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This newsletter is published quarterly. For more current information, check out our [weekly reports](#) during the legislative session and [breaking news](#).

Carlyn's Corner: Doing Good! A Voting Story.

by Carlyn Crowe, Iowa DD Council Public Policy Manager



There's great information in this infoNet about voting, but sometimes a good story makes a difference. So here's mine...

Recently I made a presentation to a group of caregivers about voting and advocacy. (By the way, voting is a form of advocacy!)

At this presentation I thought I made a great case about why voting is important and how decisions made on Election Day affect our lives every day after.

I used a fun exercise as an example of what to do if your vote isn't in the majority. Yes, there are lots of options, but advocacy is the best! Anyway, after the presentation several people walked up and said it was a good talk.

As I left, a woman walking out with me confessed that she was “one of those people who doesn’t vote.” She admitted my talk didn’t convince her. I pressed her to tell me what would convince her to vote. She said it doesn’t matter who you vote for, because they say one thing and then do whatever they want when they get elected.

Ouch! With some elected officials, unfortunately, she’s right. However I also know that most of our elected officials want to do GOOD things that make our lives better. That’s their job! Many times they don’t know what the GOOD things are or have a different definition of “GOOD.”

It’s our job to tell them what those GOOD things are and how they can make Iowans with disabilities’ lives better by doing GOOD.

Don’t give up your power to DO GOOD by not voting! Talk to the candidates, your friends and neighbors about how doing GOOD can affect you. Check out the candidate questions here for tips on how they can do GOOD. And go vote for GOOD!

YOUR Vote, YOUR Voice: A Simple Guide to Voting

Voting is one of the most powerful ways you can speak up about things that affect your life. When you vote, you help choose the people who make decisions about:

- Healthcare and disability services
- Public transportation
- Community accessibility
- Schools and jobs
- Laws that protect your rights
- Taxes

Your vote is important and it is your voice. People with disabilities have fought hard for the right to vote, the right to live in the community, and the right to be treated equally. Using your right to vote is one way to honor that work and to make sure your needs and opinions are heard by lawmakers. You also have legal rights that protect your ability to vote. Laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act require polling places and voting methods to be accessible to you.

This year’s November 3 election will give Iowans a choice in Governor, Congress, State Legislature, and all statewide offices (Attorney General, State Auditor, State Treasurer, Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of State). **With a little planning, voting is easy!**

Build Your Voting Plan Today! Having a plan makes voting easier and less stressful. Here are the main steps. You can learn more about each of these steps at the Secretary of State's [Voter Ready Iowa website](#).

STEP **1** **Check Your Registration**

In order to vote, you need to be registered and your voter registration must have your correct name and current address.

- Check if you are registered [here](#).
- Make sure your name is correct and your address is current.
- It is very easy to change your address - just contact your county auditor. They can make sure you bring the right proof of address. Find your county auditor [here](#).
- If you are not registered to vote, we encourage you to register **before the no-stress preregistration deadline** (15 days before the election). This year, the voter registration deadline is October 19, 2026.
- **Miss the deadline?** No worries - you can still register to vote at the polls on Election Day (November 3, 2026). You'll just have to bring your state-issued ID or driver's license and proof that you are living at your current address. If you find yourself in this situation, talk to your county auditor.

STEP **2** **Decide How You Want to Vote**

There are a few ways to vote. Pick the one that works best for you. You can choose to vote on Election day or one of the three options to vote early.

Voting by mail (absentee voting)

- You fill out your ballot at home.
- You mail it back (no postage required) or drop it off at your county auditor's office (or a

ballot dropbox).

- This is a good option if traveling or standing in line is hard for you.
- **You need to request this ahead of time** (you can ask for a ballot to be mailed to you now through October 19, 2026). Just remember you need to give the auditor time to mail the ballot to you and give yourself time to fill it out and mail it back. So don't wait to ask for a mail-in ballot if this is the option you choose! Contact [your county auditor](#) for the request form.

Voting early, in person

- Iowa allows voters to vote in-person before Election Day, starting October 14, 2026.
- Lines are often shorter (but not always!).
- You can visit at a time that works for you (and when you have transportation).
- Iowans can also vote early at a satellite voting office (usually in libraries, schools, community centers) or at their county auditor's office. All county auditor's offices are also open the Saturday before the election (October 31, 2026).
- The last day to vote early in person is Monday, November 2, 2026.

Voting on Election Day, in person

- You go to your assigned polling place. It's good to double check this since they can change. Find your polling place [here](#).
- Polling places must have accessible equipment, like machines with audio ballots, large print, or touchscreens. Poll workers can explain how the accessible machine works.
- It is a good idea to call your [county auditor](#) ahead of time to make sure which accessible options will be available to you at your polling site.
- **You also have the right to vote curbside, from your car.** It is best to call your county auditor to let them know you will be doing this, so they can alert the polling site. If you have a cell phone, you can call inside when you are curbside and they will bring the ballot to you. Otherwise you may need to have someone with you to let the poll workers know you are waiting to vote curbside.

