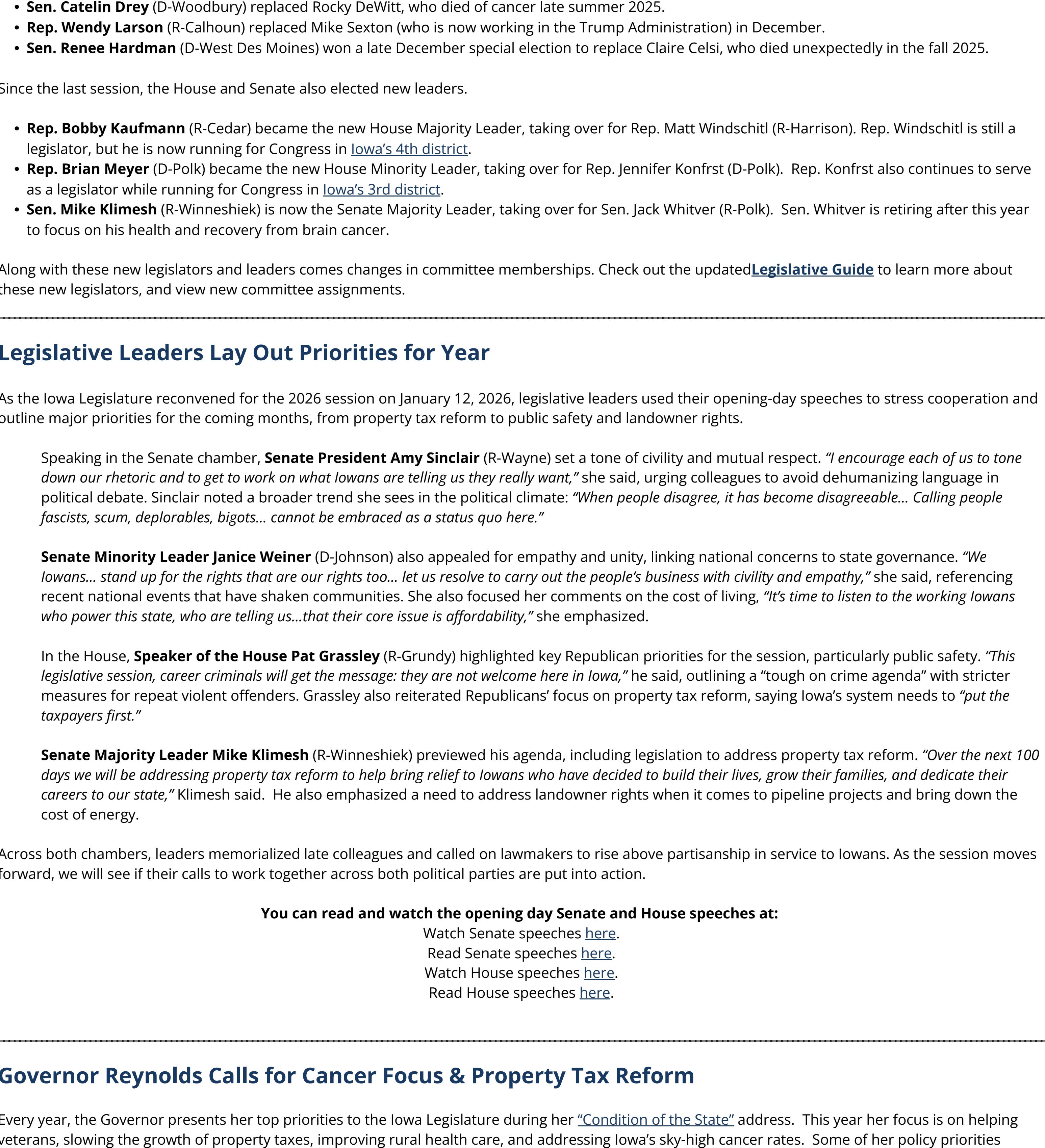


## NEWSLETTER

## infoNET NEWSLETTER

The infoNET Newsletter helps advocates with disabilities stay up to date on current issues in the Legislature, the governor's office, and U.S. Congress. It also provides information on how to be a more effective advocate, how to connect with other advocates, and when there are opportunities to bring your issue to the attention of lawmakers and opinion leaders.

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## Winter Issue | January 20, 2026

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

## New Year Welcomes New Legislators

Iowa's 150 elected legislators returned to the Iowa Capitol on Monday, January 12 to begin their 100-day legislative session. Iowa broke records in 2025 for the most special elections in a year:

- **Sen. Mike Zimmer** (D-Clinton) replaced Chris Cournoyer, who resigned in January 2025 to become Lt. Governor.
- **Rep. Angel Ramirez** (D-Linn) replaced Sami Scheetz in April 2025 after he became a Linn County Supervisor.
- **Sen. Catelin Drey** (D-Woodbury) replaced Rocky DeWitt, who died of cancer late summer 2025.
- **Rep. Wendy Larson** (R-Calhoun) replaced Mike Sexton (who is now working in the Trump Administration) in December.
- **Sen. Renee Hardman** (D-West Des Moines) won a late December special election to replace Claire Celsi, who died unexpectedly in the fall 2025.

