



RSAI ADVOCACY HANDBOOK

YOUR GUIDE TO ADVOCATING FOR RURAL SCHOOLS IN IOWA



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ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This Handbook is designed to provide information to help you advocate on behalf of rural schools in Iowa, both at the Capitol during the legislative session, and also at the local district throughout the year. Many think the advocacy process should be left to professional lobbyists, but no one is more effective at influencing legislation that helps schools than local leaders sharing their practical, real-life stories, experiences and solutions.

ABOUT RSAI

Rural School Advocates of Iowa (RSAI) was formed in 2014 by leaders from Iowa public school districts coming together to work for legislative solutions around needs and issues specific to rural public schools. While RSAI may be thought of as the association serving the needs of small school districts, the reality is our priorities are focused on issues faced by rural schools, regardless of enrollment size. Since our inception, membership has continued to grow. Lend your voice to our movement for quality rural education in Iowa, because our collective voices are stronger together!

We will work to:

- **Educate** 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;
- **Build the capacity** and understanding of other groups with similar interests on legislative and educational issues to create a strong voice;
- **Share best practices** of great education programs while under the budget constraints of fewer students, how best to innovate, share and promote efficiency;
- **Secure adequate resources**, academic and financial, to provide first-class educational opportunities for students in rural communities;
- **Maintain local control** through the flexibility and authority of locally elected school boards.

We will accomplish these goals:

- **Locally** through the advocacy of like-minded individuals and groups with our legislators at home.
- **At the Capitol** through the services of a Professional Advocate to organize our collective voice and keep members informed.

Our mission is to advocate for students in rural schools to assure a fair, equal and quality education.

CONTACT US

RSAI PROFESSIONAL ADVOCATES

Your professional advocates at the Statehouse represent the interests of RSAI members throughout the legislative process and with rulemaking and executive branch actions throughout the year. We help you prepare talking points and accompanying data specific to your district, and edit letters to legislators or to your local paper. We're glad to help you answer questions from legislators and provide resources for your board to better prepare them for advocacy. You can help us by keeping us informed of contacts and relationships you and your team members have with legislators.



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Cell: (515) 201-3755



Dave Daughton

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Cell: (641) 344-5205

RSAI LEADERSHIP GROUP

Consists of a representative from each of 4 regions across the state, plus 3 at-large representatives, each serving a 3-year term. RSAI Leadership Group representatives are elected by RSAI members at the summer regional meetings. At-Large representatives are elected at the Annual Meeting in October.

RSAI LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Consists of a representative from each of 4 regions across the state, each serving a 1-year term elected at the summer regional meetings, and includes the 3 at-large Leadership Group members. See RSAI website at www.rsaia.org, for current leadership contact info.

RSAI OFFICE

Rural School Advocates of Iowa, c/o ISFIS, 1201 63rd Street, Des Moines, IA 50311