STEP **3** **Plan Ahead & Be Prepared**

Iowa requires a government-issued ID to vote (passport, driver license or state ID). If you do not have one, you should have been mailed an alternative with a voter ID number. If you did not receive this, contact your [county auditor](#).

- You will also want to find [your polling place](#) address if voting in person.
- Make sure you know the deadlines for early voting, registration, and other voting

options. Put them in your calendar and set reminders. Here are a few important ones:

- **Registration deadline** (preregistering required by October 19, 2026).
- **Deadline to request a mail ballot** (if using one) - this year it is also October 19, 2026.
- **Election Day** (November 3, 2026; polls open 7 am to 8 pm). If voting by mail, your ballot must be delivered to your county auditor before the polls close on Election Day (Nov. 3 @ 8 pm).

Other things to consider when making your plan to vote:

- include access to transportation, timing, assistance needed, and communication barriers.
- **Transportation** - Do you need a ride? Political parties, candidates, and some organizations offer free rides to the polls.
- **Timing** - Is there a time of day that's easier for you, like when lines are shorter?
- **Assistance Needed** - Do you want to bring a support person, or ask a poll worker for help? Will you be voting curbside?
- **Communication** - Do you need materials in another form (large print, Braille, audio)?

Remember! You have the right to get the help you need to vote.

You have the right to bring someone you trust to help you vote, unless that person is your employer or union representative. You can also ask poll workers for help. Asking for help is normal and allowed. It does not take away your right to make your own choices. Some helpful resources to help with your voting plan:

- The National Disability Rights Network has an excellent, clear language guide for voters with disabilities [here](#).
- Your [local election office](#) can answer questions about registration, ID rules, and accessible voting options in your area.
- Disability rights organizations such as the [Iowa DD Council](#) or [Disability Rights Iowa](#) often help people register, plan, and get to the polls. The [Election Assistance Commission](#) has information about accessible voting.

A few reminders:

- You cannot be turned away just because you have a disability.
- If a polling place isn't accessible, you can ask for accommodations or curbside voting.
- Your vote is private. No one can force you to see your ballot or force you to vote a certain way.
- **If something goes wrong or you feel your rights aren't being respected, you can**

ask to speak with the poll manager, contact your county auditor, or call the Secretary of State's Voter Hotline: 1-888-SOS-VOTE (1-888-767-8683). The Secretary of State's staff is standing by to help on Election Day.

STEP 4 Learn About the Candidates

This step should happen at the same time you are making your plan. This is the hardest part of voting - learning about the candidates, what they stand for, and why they say you should vote for them.

- Go to your [county auditor's website](#) and look at a sample ballot. This will tell you who is running in your area.
- Visit candidate websites and social media sites.
- Search articles in your local newspapers.
- Attend a candidate forum.
- Ask questions when they call or door knock your house - they want your vote. Make them earn it. Check out some sample questions we have in the next article.

Remember:

- You don't have to vote for every office. There are a lot of people running for different positions on the ballot. You don't have to vote for people or issues that you don't know about.
- Iowans also vote to keep judges - you can check out the judge score cards put together by the Iowa Bar Association [here](#).
- There is a question about changing the Iowa Constitution on the ballot this year - you can learn more about that in the next article!

STEP 5 VOTE!

Don't let stress or fear keep you from voting - it is your right and it does make a difference. In 2022, State Representative Josh Turek won his seat by only six votes and former State Representative Luana Stoltenberg won her seat by 11 votes (after four recounts). In 2020, US Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeks won her congressional seat

by 6 votes (out of nearly 400,000 votes cast).

Iowa's Amendment 1: What Voters with Disabilities Need to Know



This November, Iowa voters will decide on a change to the Iowa Constitution. It's called [Amendment 1](#) and it could have an indirect impact on Medicaid and other services that support Iowans with disabilities. Let's break it down.

What Amendment 1 Would Do

Right now, Iowa lawmakers can raise state income taxes with a simple majority vote — that's 51 out of 100 House members and 26 out of 50 senators. Amendment 1 would change that so any future increase in personal or business income taxes would need a two-thirds vote in both the Iowa House and Iowa Senate to pass. That means 67 of the 100 House members and 34 of the 50 senators would have to agree before income taxes could go up.

Some things this amendment does not do. It does not stop lawmakers from raising income taxes (it just makes it very difficult to do). It only applies to income taxes (sales tax, property tax, gas tax, or other taxes and fees could still be raised with simple majority vote).

