



August 26, 2023

There were record crowds at the Iowa State Fair this year, weather was great and fun to see all the 4H and FFA competitions, the largest animals especially the 3,000 lb. bull, the famous Bill Riley Talent Stage, and the grandstand entertainment at night.

It seems ironic to see pumpkin spice and Halloween candy in stores, with the extreme heat we have been experiencing. Kids back to school, and Friday night football are all signs of Fall.

Two weeks ago, I did a ride a long with the Dubuque police department. I was invited by the Dubuque Police and Scott Nelson, the Dubuque County Attorney. Dubuque was chosen because it is a larger city to observe. I am going to submit a bill that makes it a felony to assault a police officer, instead of a misdemeanor. Now someone who assaults an officer can be released on a signature bond and out by 8:00 a.m.

I met with Officer Hoffman and his canine Wisco, at 11:00 p.m. My mom always told me that nothing good happens after midnight, and this experience proved so true. I witnessed many calls throughout the city. From fights, drug overdose, outstanding warrants, a drunk driver who overturned his car right in the city, and I walked through pepper spray. Wisco, a German Shepard is invaluable, his bark alone can subdue a large crowd. Officer Hoffman asked me around 2:30 a.m. if I was tired, “No way,” I responded my adrenaline was on overtime, which kept me awake all night. I left at 4:00 a.m. I have always had respect for the police, and this just solidified it for the good they do protecting us. The Dubuque Police Department has the upmost respect for Attorney Nelson for prosecuting the “bad guys”.

Agriculture

IDALS Awards 11 Grants to Support Specialty Crop Producers

On Wednesday, August 23, 2023, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) issued a press release in which Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig announced over \$355,000 in grants to help grow demand for Iowa’s specialty crops. The funding will be distributed to support 11

projects that raise awareness about, drive demand for, or create new markets benefiting Iowa's specialty crops. The grant dollars are made available through a partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and are funded through the Farm Bill.

The specialty crop block grants will be awarded to the following organizations to assist with the following initiatives:

- *Iowa State University*
 - Helping Iowa farmers get sweet corn to market earlier: Evaluating sweet corn cultivars for emergence and vigor in cold soils.
 - Pest and pesticide resistance monitoring for Iowa fruit growers.
 - Improving the quality of Iowa red wines by increasing the tannins through the use of grape stems.
 - Developing accurate yield estimation methods for Iowa vineyards and wineries.
 - Iowa Kids Garden Day: Launching a statewide celebration of specialty crop gardening at Iowa K-12 schools and early childhood education centers.
- *Practical Farmers of Iowa*
 - Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall: Investigating seasonal growing strategies by trialing a multitude of season extension practices.
 - On-farm food safety upgrades for fruit and vegetable growers to access more markets.
- *Iowa Specialty Crop Producers Association*
Providing for the Iowa Specialty Producers Conference.
- *Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development*
Increasing markets for specialty cut flowers in northeast Iowa through the development of a regional flower hub toolkit.
- *Lutheran Services in Iowa*
Increasing wholesale markets for refugee specialty crop producers in Iowa.
- *Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation*
Vegging out to increase nutrition and agriculture knowledge.

Commerce

Summit Carbon Capture Pipeline Hearings Begin

This week, the Iowa Utilities Board began its hearing on a proposed 687-mile hazardous liquid pipeline to transport liquefied carbon dioxide within Iowa by Summit Carbon.

Summit Carbon initially filed its petition for a hazardous liquid pipeline permit January 2022.

The hearing has meetings currently scheduled on Tuesdays-Thursdays in Fort Dodge until September 7th.

This past session, the Iowa House passed House File 565 to require a liquefied carbon dioxide pipeline company to get voluntary easements for 90% of the affected route miles before being granted the right to

use eminent domain. This bill additionally modified how a landowner can bring a claim for damages. The bill did not pass the Senate this year but remains alive for the 2024 session.

Education

As the School Year Begins, What Resources Do Parents Have?

These are the general steps that may be taken by parents, guardians and community members when they have concerns about public school districts or their governing boards.