Since the last session, the House and Senate also elected new leaders.

- **Rep. Bobby Kaufmann** (R-Cedar) became the new House Majority Leader, taking over for Rep. Matt Windschitl (R-Harrison). Rep. Windschitl is still a legislator, but he is now running for Congress in [Iowa's 4th district](#).
- **Rep. Brian Meyer** (D-Polk) became the new House Minority Leader, taking over for Rep. Jennifer Konfrst (D-Polk). Rep. Konfrst also continues to serve as a legislator while running for Congress in [Iowa's 3rd district](#).
- **Sen. Mike Klimesh** (R-Winneshiek) is now the Senate Majority Leader, taking over for Sen. Jack Whitver (R-Polk). Sen. Whitver is retiring after this year to focus on his health and recovery from brain cancer.

Along with these new legislators and leaders comes changes in committee memberships. Check out the updated [Legislative Guide](#) to learn more about these new legislators, and view new committee assignments.

## Legislative Leaders Lay Out Priorities for Year

As the Iowa Legislature reconvened for the 2026 session on January 12, 2026, legislative leaders used their opening-day speeches to stress cooperation and outline major priorities for the coming months, from property tax reform to public safety and landowner rights.

Speaking in the Senate chamber, **Senate President Amy Sinclair** (D-Iowa) set a tone of civility and mutual respect. "I encourage each of us to tone down our rhetoric and to get to work on what Iowans are telling us they really want," she said, urging colleagues to avoid dehumanizing language in political debate. Sinclair noted a broader trend she sees in the political climate: "When people disagree, it has become disagreeable... Calling people fascists, scum, deplorables, bigots... cannot be embraced as a status quo here."

**Senate Minority Leader Janice Weiner** (D-Johnson) also appealed for empathy and unity, linking national concerns to state governance. "We Iowans... stand up for the rights that are our rights too... let us resolve to carry out the people's business with civility and empathy," she said, referencing recent national events that have shaken communities. She also focused her comments on the cost of living. "It's time to listen to the working Iowans who power this state, who are telling us... that their core issue is affordability," she emphasized.

In the House, **Speaker of the House Pat Grassley** (R-Grundy) highlighted key Republican priorities for the session, particularly public safety. "This legislative session, career criminals will get the message: they are not welcome here in Iowa," he said, outlining a "tough on crime agenda" with stricter measures for repeat violent offenders. Grassley also reiterated Republicans' focus on property tax reform, saying Iowa's system needs to "put the taxpayers first."

**Senate Majority Leader Mike Klimesh** (R-Winneshiek) previewed his agenda, including legislation to address property tax reform. "Over the next 100 days we will be addressing property tax reform to help bring relief to Iowans who have decided to build their lives, grow their families, and dedicate their careers to our state," Klimesh said. He also emphasized a need to address landowner rights when it comes to pipeline projects and bring down the cost of energy.

Across both chambers, leaders memorialized late colleagues and called on lawmakers to rise above partisanship in service to Iowans. As the session moves forward, we will see if their calls to work together across both political parties are put into action.

You can read and watch the opening day Senate and House speeches at:

Watch Senate speeches [here](#).

Read Senate speeches [here](#).

Watch House speeches [here](#).

Read House speeches [here](#).

