



About RSAI Visit the RSAI home page to find out more: www.rsaia.org

RSAI Region Meeting SW Region April 1, 2026



Call to Order & Welcome

RSAI Agenda - 2026 Regional Meetings

RSAI Region	Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Meeting Time	Regional Representative
SW Region	04/01/2026	Green Hills AEA 212 E Coolbaugh St Red Oak	11:45 Lunch; 12 Meeting	Ron Lorenz
NW Region	04/07/2026	Prairie Lakes AEA 500 NE 6th Street Pocahontas	11:30 Lunch; 12 Meeting	Justin Daggett
SE Region	05/06/2026	Fairfield Arts & Conv Center, with Great Prairie AEA 200 N Main St, Fairfield	12 Lunch; 12:30 Meeting	Jeremy Hissem
NE Region	05/07/2026	Central Rivers AEA 1521 Technology Pkwy Cedar Falls	8 - 9:30 Breakfast & Meeting	Barb Schwamman



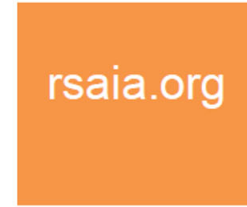
Agenda (call for approval)

- ❖ Introductions
- ❖ RSAI Overview and Processes
- ❖ Election to Leadership Group Rep (if applicable)
- ❖ Election of Legislative Committee Reps
- ❖ Updated RSAI Mission/Vision & Review of Bylaws
- ❖ Review of the 2026 Legislative Session To Date
- ❖ Discussion of Upcoming Election & Advocacy Efforts
- ❖ Discussion of Region Priorities for 2027 Session
- ❖ Brainstorming/Networking Discussion



Introductions (Current SW Region Leadership)

- ❖ Ron Lorenz, Red Oak CSD,
Leadership Group - SW Regional Representative (Term
expires September 2028)
- ❖ Deron Stender, Creston CSD,
Legislative Committee Representative (term expires June
2026)
- ❖ Bill Watson, Martensdale St. Mary's CSD,
Legislative Committee Representative (term expires June
2026)



Introductions (RSAI & ISFIS)



- ❖ James Passick,
IT Director
- ❖ Ken Sturgis,
School Finance Director
- ❖ Larry Sigel,
Retired School Finance Guru
- ❖ Margaret Buckton
RSAI Professional Advocate
- ❖ Jen Albers,
RSAI Support & Accountant
- ❖ Dave Daughton,
RSAI Grassroots Advocate



Introductions (all attendees)

- Name _____
- District Role _____
- One Sentence: What's the best thing happening in your school district as you close down the 2025-26 school year?



