeding operations (confinements).

Producers in counties that file the resolutions must meet additional standards in their construction permits than sites in other counties. They must earn points on a master matrix by choosing a site and using practices that reduce effects on the environment and the community.

The Master Matrix development, submittal and approval process allows applicants and county supervisors to discuss options for site selection, facility type and management. The county submits a recommendation to the DNR on the permit application after reviewing the master matrix items the applicant selected. Counties that participate in the master matrix process may accompany DNR on site visits to proposed locations. The county board of supervisors may also appeal the DNR’s preliminary approval of a permit to the Environmental Protection Commission. County boards of supervisors may approve the resolutions at any time, but must submit resolutions between January 1 and 31, 2022. More information is available from the Iowa State Association of Counties at [www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org).

## Human Resources

### Health and Human Services Alignment Working Towards Merging State Agencies

Throughout the legislative interim, the Iowa Department of Public Health and Iowa Department of Human Services have evaluated the areas of overlap and duplication between the two state agencies. This week, the departments presented to the House Human Resources Committee that the plan is to remove silos between agencies by moving toward a one-agency structure.

“To meet the ever-evolving health and human service needs of Iowans, we need to provide the people of Iowa well-connected access to services and supports, and more consistent communication and support to state and local partners.” DHS and DPH are currently receiving feedback from stakeholders regarding the preliminary plan. House Republicans look forward to reviewing the plan as it is brought forward this legislative session.

To learn more about the alignment process, click [here](#).

## Information Technology

### \$210M Awarded for Broadband Access

Recently, Governor Reynolds and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) announced the latest recipients of the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grants Program.



Funding of more than \$210M for new broadband infrastructure has been awarded to 160 applicants as part of the latest investment in expanding broadband across the state, announced in October 2021. Award announcements can be found online [here](#).

Projects awarded under this grant opportunity will bring more than \$526 million of new broadband infrastructure investment to Iowa, serving over 39,000 homes, schools, and businesses. To date, the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program has awarded grant funding that will result in over \$880 million in new broadband investment, reaching approximately 115,000 homes, schools, and businesses upon the completion of grant-funded projects.

The OCIO will expedite an additional federally-funded grant opportunity in the first half of 2022 to continue expanding access to broadband in unserved and rural areas across Iowa which have not been built out in the previous grant opportunities.

## Judiciary

### State of the Judiciary

On Wednesday, Chief Justice Christensen delivered her condition of the Judiciary speech. The Chief Justice was appointed to the Iowa Supreme Court in 2018 and selected as chief justice in February 2020.

Even though decisions related to COVID have hindered some court functions, the Chief Justice focused on the successes of 2021. She presented an optimistic look at the future of the courts and the importance of keeping courts assessable for all Iowans.

Highlights of Judicial Branch 2021 accomplishments:

- Distributive work program- This allows counties in a judicial district to share work to better manage workloads throughout each of the eight judicial districts.
- Improvements in court rooms. Acoustic improvements were made that included new technology in almost every courtroom. This includes sound systems and strategically placed microphones.
- Continuing as a leader in research and education on procedural fairness and access to justice.
- Increased adult learning for judges and other court staff to help ensure justice is served equally, no matter where you live in the state.
- Taskforce was created to evaluate policies established during COVID and determine what rules, policies and practices that should be kept, modified, or removed. After careful review, the Chief Justice issued a new order to clarify and simplify the policies. One of the largest changes allows a significant number of court hearings to occur over video call instead of in person.

Comprehensive revision to criminal procedure rules. This will streamline the rules, fill in the gaps and ensure the rules are working best for both prosecution and defense attorneys.



