



**This Week @ Iowa Capitol | Week 7 | February 28, 2026**

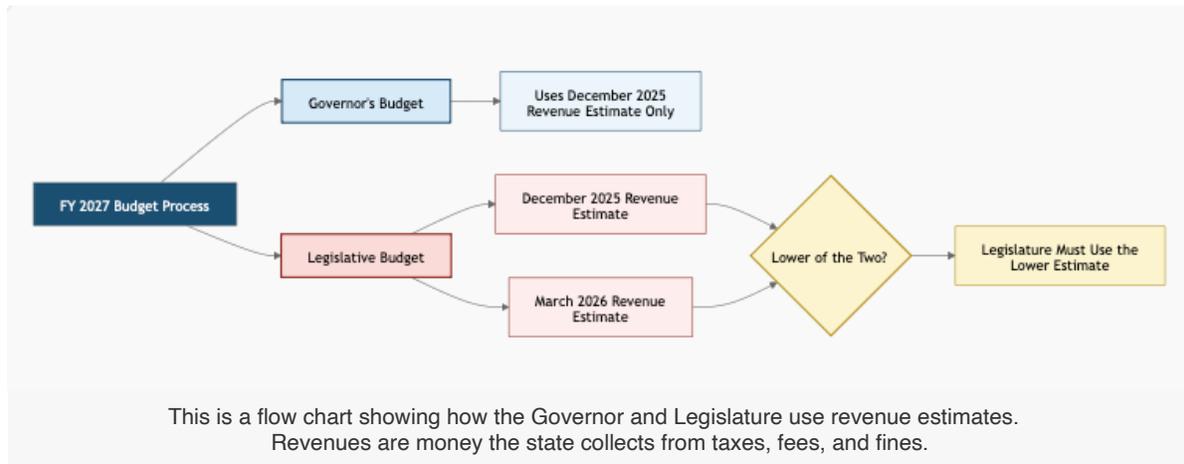
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## **Iowa Session Reaches Halftime**

The Iowa Legislature has officially hit the halfway point of its 2026 legislative session. Monday (March 1) is the 50th day of the 100-day legislative session. Unlike the Super Bowl, there is no celebratory halftime show. There are three important dates ahead that will motivate leaders to start planning for their final moves:

- **New revenue estimates will be released on Thursday, March 12.** This will determine how much money the Legislature can spend on priorities this year. The Governor's budget is based on estimates from December 2025, which showed the state collecting about \$1.3 billion less than it is spending. The Governor used the state's various savings accounts to increase spending by about 2%. By law, the

Legislature must use the lower of the two estimates for its budget (December 2025 or March 2026). We know this is confusing. Check out the chart below.



- **People who want to run for State Representative and State Senator must turn in their paperwork by Friday, March 13.** After next Friday, we will know who is retiring, who will have a June primary challenge (facing someone from within their own party), and who will face someone from another party in the November general election. This is often a strong reason for lawmakers to finish the session and get out on the campaign trail.
- **The next legislative deadline is in three weeks - March 20.** Senate bills need to be voted out of House committees, and House bills need to be voted out of Senate committees. That means either the House or Senate has approved the bill, and it has gone through a second committee process. That's a lot of work for what is really only 12 working days. Realistically, if a bill has not passed either the House or Senate by the end of next week, its chances of making this next deadline are very narrow. There are always exceptions to the rule — bills that deal with the budget (appropriations), taxes, or government oversight can be dealt with at any time.

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## Public Assistance Reform & Work Without Worry

On a party-line vote, the Iowa Senate passed [Senate File 2422](#), its version of public assistance reform. This bill will limit who can get food assistance (SNAP), Medicaid, Family Investment Program (FIP), and the children's health insurance program (Hawki). You can read more about the details of this bill and its impact on Iowans in our Bill of the Week [here](#).