RSAI Overview and Process

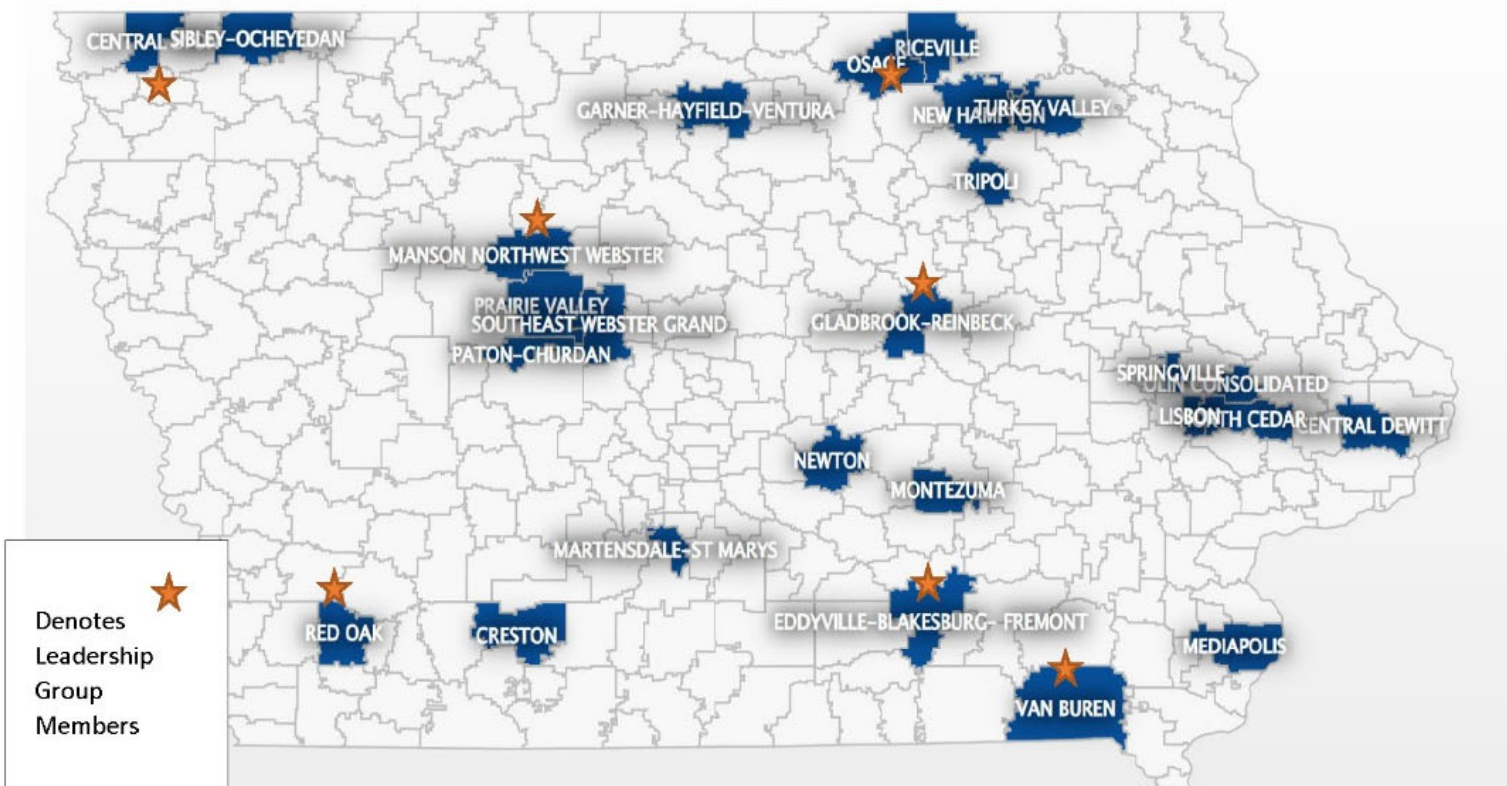


History of RSAI

The Rural School Advocates of Iowa began with a few rural school leaders getting together in 2013 to discuss many things:

- Why were rural school voices not represented in statewide decision-making?
 - Why did funding formulas not recognize transportation and sparsity factors?
 - Why did state policy always seem to have a “one-size-fits-all” approach that left little flexibility to rural schools?
 - What could rural school leaders do to change this situation to benefit students in rural schools?
-
- July 1, 2014 RSAI officially formed with 41 member districts

2025-26 RSAI Leadership Group and Legislative Committee



Denotes Leadership Group Members

Leadership Group Members			Legislative Committee Members			
Region	Name	District	Region	AEA	Name	District
NE	Barb Schwamman	Osage/Riceville	NE	Grant Wood	Autumn Pino	Springville/Lisbon
NW	Justin Daggett	Manson NW Webster	NE	Keystone	Erik Smith	New Hampton/Turkey Valley
SE	Jeremy Hissem	Van Buren County	NE	Central Rivers	Jay Marley	Tripoli
SW	Ron Lorenz	Red Oak	NW	Central Rivers	Ken Kasper	Garner Hayfield Ventura
At-Large	Brent Jorth	Central Lyon	NW	Northwest	Stan DeZeeuw	Sibley Ocheyedan
At-Large	Scott Williamson	Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont	NW	Prairie Lakes	Brian Johnson	Southeast Valley
At-Large	Caleb Bonjour	Gladbrook Reinbeck	SE	Great Prairie	Adam Magliari	Mediapolis
			SE	Mississippi Bend	Stephanie Mishler	Central DeWitt
			SE	Central Rivers	Rich Schulte	Montezuma
			SE	Heartland	Tom Messinger	Newton
			SE	Grant Wood	Mark Dohmen	North Cedar/Olin
			SW	Green Hills	Deron Stender	Creston
			SW	Heartland	Bill Watson	Martensdale-St. Mary's
Plus all three At-Large Leadership Group Members						