Local Remedies

Parents, guardians and community members should work with district staff to resolve disagreements or concerns. Potential actions include:

- Contact the teacher or service provider
- Contact the principal or direct supervisor for assistance
- Contact the superintendent
- Contact the school board
- Make a formal request of or complaint to the school board

Some formal requests are made of local boards on a routine basis, such as open-enrollment. School boards may also take action on requests made of them by parents, guardians and community members that are not routinely found on the agenda. An example might be a request to review curricular materials. Parents, guardians and community members should read and understand their local board's policies on making requests or filing complaints.

If a local school board makes a decision on a formal request, it may be subject to administrative review by the state board or the director of the Department and/or to further challenge in district court ([Iowa Code 290.1](#)).

House File (HF) 868 signed by the Governor on June 8, 2021 includes a requirement for a local board of directors of a school district to add a proposal to its agenda that is specified on a petition filed in accordance with law within 30 days of receipt of the petition. The petition must be signed by eligible electors of a school district equal to at least 10% of the persons who voted in the last preceding election of school officials, or 500 eligible electors, whichever is less.

[Petition Process Guidance](#) - Provides school districts, local school boards, and eligible district voters with information related to the petition process.

Calls to the Department of Education

Parents or guardians who call the Department are generally provided with the contact information for the [school improvement consultant](#) who serves their area of the state. Consultants ask the same questions of all parents to determine how to handle their concerns, many of which help inform parents of potential next steps. In general, before the Department can or should take action that interferes with the local process for dispute resolution, parents should exhaust all opportunities available to them to settle disagreements by engaging with the district.

If the Department is contacted about any of the following, intervention may be required:

- Potential violation of the rights of a student with a disability, including bullying
- Potential bullying or harassment of a student on the part of a staff member
- Potential harm to a child or student
- Any other act in disregard of legal requirements that places students or staff at risk

Board of Educational Examiners

Parents and guardians may file a complaint with the Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE), if appropriate. Department of Education staff are required to file a report of any misconduct suspected of an educator licensed by the BOEE (Iowa Code § 272.15(2)).

Appeals and Petitions to the Director of the Department of Education

Appeals

Certain decisions may be appealed to the director of the Iowa Department of Education as outlined in specific state statutes. [View specific Iowa Code references, procedures and timelines for specific appeal types.](#)

Petition for Review of Accreditation

[Iowa Code 256.11](#), subsection 10, paragraph "b" requires the Department to conduct an accreditation review for any district or accredited nonpublic school if:

1. A petition is filed with the director of the department signed by a number of eligible electors residing in the district equal to at least 20% of the registered voters of the school district, or
2. A petition is filed with the director of the department signed by 20% or more of the parents or guardians who have children enrolled in the school or school district.

State Board

The State Board of Education may hear from parents, guardians and community members if they have exhausted their local remedies. There are formal and informal options for bringing issues before the state board.

Informal

Parents, guardians, or community members may always speak during public comment at state board meetings. Public comment may also be taken in print and read at the meeting if the board president chooses to do so.

State board members have iowa.gov email addresses and receive messages from members of the public regularly.

Community members may provide information to the state board as a group, such as a letter or informal petition.

Formal

The state board hears formal appeals from students, parents, or guardians. View specific Iowa Code and Iowa Administrative Code references and timelines for formal appeals.

District Court

Certain final decisions by a local school board will give rise to a right for the injured party to pursue the issue in district court. This is only true for final action of the local board for some decisions.

Only individuals sufficiently impacted by the board's decision will have the ability to challenge the decision in district court.

(Info from Iowa Department of Education)

Environmental Protection

Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Awards Presented to 39 Farm Families at the 2023 Iowa State Fair

On Wednesday, August 16, 2023, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) issued a press release in which Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, Lieutenant Governor Adam Gregg, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, and Department of Natural Resources Director Kayla Lyon recognized 39 Iowa farm families with Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Awards at the Iowa State Fair.

The award acknowledges farmers who take voluntary actions to improve and protect our state's natural resources while serving as leaders in their communities. These farm families use proven in-field and edge-of-field practices such as cover crops, no-till, wetlands, bioreactors and saturated buffers, among many others, that support the goals of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy by holding soil in place and improving water quality. These worthy recipients recognize that the benefits of conservation practices extend beyond their fields, and their leadership encourages others to adopt similar conservation practices.