### Top 25 Job Postings in Iowa

Every month, Iowa Workforce Development analyzes the top 25 job postings on IowaWorks.gov. The top 25 job postings in Iowa as of December 14, 2021 are as follows:

1. Registered Nurses—5,192
2. Nursing Assistants—1,704
3. Retail Salespersons—1,155
4. Customer Service Representatives—1,063
5. Licensed Practice and Licensed Vocational Nurses—1,006
6. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers—890
7. Physicians and Surgeons, All Other—729
8. Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners—687
9. Security Guards—611
10. First-Line Supervisors and Food Preparation and Serving Workers—594
11. Managers, All Other—589
12. Cooks, Restaurant—567
13. Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand—552
14. First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers—528
15. First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers—515
16. Physical Therapists—513
17. General and Operations Managers—512
18. Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers—501
19. Occupational Therapists—489
20. Speech-Language Pathologists—482
21. Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food—466
22. Teacher Assistants—465
23. Production Workers, All Other—441
24. Accountants—393
25. Driver/Sales Workers—388

Right now, there are 83,709 jobs posted on the Iowa Works website, with job postings changing daily. The top five employers who have the largest number of job openings are as follows:

1. UnityPoint Health—2,002
2. The University of Iowa—1,494
3. Hy-Vee, Inc.—1,132
4. Accura HealthCare—786
5. Mercy Medical Center—690

To view job openings by county click [here](#).

*(Info from Iowa Workforce Development and IowaWorks.gov)*

### **DNR Notes January Antlerless Deer Season to be Held in Five Iowa Counties**

On Monday, December 20, 2021, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued a press release announcing that Iowa hunters have the opportunity to hunt deer in Allamakee, Appanoose, Decatur, Wayne and Winneshiek counties beginning January 11, 2022, after the threshold was met to hold the January antlerless season. For the January antlerless season to be held, eligible counties had to have at least 100 unsold resident antlerless deer tags on the third Monday of December. Hunters may purchase licenses for the January antlerless season wherever licenses are sold beginning December 20, 2021 and use shotguns, handguns, muzzleloaders, bows or rifles to harvest deer. All other deer hunting rules remain in effect. The season ends on January 23, 2022.

Resident antlerless licenses available as of December 20, 2021:

- Allamakee, 1269
- Appanoose, 869
- Decatur, 698
- Wayne, 1335
- Winneshiek, 796

### **DNR Notes Safety Tip to Stay Safe as Iowa Lakes Freeze Over**

As recent blasts of arctic air invade Iowa, ice is growing on lakes and ponds across the state. Anglers are increasing able to get out for the popular early ice fishing season.

A blanket of snow on top of an ice-covered lake insulates the ice, slowing the growth of ice and hiding potential hazards or weak spots. River ice is 15 percent weaker than lake ice. Ice with a bluish color is safer than clear ice. Avoid slushy or honey-combed ice and stay away from dark spots on the ice. Don't walk into areas where the snow cover looks discolored.

#### *Safety Tips on the Ice*

- No ice is 100 percent safe.
- New ice is usually stronger than old ice.
- Don't go out alone - if the worst should happen, someone will be there to call for help or to help rescue.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will return.
- Check ice thickness as you go out - there could be pockets of thin ice or places where ice recently formed.
- Avoid off-colored snow or ice. It is usually a sign of weakness.
- The insulating effect of snow slows down the freezing process.

Bring along these basic items to help keep you safe: hand warmers, ice cleats to help prevent falls, ice picks (wear around your neck) to help you crawl out of the water if you fall in, a life jacket, a floating safety rope, a whistle to call for help, a basic first aid kit and extra dry clothes including a pair of gloves.

## Public Safety

### Emergency Contact Information Now Available on Drivers Licenses

In a state of over 3 million people, the Iowa legislature remains a place where individual Iowans can make a big difference. Last year, a family approached several Representatives and asked them to consider a bill that allows Iowans to designate emergency contacts on their drivers' licenses. The family became passionate about this bill after their son died from injuries sustained in a car accident and first responders struggled to contact them.

House File 435 was put together with help of the family, Iowa DOT and Representatives. The bill allows Iowans to designate individuals to be listed in an electronic database assessable only to the Department of Transportation and law enforcement. These emergency contacts would only be used when a person dies, is unconscious or seriously injured and unable to communicate with first responders. Having access to emergency contacts can help families find loved ones in a medical emergency and will assist medical providers when health decisions must be made.