RSAI Relationships

- RSAI is recognized as the Iowa affiliate of the **National Rural Education Association (NREA)** connecting members to rural school leaders nationwide, an annual conference focused on the needs and successes of rural schools
- Lends Iowa's voice to a collective effort in our nation's Capitol through membership in the **Rural Schools Collaborative**.
- Member of **Iowa Rural Development Council** to network and collaborative w/rural leaders across all areas of economic development.



RURAL SCHOOLS
COLLABORATIVE



Member Benefits

- ✓ Advocacy presence at the Iowa Capitol focused on RSAI priority issues
- ✓ Weekly legislative update reports and recap videos to share news from the statehouse and calls to action
- ✓ A voice to advocate with the executive branch and represent rural schools on various task forces and stakeholder committees convened by DE
- ✓ Advocacy resources for local leaders to use, including position papers, advocacy tool kits, talking points, maps, and school finance estimates
- ✓ Assistance with communications, letters to the editor, sample letters to or specific responses to legislators
- ✓ Easy to share information, such as RSAI Legislative Priorities Video, to inform school boards, staff, and stakeholders
- ✓ RSAI is the state affiliate of the National Rural Education Association, including access to NREA research, updates about federal actions, and networking
- ✓ Free Summer Regional Meetings and RSAI Annual Conference in October
- ✓ Authentic grassroots development of legislative priorities in a one district one vote democratic process
- ✓ Discount on ISFIS Policy-hosting Service
- ✓ Collective purchasing power as a group, attracting needed supports at discounted prices

Advocacy, Networking, Sharing, Best Practice Connections with others

RSAI Corporate Sponsors 2025-26

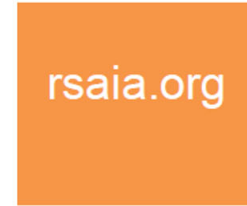


www.rsaia.org/corporate-sponsors

RSAI Annual Meeting

<https://www.rsaia.org/annual-meeting.html>

- Meet in October, hear reports, budget, fee schedule, elect officers, approve priorities
- Members get one vote per district (affiliate members, guests and nonmembers are welcome but asked to register so we have enough food)
- An outside speaker or Some Leadership Development Content
- Networking
- Share a good meal



Election of RSAI Regional Representative to the Leadership Group (SW Region)