How It Got on the Ballot

Changing the Iowa Constitution takes two steps: the Legislature must pass the same amendment in two separate two-year sessions, then voters get the final say. This amendment first passed the Legislature in 2024, then passed again in 2025 and 2026. Both votes were along party lines, with Republicans voting for it and Democrats voting against. It now heads to voters on the November 3 ballot as Amendment 1.

What Supporters Say

The main group backing the amendment, [Iowans for Tax Relief](#), argues that higher income taxes should be a last resort. For that reason, they want to make it harder to raise income

taxes. They say that the supermajority requirement forces Republicans and Democrats to work together.

What Opponents Say

[Fair Taxes for Iowa's Future](#) is a coalition of groups, including labor unions and human services organizations. They argue the opposite - that the amendment would lock in place the large tax cuts Iowa passed between 2019 and 2025, cuts they say helped wealthier families and profitable corporations the most. Joshua Brown, president of the Iowa State Education Association, points out that Iowa has been spending more than a billion dollars a year more than it takes in for two years running, and says the amendment “takes one of those options and makes it nearly impossible.”

Supporters say that a “yes vote” would make it harder to tax the rich and force budget cuts, further harming those who benefited the least from the recent tax cuts. Supporters also challenge the main argument for the amendment (it makes it harder to pass an income tax), saying it is already very hard to do this. The last time Iowa raised income taxes was in 1974, and since that time our state has cut income taxes six times. With a simple majority vote.

What This Could Mean for Disability Programs — And What's Uncertain

This is the part that matters most to Iowans with disabilities and their allies. Amendment 1 does not name or target any disability program. It's about how many votes are needed to raise income taxes. No cuts or changes in funding for programs like Medicaid is included in this amendment.

That said, Iowa is already running an annual budget shortfall of more than a billion dollars. Opponents say that gap will have to be closed by either raising revenue or cutting spending, and that a two-thirds requirement makes raising revenue much harder. It also means other taxes may take the place of taxes based on how much money a company or person earns, like sales and gas taxes that hit poorer Iowans the hardest. Those opposing the bill say that leaves cuts as the more likely path. Because school funding, Medicaid, and other human services make up more than 80% of the state's budget, there is really no other place to make those cuts.

Medicaid, including the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers, help many Iowans with intellectual, physical, and developmental disabilities live at home instead of in an institution. It is one of the largest categories of state spending. Iowa is currently in the middle of redesigning those waivers under a project called HOME, which is replacing several existing waivers with two new ones. None of this redesign is caused by Amendment 1. But if the state budget comes under more strain in future years, programs like HCBS waivers are the kind of program budget writers often look at first when they need to close a gap, regardless of which party is in charge

Supporters would counter that lawmakers can still raise taxes when needed, it just takes more people to be in agreement. They also say that they can change their spending priorities or use reserve funds without resorting to cuts. The reality is Iowa's spending nearly \$9.5 billion every year to provide services and keep the government operating - but is only taking in a little more than \$8 billion. It is already dipping into reserves, and that supply of funds will run out in a few years if the state's economy doesn't pick up.

What Happens Next

Amendment 1 needs a simple majority of "yes" votes statewide to pass. We want to make sure you know the facts and the impacts now - before you get to the voting booth. Learn more about this issue at the campaign websites and by listening to our last Capitol Chat, which featured speakers on both sides of the issue.

- VoteNOIowa.info
- maketaxhikesharder.com
- [Capitol Chat](#)

Bottom line for Iowans: The amendment limits what our elected legislators and Governor can do to pay their bills and make sure services are available for all that need them.

Election Time: They Want Your Vote, So Ask Them Questions!

For the past two years, legislators have passed laws that limit how much cities and counties can raise property taxes. "When I'm doorknocking, I ask the voters what I should be doing in Des Moines. They almost always complain that property taxes are too high," said one legislator. "That's why I'm making it a priority." Imagine if every legislator heard from voters about the importance of community inclusion, ending HCBS waiver waiting lists, and making sure people with disabilities can work without worrying about losing their health insurance.

You have a chance right now to make that happen. When candidates are knocking at your door, calling to ask for your vote, or hosting a town hall meeting, ask them a question about a disability topic important to you! We asked a few of our self-advocates for their questions to help you get started - but please feel free to come up with your own!