The Iowa DOT has now put the emergency contact program online, and Iowans can sign up here.

<https://iowadot.gov/mvd/Emergency-Contact-Information> Up to two individuals can be designated as emergency contacts. The form takes just a few moments to fill out and can save law enforcement significant time in the case of an emergency. Iowans also have the option to opt out of being an emergency contact.

While the reason for the bill is heartbreaking, House Republicans were pleased to help a family as they worked to help others avoid the problems they faced. The new law went in to affect January 1<sup>st</sup> this year.

## State Government

### DC Democrats Again Look to Dismantle Election Integrity

Since September 2021, President Biden and Washington liberals have been pushing the colossal \$1.75 trillion spending bill, "Build Back Better." However, even members of his own party have not been able to support the legislation as the Democrats have repeatedly stumbled to gain momentum in the U.S. Senate. After three months of failure, Biden and the rest of the Democrats have once again shifted their focus towards sweeping federal reforms to voting rights aimed at overturning state Voter ID laws.

This, unfortunately, is not a new tactic for the Democrats as they've continued to botch passage of their legislative priorities. In June, S. 2093, the so-called "[For the People Act](#)" was brought to the U.S. Senate floor for consideration of debate and failed to get support outside of the Democratic caucus for the legislation to proceed. S. 2093, was a massive overreaching 888-page piece of legislation aimed at wresting control over elections away from states in order to concentrate electoral power in Washington, DC. This legislation has been a top priority for national Democrats for several years. With full control of Congress and the presidency, Democrats attempted to force this federal power grab to maintain their federal control.

A new version of the Democrats federal takeover of elections was introduced in September. S. 2747, Freedom to Vote Act is receiving new attention as this past week Democrats and Biden have called for changing Senate Rules and eliminating the filibuster in order to pass sweeping voting reforms. The filibuster requires 60 votes for the Senate to

end debate on a bill and proceed to a vote. The filibuster has prevented highly partisan legislation that didn't even have full Democratic support in the Senate from becoming law. Eliminating the filibuster dramatically changes how federal laws are passed and gives the Democrat trifecta in DC free reign to trample efforts by states to ensure fair and honest elections. Such a move would be, as Senator Joe Biden said in 2005, **“an example of arrogance of power”** and a “fundamental power grab by the majority party.”

Between S. 2093, S. 2747, and the threat of eliminating the filibuster, Iowa is at risk of having our strong voter ID laws stripped away. Even though 75% of those polled support voter ID laws, according to a March Rasmussen poll. Beyond nullifying Iowa's voter ID requirements, Democrats are trying to reverse Iowa's newly enacted attempts to stop ballot harvesting. This legislative session the Iowa House Republicans put forth a strong election integrity bill that was signed into law. One of the cornerstones of that bill was preventing a person to return as many ballots as possible. If enacted, states would be required to allow paid campaign staffers and operatives to collect absentee ballots.

By eliminating the election safeguards enacted by Iowa House Republicans, the door is wide open for political campaigns to deceive voters or even fake voters' ballots. This last session, Republicans enacted protections for voters to prohibit political operatives from “harvesting” ballots by prohibiting them from returning ballots for Iowa voters. Additionally, the designated delivery agents created by newly passed election laws would allow certain individuals to return ballots for Iowans who want the assistance. The Republican backed law holds these delivery agent's accountable that they are who they say they are and that they are delivering the ballot on behalf of a specific voter. Allowing random paid campaign staffers to go door to door and take ballots would open Iowa's elections to fraud and wrongdoing.

Routine voter registration maintenance, another broadly popular election practice would be stripped from the states by Washington Democrats. Again, Democrats have tried to convince everyone that maintaining accurate and up to date rolls of registered voters is “voter suppression.” However, the Pew Research Center poll conducted before the 2020 election showed that 77% of those polled supported automatic removal of inaccurate and duplicate registrations from voter lists.