Ron's term expires Sept. 2028
No Election Necessary

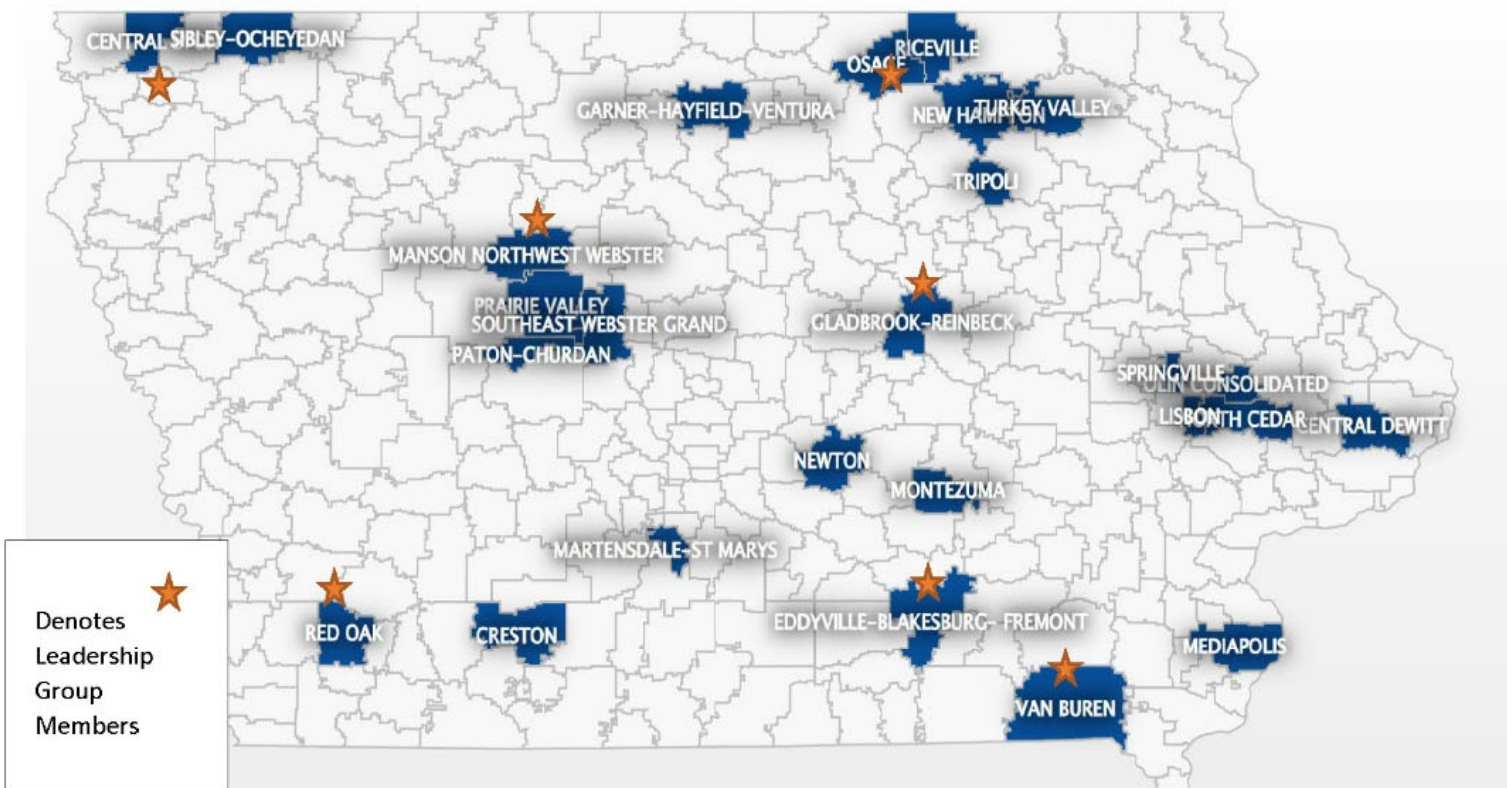


Election of RSAI Regional Representative to the Legislative Committee

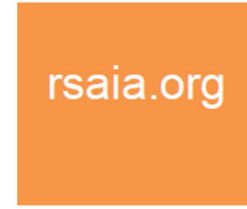
- Office is a 1-year appointment, but no term limits.
- Bylaws allow additional representatives so each AEA in the region has at least one.
- Representative attends August Legislative Committee Meeting in Des Moines, attends the October Annual Meeting, and supports legislative advocacy efforts throughout the Legislative Session.

*(Maps show membership & current representation.
Thanks to those serving during the 2026 Session!)*

2025-26 RSAI Leadership Group and Legislative Committee



Leadership Group Members			Legislative Committee Members			
Region	Name	District	Region	AEA	Name	District
NE	Barb Schwamman	Osage/Riceville	NE	Grant Wood	Autumn Pino	Springville/Lisbon
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Plus all three At-Large Leadership Group Members						



RSAI Mission

RSAI will advocate for students in rural schools to assure a fair, equal, and quality education.