Health and Human Services

Mental Health Rate Increases in Effect

This session, the Iowa Legislature continued to prioritize expanding access to mental health care in every corner of the state by passing bills to recruit and retain mental health providers in Iowa. One of those bills provided \$13 million in increased state funding towards mental health and substance abuse Medicaid rates. In total with federal funding, this is over \$35 million increase to ensure that the state can recruit and retain mental health providers to care for Iowans in need. These increases came based on a Medicaid rate review that compared Iowa's mental health rates to Medicare and surrounding states.

Iowa Medicaid recently announced exactly how the rate increases will be distributed between providers.

- \$7 million of the state increase is for individual psychotherapy session. This amounts to a 18.23% increase in rates for those fee schedules.
- \$3 million for increases Psychiatric Medical Institutions for Children (PMIC) services. With this increase, the PMIC per diem rate will be \$464.95.
- \$3 million for increases to substance use providers. This increase is a 96.47% increase to substance abuse rates.

(Contact: Natalie Ginty 5-2063)

Judiciary

New School Year...More Student Privacy

During the 2023 legislative session, parents across Iowa contacted members of the legislature concerned about the privacy of their children in school. There were reports of male students using female changing rooms, bathrooms, and at least one instance of female students forced to share a hotel room with a male student on a school trip. House Republicans know that violating the privacy of these minor boys and girls not only places unneeded mental stress upon them but places them in a position that no child should have to navigate. Senate File 482 was created to address this issue and ensure that students, nearly all of them minors, are not forced to share a space with students of the opposite sex while they are using the restroom or changing clothes. The bill passed both the House and Senate and took effect March 22, 2023.

Senate File 482 is simple and straightforward, it requires schools to designate bathrooms and changing rooms for either boys or girls. Girls are required to use a girl's bathroom or changing room and boys are

required to use a boy's bathroom or changing room. If there is any conflict or confusion, the sex listed on the child's original birth certificate clarifies what facility the child shall use. These requirements also apply when there are extracurricular activities outside of the school building. This ensures girls and boys each have the privacy they should expect in a school.

If a child wants greater privacy than provided by law, their parents can send a letter to the school requesting a reasonable accommodation. A reasonable accommodation does not allow a boy to use a girl's bathroom or vice versa but does allow the child access to a single occupancy restroom or changing area, or controlled use of faculty restrooms or changing areas.

There are exceptions to the bill for parents assisting a child who cannot use the restroom or changing room by themselves, janitorial and maintenance staff if the room is empty, allowing access to anyone providing emergency medical care, and in a disaster or emergency where it is necessary to protect students from a threat.

The new law also gives a clear course of action if a person believes the law has been violated. Potential violations should be addressed to the school first and after that a person can file a complaint with the Attorney General. That complaint must include a copy of the written notice provided to the school and a signed statement describing the violation. The Attorney General must investigate the claim and can pursue legal action if it is warranted.

Protecting the privacy of children should be a priority for all adults. Children shouldn't be subjected to destructive and anti-common sense gender ideology and should have their privacy protected in their school setting.

Labor

Average Length of Iowa Unemployment Claim is Falling Following RCM

Eighteen months after Iowa revamped its approach to unemployment and began providing earlier job search assistance to people seeking unemployment benefits, the average length of an unemployment claim has dropped to its lowest level in more than 55 years.

A recent review of Iowa Workforce Development data shows that unemployment claims lasted for an average of 10.7 weeks in calendar year 2022 – 10.1 weeks for the 12 months that ended May 31, 2023.

Those are the lowest figures that statistic has seen since claims lasted for an average 9.7 weeks in 1967.

The shorter average duration follows Iowa's adoption of its new Reemployment Case Management (RCM) system in January 2022. RCM created a new requirement that unemployment claimants have weekly contact with IWD Career Planners starting with the first week of their unemployment claims. Career Planners review job searches, discuss job interviews, and provide direct assistance to clients by making connections to training and educational opportunities in high-demand careers.

"The numbers clearly show that the Reemployment Case Management program is making a difference," said Beth Townsend, Executive Director of Iowa Workforce Development. "By providing job-seeking Iowans with more assistance as soon as they become unemployed, we are shortening the time between the loss of one job and the acquisition of the next, returning unemployment to what it was always intended to be – a bridge between jobs."