S. 2747 has one insidious provision that restricts states from removing local election officials who would oversee federal elections. House Republicans last year passed the law to ensure that election officials are held to a high standard of performance and establishing recourse for when an elected official defies the laws of the state or does not act in the best interest of the voter. This bill protects local elections officials who have been found to have willfully failed to conduct their election duties.

The talking points from national Democrats are that this bill is needed as a response to states passing their own election integrity bills this past spring. However, these bills in previous forms have passed the House before. These bills are not reactionary to laws passed by conservative states, but a push by the radical progressive left to gain as much control over elections as possible while they have the power.

The talking point falsely accusing Republicans of voter suppression doesn't hold up to scrutiny. In the 2020 general election, an election that required voters show an ID, Iowa saw the largest turnout since 1900 with 76% of registered voters casting a ballot. Following the enactment of the two strong election integrity bills passed by House Republicans last year, school and city elections in 2021 saw an increase of about 67,000 voters. Voters have continued to participate and vote because of the confidence in the election process in Iowa.

Once again Democrats have pivoted from failed legislation to attacking state's rights to conduct secure and fair elections. Fearing defeat at the ballot box, DC Democrats are again saying they know better than Iowa on how to conduct Iowa's elections. House Republicans have through the years continued to strengthen and enforce the integrity of our elections, without the federal government.

## Transportation

### Electric Vehicles Begin to Pay Additional Registration Charge

This January, Iowa began charging the entire annual registration fee to electric vehicles (EV) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEV). These vehicles use no (EV) or little (PHEV) gasoline or diesel fuel, while still using the transportation infrastructure of roads and bridges.

In 2019, the legislature passed a bill that phased in the creation of a supplemental registration fee for electric vehicles to make the Road Use Tax Fund whole. The bill also created an excise fee for hydrogen and electric fuel. To learn more about the bill, click [here](#).

As of July 1, 2021, Iowa had the below number of vehicles registered and fees collected from electric vehicles.

Fuel types	Vehicles registered	EV/PHEV transactions	EV/PHEV fees collected
EV	3,200	3,553	\$284,364.89
PHEV	3,183	3,575	\$145,649.33
TOTAL	6,383	7,128	\$430,014.22

## Veterans Affairs

### Iowa Veterans Home Releases Annual Report

Recently, the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown released its [annual report](#). As Iowa's largest nursing home that serves Iowa veterans and their spouses, IVH remains a 5-star facility as rated by CMS.

In the report, Commandant Matt Peterson notes that IVH faces similar challenges as all Iowa nursing homes are currently facing. "Primary challenges for the Iowa Veterans Home include admissions, recruiting and retention. Admissions have decreased since the onset of the pandemic from 99% of our capacity to 77%. The additional stress on staff at the Iowa Veterans Home has resulted in an increase in resignations and retirements, which have been difficult to replace because of the intense demand for nurses caused by a national shortage."

## Ways & Means

### Tax Cuts for Individuals and Retirees Headlines Governor's Tax Plan

This week the governor made several tax-related recommendations in her annual State of the State address. The provisions reduce taxes on individual income, retirement income, and corporate income.

For individual income tax, the Governor recommends (beginning in tax year 2023) implementing four tax brackets ranging from 4.4 percent to 6.0 percent. After that, her plan eliminates the top rate annually until a 4 percent flat tax rate is achieved in tax year 2026.

Another change the Governor recommends is fully exempting retirement income. Her recommendation is that beginning in tax year 2023, Iowans age 55 and older would be exempt from state tax on retirement income earned from individual retirement account (IRA) distributions, taxable pensions, and annuities. Additionally, the Governor's plan includes that beginning in tax year 2023, Iowa farmers 55 and older who farmed for at least 10 years but have retired from farming operations can elect an exemption of income from either cash rent or farm crop shares for all years the income is earned or elect one, lifetime election to exclude the net capital gains from the sale of farmland.