Current RSAI Vision

Current Vision:

Member schools will collaborate to promote legislation that strengthens rural education for students, by;

1. Educating others about the value of rural education to the state's economy and future of Iowa as an educational leader in the nation and the world and unique challenges rural schools and communities face;
2. Building the capacity and understanding of other groups with similar interests on legislative and educational issues to build a stronger voice;
3. Securing adequate resources, academic and financial, to provide first class educational opportunities for students; and
4. Maintaining local control through the flexibility and authority of locally elected School Boards.



Draft RSAI Vision

Member schools will collaborate in support of rural students by advocating for just resource allocation, addressing structural differences, and promoting statewide decisions that recognize the unique needs, challenges, and opportunities of rural communities, to ensure rural schools and students survive and thrive, by;

1. Collaborating to promote awareness and legislation that strengthens rural education and opportunities for students;
2. Educating others about the value of rural education to the state's economy and future of Iowa as an educational leader in the nation and the world and unique challenges rural schools and communities face;
3. Leveraging partnerships to build capacity and understanding by collaborating with business, postsecondary, economic, agricultural, educational and other entities to engage their capacity for advocacy and support of rural schools and students;
4. Securing adequate resources, academic and financial, to provide first class educational opportunities for students; and
5. Maintaining local control through elected school boards, ensuring the flexibility and authority to be innovative based on local student and community needs.

Discussion with a partner/table

- Do these changes resonate with you?
- Does this vision provide clear direction to the Leadership Group and staff in how and where to lead?
- Does this vision guide local leaders regarding advocacy
 - With Legislators?
 - With stakeholders and organizations in the district?
- Any feedback for the Legislative Group which will take the next step on considering the changes.



Review of RSAI Bylaws

Any changes needed?

Process for Changes:

- Comments/recommendations are shared with the RSAI Bylaws Committee.
- Bylaws Committee make recommendations to the Legislative Committee.
- Legislative Committee makes final recommendation to members at the Annual Meeting (which requires a 2/3 vote for approval).