Areas of most concern in this bill:

- There could be significant delays in getting services because of new citizenship checks and unreliable federal databases used to do these checks.
- Iowa entered Medicaid managed care without legislative approval, but this bill requires legislative approval to get out of managed care.
- The state might be able to show it can save money by ending managed care, but the state would not be allowed to end it without legislators approving the exit.
- The state would also not be able to make changes to its Medicaid program, including HCBS services, unless the state proves it will save money, or if the Legislature approves it. For example, if a change to Medicaid would save money for counties or hospitals, but would cost the state more, legislators would have to approve that change. That can take a lot of time.

One of the criticisms of this bill is that the Iowa Department of Health & Human Services has not yet submitted information on the costs saved, the number of people expected to lose services, or what it will cost to do the additional eligibility checks. You can see this incomplete cost analysis [here](#).

[Sen. Matt Blake \(D-Polk\)](#) offered an amendment to remove the requirement for Medicaid managed care. Sen. Blake gave an impassioned speech opposing this portion of the bill, using his experience as a lawyer helping people get and keep their benefits and as an advocate for aging services providers.

“MCOs have not been a net benefit to our state at all. They have created problems for providers. They have made it more expensive to provide services...and if you ask any one of your LTSS [long term services and supports] providers in your districts how we could help with their bottom line, the first thing they would say is, get rid of the MCOs. The duplication of the bureaucracy that comes with them only adds cost and not benefit to the people that need it most...Why are we taking steps to codify a system that isn't working for Iowans? Why, after ten years of having this process in place, are we doing this now? We've had ten years to put

this in place, but it seems there is a particular reason, and a particular election potentially, that this becomes an issue now. You are tying the hands of the governor that comes after us. The MCOS were put in place by Executive Order. They were created by a governor. And now we're telling future governors that they can't make that decision anymore." *Sen. Matt Blake*

If you are looking for talking points on this issue, look no further than this debate. You can watch or listen to the full debate [here](#) (it's not long). You can see how Senators voted on this bill [here](#). This bill now goes to the House Health & Human Services Committee for their further consideration.

The House of Representatives plans to bring up their version of public assistance reform sometime this week (March 2–5). Their bill ([HF 2716](#)) does not include a requirement to keep managed care. It includes some changes that could create better opportunities for lowans with disabilities. However, it may also make it harder for some people to get and keep their benefits. You read more about this in our bill of the week from last week [here](#).

The House bill:

- Allows people with disabilities to earn up to 300% of the federal poverty level without losing coverage on the Medicaid for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MEPD) program. The current income limit is 250% of the federal poverty level. This allows someone to earn about \$7,000 more per year. *See below for how this relates to Work Without Worry!*

Directs Iowa Medicaid to allow people to pay their MEPD premiums online.

- Increases Medicaid rates for HCBS providers who are serving rural lowans with disabilities.
- Eliminates premiums for Iowa Health & Wellness Plan (IHWP) members earning between 50-100% of the federal poverty level, but adds copays for members who misuse emergency rooms (\$8), get dental care (\$5), miss appointments (\$5), and fill a prescription (\$1).
- Requires everyone to be a citizen to get any public assistance programs (through SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, IHWP, Hawki, FIP, and child care assistance).
- Takes back unused SNAP benefits after 91 days of inactivity and automatically verifies eligibility for SNAP using several existing federal databases.
- Requires a person to live in Iowa continuously (without break) for at least 12 months before getting public assistance.

- Allows teens to work and save money without risking their family's loss of SNAP.
- Sets up a work group to look at high acuity children and youth who are Medicaid or IHWP members.

## **What about Work Without Worry? We still have to worry!**

The House bill that contains language about Work Without Worry is now [HF 2716](#). You can read it by clicking on the link, or it might be easier to go to the [Bill of the Week](#). As noted above, many people have concerns about how this bill would affect lowans needing public assistance programs like SNAP, WIC and Medicaid.

The small income limit change to MEPD (going from 250% to 300% of the federal poverty level) is expected to cost the state \$2.6 million. That is a lot of money for not making a significant change for a lot of people. This cost estimate is based on the number of people who have applied for MEPD but been denied (because of income). If the same number of people apply and are accepted after this change is made, it will cost at least \$2.6 million. The bill is expected to be on the House debate calendar this week.