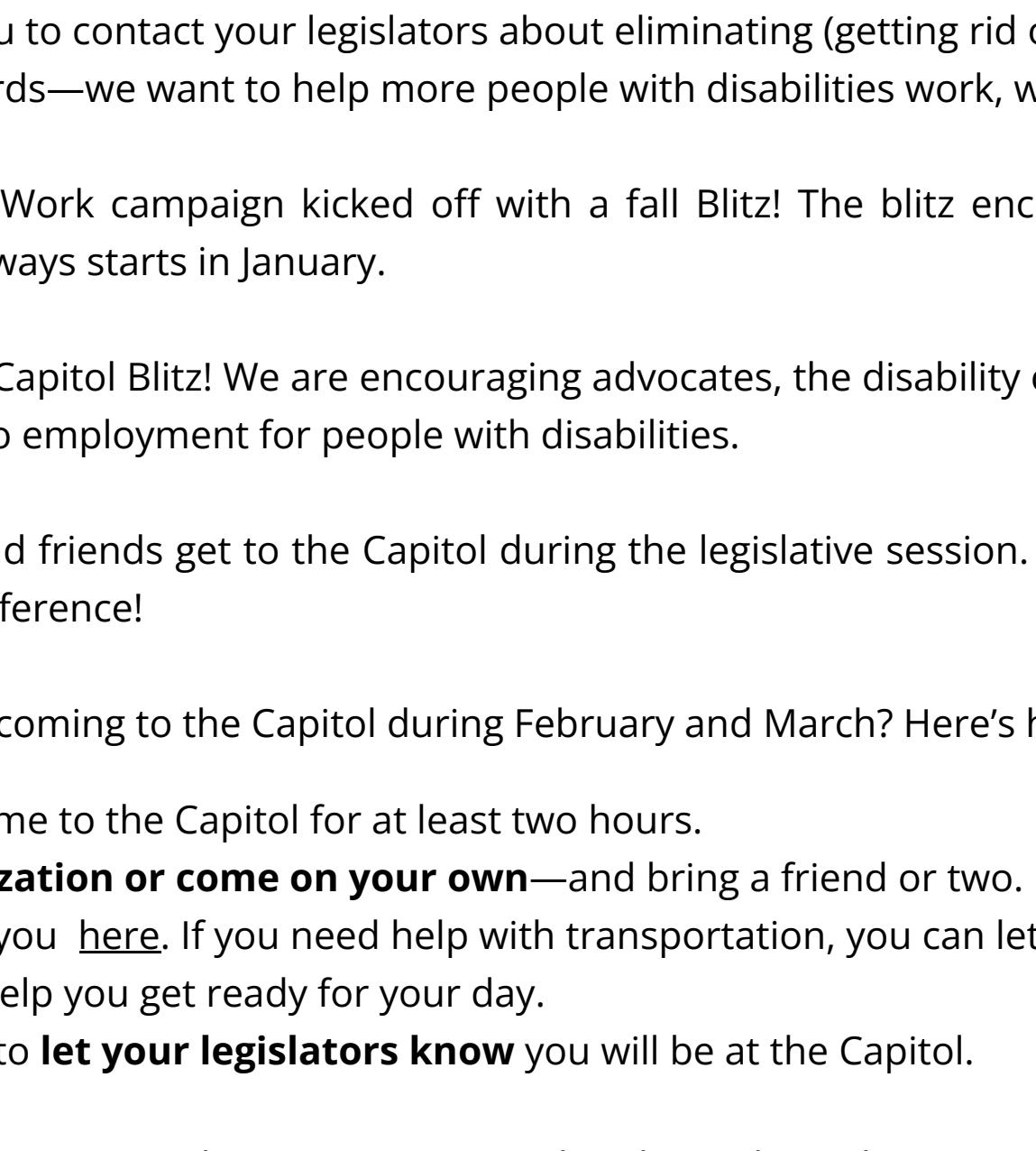
## Governor Reynolds Calls for Cancer Focus &amp; Property Tax Reform

Every year, the Governor presents her top priorities to the Iowa Legislature during her "Condition of the State" address. This year her focus is on helping Iowans, slowing the growth of property taxes, improving rural health care, and addressing Iowa's sky-high cancer rates. Some of her policy priorities include:

- **No longer requiring counties to elect their County Auditor** (who controls elections), **County Recorder** (who maintains official records and handles licensing), and **County Treasurer** (who collects taxes and manages other fee-based services). Under the Governor's proposal, the county board of supervisors could appoint these positions.
- Creating a \$10 million grant fund to help **local governments share services**.
- Reconsidering a **state-based health insurance exchange** (where people are able to purchase Affordable Care Act subsidized insurance plans). Right now Iowans go through a national exchange; the creation of an Iowa-based exchange may make it easier for Iowans to find low-cost health insurance options.
- **Requiring every person registering to vote to swear to they are a US citizen**, and increasing the penalty for lying about citizenship. The Governor also recommends requiring all state agencies to use the federal citizenship verification system (E-Verify) to make sure employees are legally able to work in the country.

The Governor's budget puts additional money into Medicaid, but those funds are needed to meet current responsibilities. That means there is no money set aside for provider rate increases or to fully implement the HOME project (waiver redesign). In fact, the Governor is proposing **\$52 million in Medicaid "cost containment."** That usually means more hurdles for Medicaid members and providers to go through before receiving services and payment for the services. It often means fewer services, less hours of coverage, or lower pay. Watch [@infonetowa](#) and [@iowaddcouncil](#) social media platforms and the "Latest News" section of the website.

Below you can see how much of our state's budget goes to education & health/human services.