About RSAI Visit the RSAI home page to find out more: www.rsaia.org

Summary of 2026 Legislative Session (so far) RSAI Priority Action



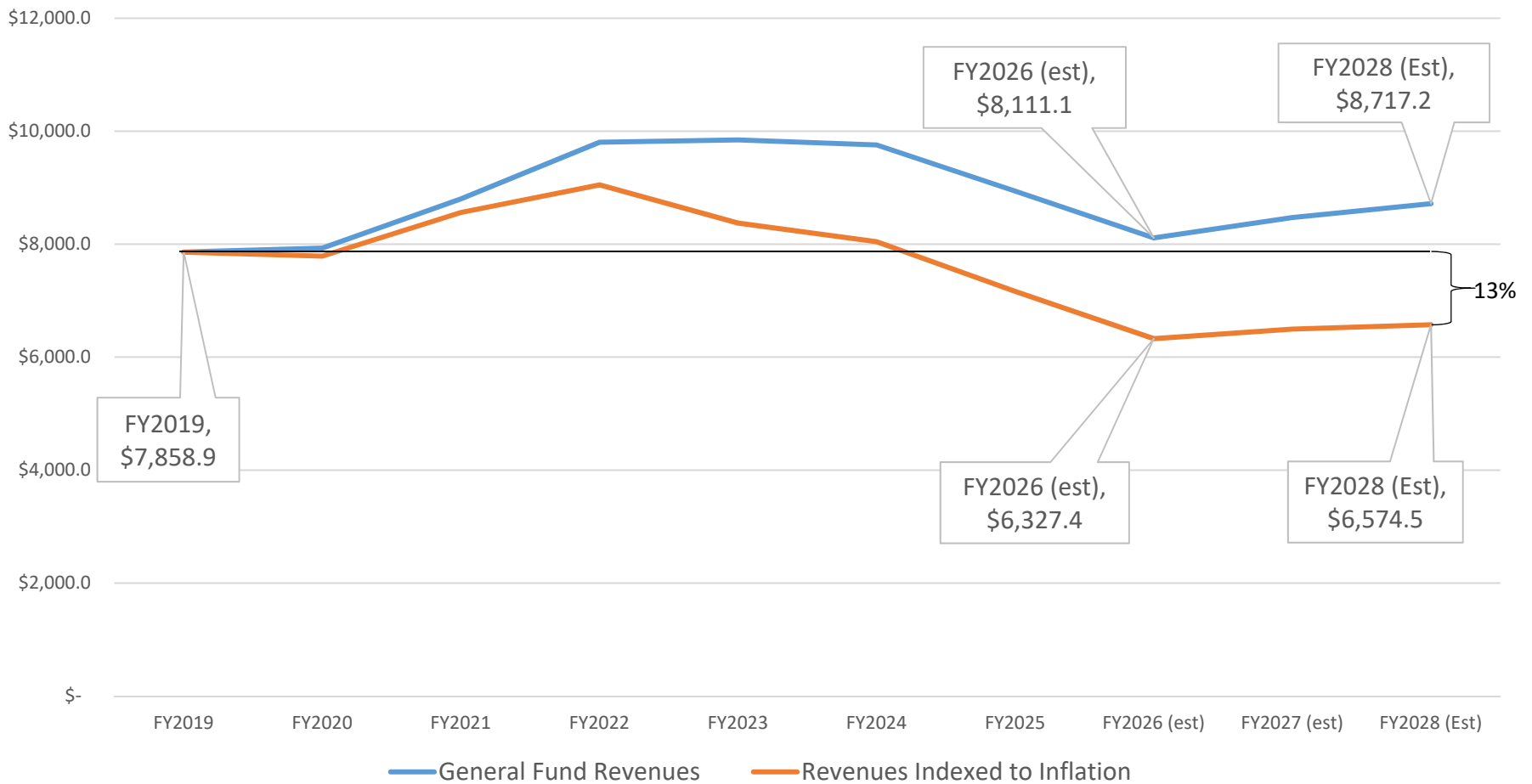
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Advocacy Impact (and Challenges) So Far. . . .