Finally, the Governor's plan includes a reduction in corporate income tax. Her recommendation is that for every fiscal year in which net corporate income tax receipts exceed \$700 million, the surplus will be used to buy down the current top rate. The Department of Revenue would determine the new top corporate income tax rate and apply it effective January 1 of the following tax year. The rates will continue to be bought down until a uniform 5.5 percent corporate income tax rate is achieved. Once the rate is capped, excess tax revenue beyond \$700 million will go into the state's general fund.

A bill containing these provisions (and likely others) has not been filed yet. When it is, the House Ways and Means Committee will be ready to begin working on the best way to return the state surplus to hard-working Iowans as well as ensure they keep more of their money in the future.

## November Iowa Poll

### Republicans Roll Into 2022 Session With Momentum

In November, *The Des Moines Register* published the results of their latest Iowa Poll. Among the key findings were: Governor Reynolds approve/disapprove rating was 51/43. Comparatively, President Biden's approve/disapprove rating was 33/62.

The Governor's highest job approval ratings come from Republicans at 88% along with 69% of rural Iowans. An impressive 60% of parents of children under 18 also approve of her job performance. Other groups that strongly approve of the Governor's performance were men at 60% and Iowans between the ages of 35 to 54. The key result to remember is that parents of school age children gave Gov. Reynolds a 60% approval rating.

Among fellow Republicans, the Governor fared well with 88% saying they approve of the job she is doing which outpaced both Senator Ernst with GOP support at 80% and Senator Grassley at 71%. The GOP led Legislature rolled in at 73% approval among Republicans.

The least surprising finding was Reynolds' low grade from Democrats which disapproved at an 86% rate. While independent voters were split with 47% approve and 46% disapprove.

Iowans' overall approval of the state Legislature registered at 46% approval and 30% disapproval. While 49% say Iowa is headed in the right direction and 42% say Iowa is on the wrong track.

On overarching issues, Governor Reynolds approval rating on the economy was 56%. Her approval rating on handling COVID-19 was 52% and on schools/education it was 52%.

In October, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed a new state law saying employers who require COVID-19 vaccinations must allow exemptions for workers who cite religious or medical reasons.

The law protects both health care and religious freedom by providing legal ways to opt out of COVID-19 vaccine mandates in the workplace. The new law was supported by 52% of Iowan adults and opposed by just 39%. More

Republicans support the law than Democrats. Seventy-five percent of Republicans favor the law, compared to just 24% of Democrats and 51% of independents.

Mask mandate in Iowa schools also split Iowans on partisan lines when it comes to whether parents or school districts should have ultimate authority.

Statewide, 51% of Iowans think that decision should be left up to parents, 45% think school districts should be allowed to require students to wear masks, and 3% are unsure.

Interestingly, 85% of Republicans think the decision should be left to parents while 88% of Democrats think school districts should decide. Political independents are split, with 48% saying parents should have the final say, and 47% saying districts should be able to require masks.

Parents of school age children remain strong in their support for Republicans on the issue of masks with 61% of Iowans with children younger than 18 believing parents should have the final say on whether students wear masks. Only 36% of parents of children younger than 18 think school districts should be able to require masks.

President Biden lost Iowa to former President Trump by nine percentage points in November of 2020. Since then, Biden's job approval has tanked in spectacular fashion. He has not seen net positive territory in Iowa since March of 2021 when 47% of Iowans approved and 44% disapproved.

In November just 33% of Iowans approved of Biden's performance as President and an amazing 62% disapproved with 6% somehow unsure.

On top issues, the President is not doing well. Only 24% approve of his handling of immigration while 66% disapprove.

On criminal justice only 28% of Iowans approve, while 53% disapprove. Interestingly, 60% of Democrats actually approve.

When it comes to the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan only 22% of Iowans approve and 68% disapprove. On the economy, 32% of Iowans approve and 61% disapprove.

On COVID-19, and prior to the rise of the Omicron variant, just 41% of Iowans approved and 57% disapproved. It would be interesting to see how far that number has fallen since November.