



infoNET

IOWA'S DISABILITY POLICY RESOURCE

IOWA DD Council
Preparation, Participation, Power

This Week at the Iowa Capitol | Week 11 Report | March 27, 2026

Things are really slowing down at the State Capitol as we wrap up week 11 of the 2026 Iowa Legislative Session. With less than a month to go, leaders in both chambers say they will meet only a couple days each week while they work out details on property tax reform and budgets. That's not great news for advocates wanting to put pressure on their legislators to act on priorities like changes to the Medicaid for Employed Persons With Disabilities (MEPD) program or stop bills that lock the state into managed care or put in additional hurdles to keep their supportive services.

This week legislators only worked Monday and Tuesday. Wednesday was the semiannual "Pioneer Lawmaker Day," when previous legislators are honored for their service. It included a memorial service for those who have passed away in the previous two years and a speech/ ceremony inducting new members to the 130-year-old Pioneer Lawmakers Association.

Unfortunately, it sounds like legislators are planning short work weeks until they work out budget and property tax details. There is a lot to negotiate and a lot of bills are being stalled while the House, Senate and Governor try to agree on priorities.

COUNTDOWN

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DAYS LEFT IN THE IOWA LEGISLATIVE SESSION

REMINDER! Disability Day on the Hill is (no fooling!) April 1, 2026

Advocates are getting ready to pack the State Capitol next week on Wednesday, April 1 for Disability Advocacy Day! Disability Advocacy Day brings advocates, families, and community partners together for a day of connection, learning, and action. We'll gather on the first floor to hear from advocates, organizations, and legislators. Advocates can engage in conversations with legislators about Medicaid, employment, education and other disability policy issues. This is a day to stand together to support policies that help lowans with disabilities live, work, play, and flourish.



**Join the Iowa Disability Policy Alliance and partner organizations for
Disability Advocacy Day**

April 1, 2026

9 am to 2 pm

Iowa State Capitol

Raise your voice so lowans with disabilities can live, work, play, flourish.

[Click here for more information.](#)

Week In Review

Governor Kim Reynolds signed [House File 2739](#) into law on Thursday. This bill increases a tax on health maintenance organizations (HMOs), a type of Medicaid Advantage Plan offered by private insurers. The tax will bring in **\$123 million that will be used to cover the** \$70 million shortfall in the current year's Medicaid budget. That will help legislators avoid cuts in Medicaid when they start the budgeting process in the coming weeks. **This is our bill of the week - you can find it [here](#).**

[House File 2230](#) passed the Iowa House of Representatives this week (90-2), adding new training requirements for all teachers intended to **support special education students**. Starting in 2027, colleges

would be required to include hands-on experiences that actively engage all education students in the individualized education plan (IEP) process. It also requires structured mentoring and support during the first year of teaching for special education teachers and school administrators.

On Tuesday, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a bill to help schools be better prepared to react to a **cardiac emergency**. [Senate File 2390](#) sets up a grant program to help schools adopt a cardiac emergency response plan, train a team of school staff to react to an emergency, and help pay for things like automated external defibrillators (AEDs). The American Heart Association says that about [23,000 children have a cardiac arrest outside of a hospital](#), and about 40% of those happen unexpectedly while playing sports.

Funding is scarce this year, and legislators were concerned that they do not fully know what schools need, how many schools already have plans in place, and which schools have AEDs already available in their buildings. Because of this, the Committee recommended an amendment that will require the Iowa Department of Education to get information from both public and private schools on the number of AEDs already in buildings. The amendment also requires the Department to develop a list of schools that already have cardiac emergency response plans in place. With that information in their hands in 2027, the Iowa Legislature will have a better understanding of how much money is needed to fill the gaps.

Remember you can see where bills are at in the process in real time at:
iowaddcouncil.org/bill-tracker

TIME FOR ACTION: Medical Ethics Defense Act

[House File 571](#) is on its way to the Governor, who will need to decide whether to sign this controversial bill into law. The bill allows doctors, nurses, hospitals, clinics, and other health care providers to **refuse to perform any health care service that conflicts with their ethical, moral, or religious beliefs**. There are no legal consequences for refusing, and in fact, professional licensing boards would not be able to discipline someone for this refusal. In addition, employers would not be able to fire someone for refusing to provide a service.

The bill is very broad, and also means that a provider could refuse to even *advise* a patient about a treatment they find objectionable — leaving patients in the dark about their own options. This could particularly affect end-of-life planning and use of certain psychiatric medicines that some faith communities oppose. In addition, entire hospitals and clinics can refuse to provide certain treatments. For people with disabilities, this is especially worrying because they often depend on a specific, coordinated network of specialists. People with disabilities often have fewer providers to choose from and face greater barriers when they have to find alternative care. A law that lets any provider — or an entire institution — refuse care without any obligation to inform or redirect the patient could make accessing care even harder in Iowa, especially in rural areas.

If this is concerning to you, click on the button below to email the Governor!



Let Us Work Campaign Update

While Iowa lawmakers struggle to find a compromise to allow Iowans with disabilities to work, earn, and save more without risking their health care, some exciting news is coming out of Hawaii.