School Funding

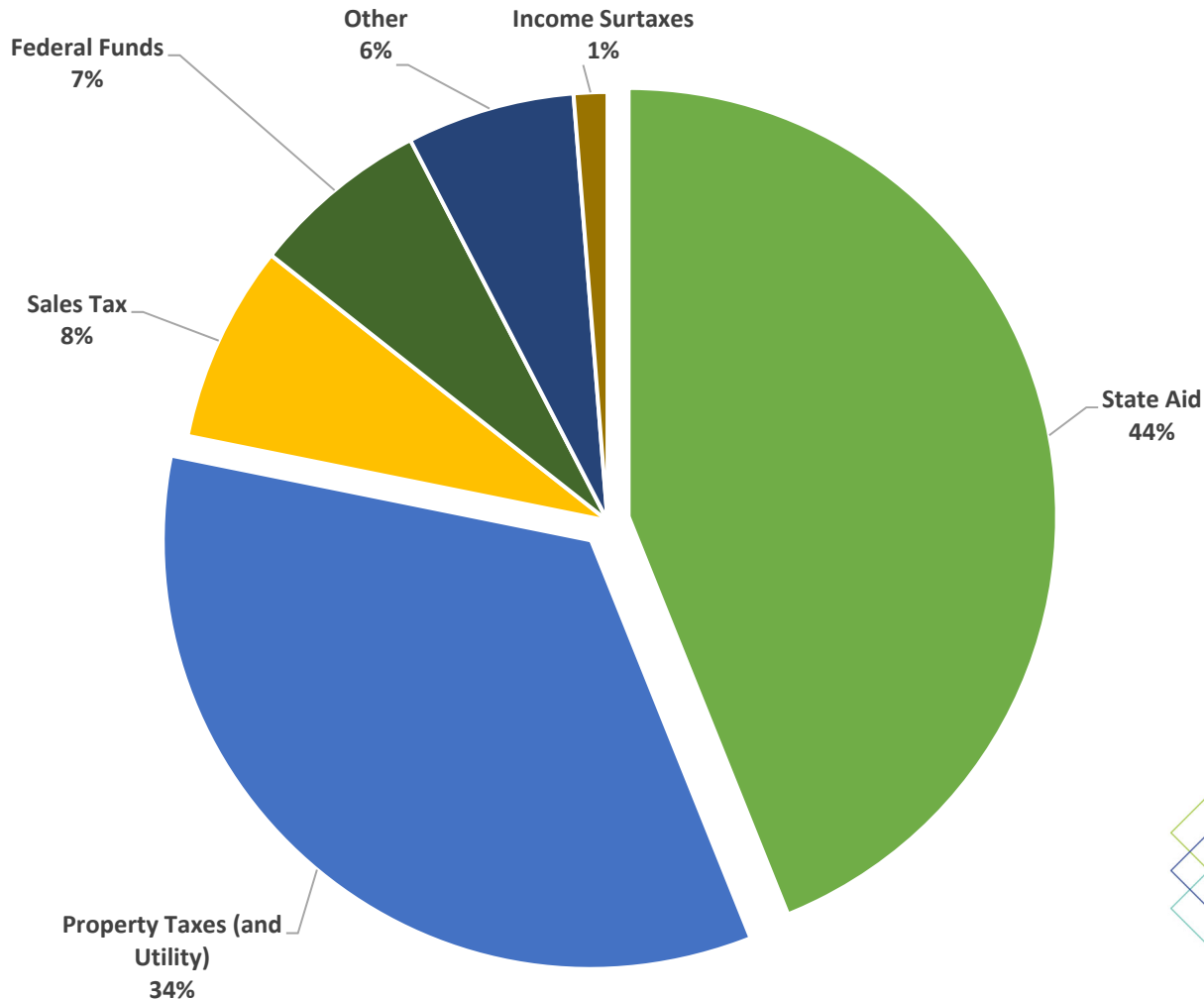
- **SF 2201 SSA 2% Plus signed 2/26:** 1) despite possibilities of zero or 1% SSA discussed last November and December, the Senate agreed to the Governor's 2%. The House is still working to add another \$7 million to hourly support staff supplement, bringing the total to \$14 million.
- Challenges:
 - Second Count Date (January 2027)
 - 199 districts on budget guarantee (state funded to protect taxpayers)
 - 89 districts with less RPDC
 - Standings will likely still cut AEAs by \$25 million
 - Next year??????

State General Fund Revenues



*Uses data from the Iowa REC March 2026 meeting, CBO Sept 2025 inflation estimates

FY2025 School Funding in Iowa



■ State Aid ■ Property Taxes (and Utility) ■ Sales Tax ■ Federal Funds ■ Other ■ Income Surtaxes

Property Taxes Advocacy Impacts

- [SF 2472](#) no longer has a state take-over of special ed and media and educational services property taxes, still limits management fund taxing authority but does not mention SAVE.
- [HF 2745](#), eliminated the 60% supermajority vote for SAVE bonds, diverts SAVE to property taxes by 2034 but extends SAVE to 2070. Adds a June special election date for bonds. Still working on UAB 35% limit.
- Both bills improve taxpayer statements. They could reach a compromise or adjourn before agreement.
- Challenges:
 - Unknown impacts (reduced valuation lowers some revenue)
 - What can the state afford?
 - Any hit to SAVE reduces capacity for facilities, cyber security and safety, buses, and potentially shifts to GF
 - Management Fund? (begins FY 2028 budget)
 - UAB limitations

Flexibility and Local Control

- **ESA Categorical and TSS Flex:** [SF 2144](#) and [HF 2684](#) Sens. Shipley and Evans are working on a vehicle to include this priority, likely in an appropriations bill.
- **TAG and Advanced Pathways:** House amendment delays implementation (Advanced Pathways & Acceleration) to July 1, 2027 and provided criteria for district determination of student readiness.
- **Concurrent Enrollment:** Failure Payback [SF 2299](#) and District Online Discretion [SF 2320](#) (House Calendar)
- **PK for Young Children:** [HF 2493](#) adds students who turn 5 after March 15 in SVPP to count for 0.5 weighting. Does not prohibit TK. Gives local districts more options.