Questions for Federal Candidates

(US Senate, US Representative)

1. The effects of H.R. 1 (One Big Beautiful Bill Act) are already being felt in Iowa. Iowans with disabilities and families are seeing increased eligibility requirements and decreases in services they used to receive. At this time access to care in Iowa is already difficult, health care costs are not decreasing and the number of people who need services is growing. What is your understanding of who is served by Medicaid and why they do not have private insurance options? Where do you stand on federal Medicaid funding, and will you support permanent, adequately funded community-based services (home care) so people can receive care at home instead of being forced into institutions?
2. Will you support strengthening the Air Carrier Access Act and DOT enforcement, especially given ongoing problems with wheelchair damage and inaccessible air travel?
3. Do you support phasing out Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which currently allows employers to pay disabled workers less than minimum wage?
4. Will you support raising the SSI asset limit (currently \$2,000 for individuals, unchanged since 1989) and eliminating marriage penalties that cut benefits when people with disabilities marry?
5. Recently the DOJ under the Trump administration wrote an opinion (June 18, 2026) that concluded that neither the ADA nor Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require states to provide services in the “most integrated setting appropriate” to meet the needs of people with disabilities. This goes against the Supreme Court’s Olmstead Decision of 1999 which gives people with disabilities the right to receive services in their home and community, rather than in an institution.
 - a. What is your understanding of the “integration mandate”?
 - b. Do you agree that states aren’t required to provide services to people in their homes and communities?
 - c. Given that only Congress can amend the ADA or Rehabilitation Act—and courts have final say on interpreting them—what role do you believe Congress should play in protecting the rights affirmed by the Olmstead decision?
 - d. Would you support bipartisan legislation that explicitly reaffirms the

“integration mandate,” requiring community-based services for people with disabilities rather than institutionalization?

- e. Will you oppose efforts to weaken the Americans with Disabilities Act and push back on executive orders that undermine Congressional intent?

Questions for State Candidates (Governor, State Senator, State Representative)

1. With federal Medicaid cuts about to hit state budgets, what will you do to guarantee that people with disabilities and seniors can continue to get the help they need to stay in their own homes and not be forced to use Medicaid to pay for more expensive institutional care?
2. The number of students in special education keeps rising, yet funding is never enough to cover actual costs. The same is true for vocational rehabilitation, which helps students with disabilities transition to employment in the community. What will you do to ensure that students with disabilities are supported to achieve their highest potential?
3. What can you do to improve special education services after AEA changes were made, and how will you address IEP (Individualized Education Plan) implementation gaps and shortages of special ed teachers/paraprofessionals?
4. People with disabilities who must use Medicaid for care are limited in the income they can earn and save, as well as the assets they can keep. Medicaid eligibility is a cycle of poverty. At the same time, Iowa has a workforce shortage. People with disabilities want to work, but they can't because they will lose the health care and support that enable them to work. What would you do to make sure that Iowans with disabilities can earn and save without losing the health and home-based care they need?
5. Will you support raising the Medicaid asset limit and eliminate marriage penalties that cut benefits when people with disabilities marry?
6. Where do you stand on state Medicaid funding and what will you do to reduce or eliminate waiting lists for home and community-based services in our state?
7. The Federal government is trying to make home and community-based services



- optional for state Medicaid programs. Will you support protecting access to these cost effective, family-centered services in state law?
8. Will you support increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates so direct support professionals and personal care attendants can be paid a living wage?
 9. Cutting Medicaid leads to increased institutionalization. These institutions should not be our only choice, so how will you make sure community services are protected? Do you support making HCBS services mandatory to eliminate institutional bias?
 10. Thousands of refugees and immigrants with disabilities living in Iowa lack access to Medicaid and employment, and suffer from stress and anxiety. How will your help protect access to Medicaid for refugees and migrants with disabilities to ensure that no one is left behind?
 11. Managed care only works when higher costs can be avoided by making people healthier. People with disabilities will always have a disability. Will you support carving long term supports and services from Medicaid managed care?
 12. What is your plan to increase accessible, affordable housing stock and ensure our state is complying with the Olmstead decision's integration mandate rather than defaulting people into institutions or nursing homes?

Questions for All Candidates

1. Iowans with disabilities frequently feel left out of decision making that affects them and their lives because of their disability. Will you consult with disability organizations and advocates when you are developing policies, and how will you solicit ideas and feedback on policy or other changes?
2. What do you see as the major issues impacting Iowans with disabilities? What will you do if elected to fix these issues?
3. Candidates make a lot of promises to get elected. It seems like once they are elected, they just do what they want, or what their party wants. I expect the people I vote for to work hard to follow through on their promises, even if their leaders disagree. How can I be sure you'll do that?

Join Us for our Final 2026 Virtual Capitol Chats

We have two remaining Capitol Chats on the calendar for 2026, and they'll be exciting ones to attend. Sign up for these zoom meetings [here](#).

- **Friday, October 30 (Noon - 1 p.m.)**

Hear from the experts at the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law about the recent attacks by the Federal government on community inclusion and the Olmstead Decision.

- **Thursday, December 3 (Noon - 1 p.m.)**

We'll break down the elections, talk about committee changes, discuss the outlook for the 2027 legislative session and review the top policy priorities of the Iowa DD Council.

[Sign Up for Capitol Chats.](#)

Watch recorded Capitol Chats [here](#).