In the Senate, [SF 2315](#) is a “stand alone” bill, which means that it doesn't include all the other program changes like the House bill. It has now been sent to the [Senate Appropriations Committee](#). That means they will decide whether they can invest the estimated cost (\$2.6 million) to make these changes to the MEPD program. It has a subcommittee assigned, and we know they are working on the details of the cost and considering alternatives. The subcommittee is: [Sen. Mark Costello \(R-Mills\)](#), [Sen. Kara Warne \(R-Story\)](#), and [Sen. Molly Donahue \(D-Linn\)](#).

It is good that both the House and the Senate are considering making these changes to MEPD and looking at all the numbers. **Unfortunately, neither bill is close to the original Work Without Worry and that's what the disability community wants!**

**With these two bills we will still have to worry!** They are a step in the right direction and [Rep. Austin Harris \(R-Appanoose\)](#) and [Sen. Dennis Guth \(R-Hancock\)](#) deserve thanks for bringing them forward. While the bills are a very small step in the right direction, they do not make significant changes to income and asset limits.

**Keep up your advocacy!** As *infoNET* reported before, **Let us Work is working!** There is recognition at the Capitol about the Let Us Work campaign almost every day! You can use our Take Action Center to send a pre-written message or write one of your own [here](#).

**NEW EVENT: Disability Day on the Hill — April 1, 2026**

Mark your calendar for April 1 and plan to attend a new **Disability Day on the Hill!** The Iowa Disability Policy Alliance is organizing a day of advocacy and education. It's your time to learn and also educate your legislators. Organizations and agencies are invited to exhibit. Advocates and families are invited to come tell your story about Medicaid, employment, and special education. Gather with your fellow advocates for a day of effective disability policy advocacy—TOGETHER.

Find out more and register to attend Disability Advocacy Day [here](#).



## Other Capitol News

Last week the House passed the following bills:

- [HF 2292](#) requires Iowa HHS to apply for a waiver that allows the state to get a Medicaid match for individuals in the state's mental health institutes (MHIs) and, upon approval, **double the number of MHI beds** in the state. The bill passed unanimously ([90-0](#)).
- [HF 2518](#) requires Iowa Medicaid to review the **Medicaid HCBS provider rates** every four years. Currently, they are the only type of Medicaid provider that does not have a regular rate review. The House amended this bill during debate, eliminating the requirement that all other rate reviews look at the rates paid to providers in border states and states with similar populations. The bill passed unanimously ([92-0](#)).

Last week the Senate passed the following bills:

- [SF 2203](#) requires the Secretary of State and county auditors to **verify the US citizenship of anyone currently registered to vote** and all new registrations. This could delay the registration of voters and make it difficult for Iowans to exercise this right. The bill passed [34-13](#).

**The Governor has signed her first bill of the year** — the bill increasing K-12 school funding by 2.5% for the next school year. This bill ([SF 2201](#)) also includes \$7 million needed to continue paraeducator salary increases. As you might recall, these funds were left out last year and had to be added late in the session using one-time funds.

## Around the Capitol

Iowans with disabilities are at the State Capitol **every week** the Legislature has been in session. Here's proof! **Iowa Family Leadership Training Institute** held their Capitol Advocacy Day on Wednesday, February 25, 2026. Advocates snapped a quick photo (below) with [Rep. Brent Siegrist \(R-Pottawattamie\)](#), who is wearing the white shirt and tie, and Sam Schoening (far left), who is the legislative aide for [Rep. Josh Turek \(D-Pottawattamie\)](#)



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**Find all the bills** we are tracking at:

[iowaddcouncil.org/bill-tracker](http://iowaddcouncil.org/bill-tracker)

**Take action on bills** by emailing your legislators at:

[iowaddcouncil.org/take-action-center](http://iowaddcouncil.org/take-action-center)

**Find local legislative town hall meetings** in our calendar at:

[iowaddcouncil.org/calendar](http://iowaddcouncil.org/calendar)

**Find our bills of the week at:**

[iowaddcouncil.org/bill-of-the-week](http://iowaddcouncil.org/bill-of-the-week)