"We have received feedback from around the country that our efforts are producing results that by any definition are an unprecedented success," Townsend said. "The RCM program will help ensure that Iowans find their next job more quickly and that employers have access to a steady stream of workers."

The launch of RCM coincided with an increased requirement than Iowa unemployment claimants complete at least four "reemployment activities" during each week they file a benefit claim – at least three of which are required to be job applications.

Also in 2022, the Iowa Legislature reduced the maximum duration of benefits from 26 weeks to 16 weeks per year (except in the case of business closures, when the duration remains at 26 weeks).

Despite the reduction in the number of weeks of benefits provided, fewer Iowa unemployment recipients are using the full 16 weeks of benefits, according to IWD records.

Data show that slightly more than 15 percent of unemployment claimants exhausted their benefits in 2022, down from 22.3 percent the previous year (with a 26-week period). This was the lowest annual exhaustion rate since 1979, when the rate was 13.9 percent.

Earlier this year, the American Institute for Full Employment presented IWD with the organization's 2022 Full Employment Award – citing, among other things, the success of RCM and one three-month period in which Iowa had the second-lowest rate of exhausted unemployment benefits in the nation.

Commenting on Iowa's success, AIFE President John Courtney said then that it was "encouraging to see leading states like Iowa optimize their policies and processes and implement effective approaches to reemploy UI claimants and stabilize the economy."

Natural Resources

DNR State Forest Nursery Seedling Orders Start September 1st

On Tuesday, August 22, 2023, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued a press release announcing that the DNR State Forest Nursery is gearing up for fall 2023 and spring 2024 seedling orders.

Seedlings can be ordered September 1, 2023 through May 30, 2023. The bare-root (no container, soil root ball or moss included) seedlings are packaged in bundles of 25 inside sealed and labeled plastic bags. Tree varieties include 23 species of native hardwoods, eight evergreen species and 15 smaller trees and shrubs. Prices range from \$.80 to \$1.20 per seedling. Seedlings are sold in three age classifications, and range in size from 10-30 inches depending on the species.

Evergreens and a few other species are only available for spring delivery; all other species are available both spring and fall. Fall delivery is in November and spring delivery is in April and May. Customers can choose to have their order shipped or they can pick it up at the State Forest Nursery in Ames.

The DNR State Forest Nursery sells approximately 1 million seedlings per year, and 3-5 million seedlings are grown on-site at any given time. Located on 98 acres just south of Highway 30 in Ames, the nursery was established by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, and has operated continuously ever since. For more information, visit the online sales site at <http://nursery.iowadnr.gov/>

Veterans Affairs

Iowa Veterans Trust Fund Rules Move Through the Process

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently presented to the Administrative Rules Review Committee. These [rules](#) are meant to lower eligibility for the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund back to 2021 levels.

The Governor did approve \$440,000 of funding to cover the backlog of Iowa Veterans Trust Fund grants since November 2022. The Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs had been approving grants during this time without ensuring there were sufficient funds in the trust fund. These rules are meant to address this issue.

This session, the Iowa House unanimously passed House File 142 to increase the appropriation to the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund to \$800,000 annually, in addition to monthly interest revenue. Currently the fund receives \$500,000 annually from the Iowa Lottery to help eligible veterans and their families with emergency needs. The Iowa Senate chose not to advance this bill.

In 2022, the legislature allowed for an additional investment of the fund, which has resulted in significantly higher interest payments since going into effect.

FUN FACTS: About Ice Cream

Did you know many people prefer their ice cream served in cones.

The Daily Alliance reports that three gallons of milk are required to produce a single gallon of ice cream. That means one cow can produce between two and three gallons of ice cream per day.

The World Atlas reports that no country consumes more ice cream per capita than New Zealand. New Zealand is reportedly renowned for producing high-quality dairy products. The average New Zealander consumes 28.4 liters of ice cream per year. The United States and Australia are next in line.

Chocolate reigns supreme as the most popular ice cream flavor in the world.

According to Ben & Jerry's the new ice cream texture that develops after a pint melts and then re-freezes is the result of microscopic air bubbles that keep ice cream soft and fluffy.

You can contact me with your concerns or to subscribe to newsletter at: steven.bradley@legis.iowa.gov