Other budget recommendations include:

- Moving grants for **Centers for Independent Living Centers** and funding for independent living services from Iowa Workforce Development's Vocational Rehabilitation Division to Iowa HHS' Aging and Disability Services Division. The Entrepreneurs with Disabilities program remains with vocational rehabilitation.
- Moving funding for **Iowa ABLE** administration from Iowa HHS to the State Treasurer, where the program is managed.
- Increasing **school aid** by 2%, including funding for private schools. This year parents of any income level can access the educational savings account program that allows them to use the funds that would have gone to their local public school to pay for private school tuition. The total going into these ESAs in the next year is expected to be \$349.7 million, an increase of \$20 million over last year and \$132 million more than the year before that. No change in funding for **paraeducator salaries** (\$14 million) and **special education** (\$10 million).
- Cutting funding for **school-based mental health training** by \$1.5 million (leaving \$1.9 million). The Governor stated this is "duplicative" funding.
- Eliminating funding for the **Iowa Epilepsy Foundation** for their work to support people living with epilepsy (\$144,000) and **child vision screening** (\$225,000).

You can find the Governor's priorities and budget [here](#).

The independent Legislative Services Agency analysis of the Governor's budget is now available [here](#).

## Bills, Bills, and More Bills

Legislators filed 296 bills during their first week back to work at the State Capitol. The Iowa DD Council will be spotlighting some of these bills in their 2026 "Bills of the Week." You can find them [here](#), along with a work to talk points advocates can use when talking with their legislators.

Here are a few of the new bills introduced:

- **House File 2033 (HF 2033)** requires pharmacies give patients the option of receiving their medications with **accessible prescription labels**, bag tags, and medical guides at no additional cost. The goal of this bill is to help people with disabilities and people with low vision be able to understand and use their medications safely.
- **House Bill 2003 (HB 2003)** sets up a pilot program to allow education. This is an urban school district to set up a separate school for children with disabilities (IDEA). It requires students with disabilities to receive a "Free and Appropriate Public Education" (often referred to as "FAPE") and that this be delivered in the least restrictive environment. This law makes sure that children with disabilities are served in an integrated setting, with their friends and neighbors.
- **House File 2012 (HF 2012)** makes students with disabilities attending **Comprehensive Transition & Post Secondary Programs (CTPs)** eligible for Iowa Community grants. This change makes college more affordable programs like REACH (University of Iowa), NEX (Northwestern University), and EDUCATE (North Iowa Area Community College) more affordable.

**House File 2014 (HF 2014)** creates an **Iowa Work Opportunity Tax Credit** to replace the one Congress last year. This encourages Iowans to hire 20 individuals with disabilities first of the **Week for 2026** in finding jobs. There is already a subcommittee set up for this one.

- **House File 2017 (HF 2017)** creates an **Iowa Work Opportunity Tax Credit** to replace the one Congress last year. This encourages Iowans to hire 20 individuals with disabilities first of the **Week for 2026** in finding jobs. There is already a subcommittee set up for this one.

**House File 2033 (HF 2033)** requires pharmacies give patients the option of receiving their medications with **accessible prescription labels**, bag tags, and medical guides at no additional cost. The goal of this bill is to help people with disabilities and people with low vision be able to understand and use their medications safely.

- **House File 2068 (HF 2068) & Senate File 2015 (SF 2015)** allows political parties to put the **location of caucuses** on their social media platforms, or their website. This could make it harder for Iowans to find where their local caucuses are held.

- **House File 2094 (HF 2094)** doubles the number of beds at the state's **Mental Health Institutions** and allows Medicaid funds to be used to pay for that helps people transition from an institutional setting to community living. Allowing Medicaid to pay for MHI and the development of subacute options, rather than inpatient, at the most expensive level of care, should be reinvested into HCBS provider rates and the development of subacute options.

- **Senate Study Bill 2005 (SSB 2005)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate Study Bill 2006 (SSB 2006)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2094 (HF 2094)** doubles the number of beds at the state's **Mental Health Institutions** and allows Medicaid funds to be used to pay for that helps people transition from an institutional setting to community living. Allowing Medicaid to pay for MHI and the development of subacute options, rather than inpatient, at the most expensive level of care, should be reinvested into HCBS provider rates and the development of subacute options.

- **Senate File 2095 (HF 2095)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2096 (HF 2096)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2097 (HF 2097)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2098 (HF 2098)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2099 (HF 2099)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2100 (HF 2100)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2101 (HF 2101)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2102 (HF 2102)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2103 (HF 2103)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2104 (HF 2104)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2105 (HF 2105)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2106 (HF 2106)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2107 (HF 2107)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2108 (HF 2108)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2109 (HF 2109)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2110 (HF 2110)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2111 (HF 2111)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2112 (HF 2112)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2113 (HF 2113)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2114 (HF 2114)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2115 (HF 2115)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2116 (HF 2116)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2117 (HF 2117)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.

- **Senate File 2118 (HF 2118)** allows individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or traumatic brain injury to meet with rehabilitation services. This work search is intended to make up for not participating in benefits more accessible to persons with disabilities through the designation of vocational rehabilitation support needs.
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