In 2019, Hawaii passed a bill with a program similar to Iowa's Medicaid for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MEPD) program. It was called "[Kal's Law](#)." Recently, the Hawaii Legislature was considering changes that would make the law similar to "Work without Worry," but could not get it done in their legislative session. Instead, the Hawaii Department of Human Services went ahead and made the change through a Medicaid State Plan Amendment, allowing the state to move ahead to **remove all Medicaid income and asset limits to allow individuals with disabilities to work, save, and plan for their future without fear of losing essential health coverage.**

Hawaii's approach reflects the original intent of Kal's Law (and Iowa's Work without Worry), to ensure that people with disabilities are not forced to choose between employment and the services they need to live in their communities. **Iowans with disabilities want the same thing!**

There have been no decisions made yet on the MEPD changes that have been suggested in this year's legislative session. It is going through budget negotiations. If the Legislature moves forward with any changes, they will either be added to the HHS Budget, to the Senate's public assistance reform bill ([SF 2422](#)), or through the MEPD Reform bill ([SF 2315](#)). This is what is still being considered:

- Increasing income limit from 250% to 300% of the federal poverty level. This allows people with disabilities to earn about \$7,000/year more.
- Exempting a spouse's income from the income limit.
- Not counting one car toward asset limits.
- Disregarding pension income (similar to other retirement income that is already not included).
- Requiring Iowa Medicaid to set up a system that allows people to pay their MEPD premiums online.

These changes being considered are all good but **we still have to worry!** These changes do not make the impact that the original Work Without Worry bill would make for Iowans with disabilities who work or want to work more, earn more and save more.

There is still time to make a difference on this!

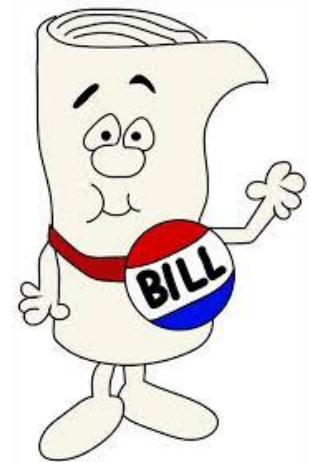
- **Come to the Capitol and advocate with others on April 1!** There is power in numbers. This is really helpful if you are new to advocacy or nervous about talking to your legislators.
- **Call your legislator.** You can leave a message. They may not call you back, but they will listen to your message. Make sure you let them know how to contact you - phone, text, and/or email. I usually give them my email and cell phone number - and let them choose how to connect.
 - Senators can be reached at 515.281.3771.
 - Representatives can be reached at 515.281.3221.
 - You can find out who your Senator & Representative are at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>.

- **Email your legislator.** You can email your legislator using our Take Action Center! We have even started the email off for you. [Just get started here.](#)
- **Write a letter to the editor in your local newspaper.** Legislators read their local news, but this also educates others in your community. It may even prompt others to take action! Check out our new resource to help you get started writing a letter to the editor – and make sure it gets published. We’ve attached it to this email!
- **Post your letter on your own social media and also send it to your legislators.** Add a photo. A picture is worth a thousand words!

FUN (*but serious*) Stuff

Do you know how a bill becomes a law?

Did you watch or listen to Schoolhouse Rock when you were a kid (or an adult)?! March 27, 2026, was the 50th anniversary of the first showing of “I’m Just a Bill.” Do you feel old now? We do. Here it is! [Bing Videos](#)



Advocacy Tools

Writing a Letter to the Editor



What is a letter to the editor?

A letter to the editor is a short message written by a reader and sent to a newspaper or magazine. It's typically used to:

- React to a recent article or story.
- Share an opinion on a current issue or topic.
- Correct something the publication got wrong.
- Add perspective that the original story missed.

Publications choose which ones to print, so they tend to favor letters that are timely, clear, and make a point.



How should I write a letter to the editor ?

- **Read other letters to the editor.** Look at the newspaper or magazine (online or in print). See how other people have written letters other than the editor. This will help you organize your thoughts.
- **Start writing!** Letters to the editor are usually short, signed with the writer's name and town, and written for a general audience.
 - **Introduce yourself.** Who are you?
 - **Introduce your issue.** Why are you writing this? What happened? Why does it need attention?
 - **Explain why this issue is important.** Is it part of a bigger problem? How does it impact you - and especially others in your community.
 - **Call for action.** What do you want people to take away from this issue? What do you want to see happen? Is there something you want them to do as well?

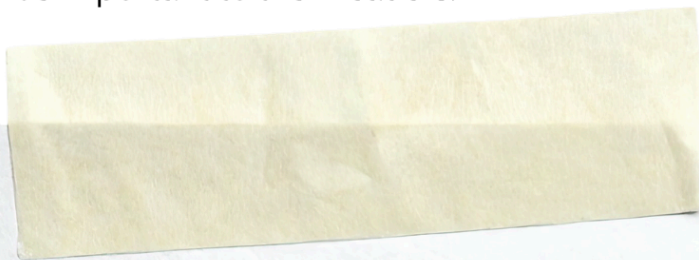




How do I send in a letter to the editor?

Each magazine or newspaper will have their own process. Some have online forms, others have emails you need to use. Make sure you submit ASAP to the event you are taking about or the story you are referencing. Usually 1-2 days.

It is sometimes helpful to include 2-3 links to articles about your topic. You can just add them to the bottom of your letter. This helps editors decide whether the issue is going to be important to their readers.



Dear Editor,

My name is Jane, and I am a person with a disability living in Cityville. I am writing to urge our elected officials to protect and fully fund Medicaid – a program that is not a luxury for people like me. It's a lifeline.

Medicaid covers the personal care attendants who help me get out of bed, bathe, prepare meals each day, and get ready for work. Without this support, I could not live independently in my community, hold a job, or participate in civic life. Cuts to Medicaid do not save money – they shift the burden onto families, emergency rooms, and nursing facilities, which cost far more.

People with disabilities are not a burden. We are neighbors, taxpayers, and contributors to this community. We deserve the same opportunity to live full, dignified lives as anyone else. That opportunity depends on a fully funded Medicaid program.

I ask readers to contact their state legislators and urge them to stand firm in support of Medicaid funding. Our lives are quite literally on the line.

Respectfully,
Jane Doe
Cityville, Iowa