Flexibility and Local Control

- **PE, Extracurricular and Screen Time Mandates:** [HF 2676](#) MAHA bill is on the Senate Calendar. Seeing consistent intentions to remove mandates in Senator's email replies. Waiting for the amendment.
- **Student Behavior:** [SF 2428](#) (with oversight committee) and [HF 2538](#) (with committee input into local policy but retained Principal decision-making following the policy) on each other's calendars.
- **U.S. Government Requirements:** started as doubling government requirements for graduation. Amended to add Civics and US Government to 7th and 8th Grade. Over-the-top social studies standards from the House failed to advance in the Senate. [HF 2244](#) is attached to [SF 2413](#). House delays the mandate until July 1, 2028.

Staff Shortages

- **CTE Teachers Operational Sharing:** [SF 2005](#) is attached to [HF 2492](#) on the Senate Calendar.
- **Endorsements** [SF 2221](#) and [HF 2724](#): alternative endorsements for fine arts, math, science teachers. House version includes Strat II Special Education and activities administrator authorization.
- **TeachIowa Scholar Program** [HF 2441](#): Strikes requirement that loan recipients be in the top 25% of their class. Requires that 20% of recipients be special education teachers and 50% be in rural districts defined as districts below 1,000 student enrollment.

Themes of Advocacy Impact this Session

- Timelines of implementation
- Concerns about unfunded mandates taking away from educational improvement focus – provide district discretion
- Reduced capacity in SAVE will hurt students and taxpayers
- Collaboration – when the entire education community is united, we have more influence. Can we leverage other voices for influence?
- Safety of Teachers and Students



Current Priorities Discussion

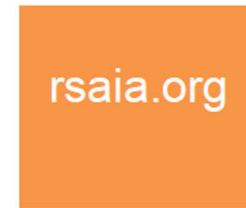
(see tracking form in your packet)

Find the 2026 RSAI Priorities list in the packet or on the RSAI website at:

<https://www.rsaia.org/2026-legislative-session.html>

1. Are there any that need to be removed for 2027?
2. Any that need to be added?
3. Any significant (or suggested) policy or direction changes on those already on the list?

Small group or whole group discussion. We can go through them one at a time or consider the whole list with one vote. It's up to the attendees to decide how to proceed.



RSAI Legislative Priorities for 2027

See the RSAI website meeting tab for more information such as RSAI Legislative Digest, Position Papers which will be updated after language is finalized during the process, Legislative Priorities, and this PPT and meeting minutes on the Regional Meeting tab. <http://www.rsaia.org/>

Suggestions and recommendations from the Regional Meeting Attendees will be compiled and shared with the Legislative Committee. Legislative Committee will recommend final priorities for approval by members at the Annual Meeting in October.



Upcoming Election Cycle & RSAI Advocacy Efforts

Find the RSAI Election Advocacy Supports on the RSAI website at:

<https://www.rsaia.org/elections.html>

1. Are there additional supports that would be helpful?
- 2.
- 3.

Small group or whole group discussion.



Brainstorming/Networking Discussions

Any other topics the group would like to discuss?



THANK YOU FOR YOUR VOICE on behalf of rural students!

- Watch for RSAI Legislative Digest
- RSAI Priority Survey later this Summer
- Stay connected through the Interim
- Let us know what you need to beef up your advocacy efforts.
 - See you in October at the RSAI Annual Meeting!

Professional Advocate

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Grassroots Advocate

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