Phone: (515) 251-5970

Web: www.rsaia.org

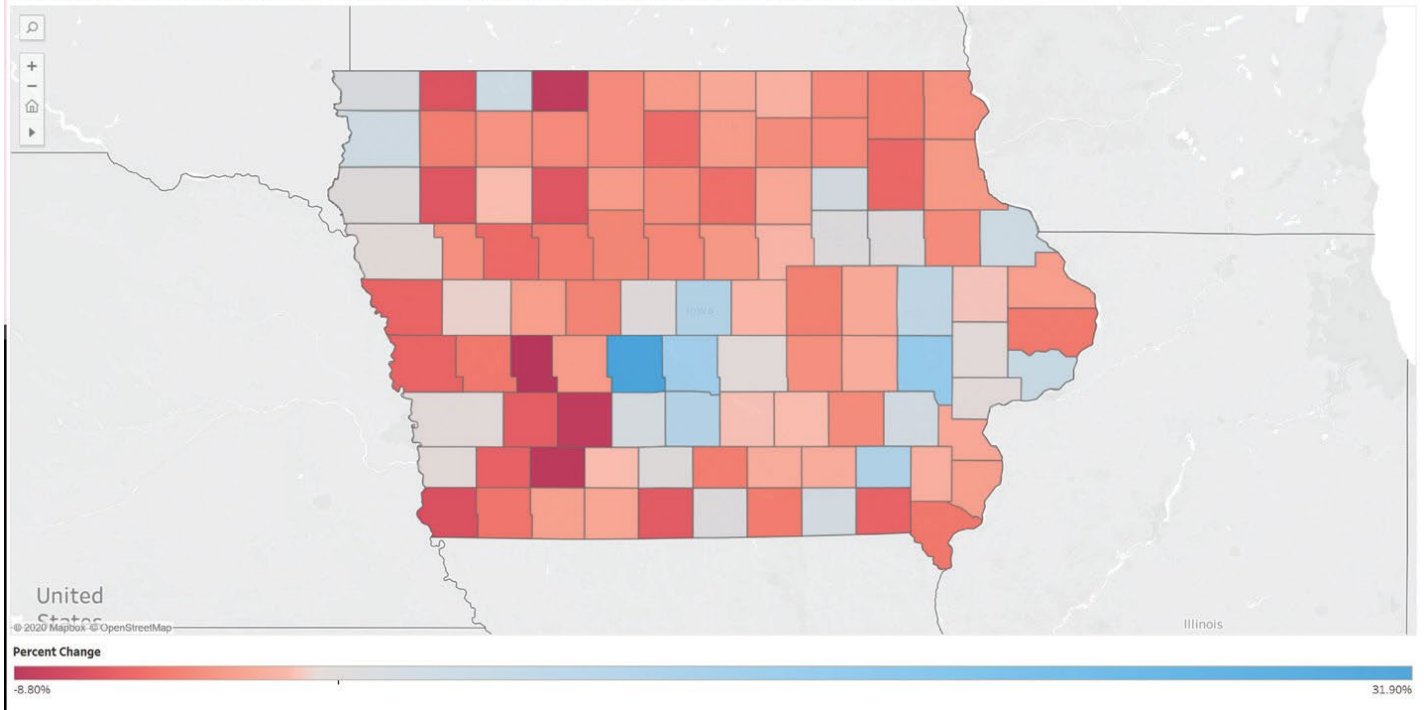
Email: info@rsaia.org

RURAL POPULATION IN IOWA

RURAL TRENDS

Population Change in Iowa from 2010 to 2017

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. The color shows the percent change of population in each county, with counties having increasing population in blue and counties having decreasing population in red.



This map shows the percent change in population in Iowa by County from 2010 to 2017. The scale is from a low of negative 8.8% (in the darkest red) to a high of 31.9% (in the darkest blue).

- Iowa's population grew 4.3% from 2010 to 2018, trailing national growth of 5.5%, with growth primarily occurring in 16 Iowa counties. The remaining 83 counties lost 2.2% or 36,414 people.
- In 1980, only 15 Iowa counties had a population of less than 10,000 people. In 2019, there were 25 counties that fit that category.
- Funding of education is based on enrollment. With rural Iowa population decline, enrollment (and school funding) follows. As districts face enrollment decline, funding decline, and corresponding accreditation pressures, conversations about consolidation are sometimes necessary. Due to local consolidation and state dissolution, there are now 47 Iowa school districts from 2003-04 that no longer exist. They were all districts serving rural communities.

RSAI PRIORITIES FOR 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

ADEQUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

RSAI supports adequate base funding. The increased per pupil cost known as SSA is especially critical to rural students due to distance from school/opportunities, economies of scale, mandates, the need for AEA support, and the ability to attract and retain staff. Rural schools depend on an investment of meaningful new resources to prepare students for a successful future. COVID-19 experience has created additional financial burdens for connectivity, staffing, social distancing practices, virtual curriculum and protective equipment, while potentially diverting resources away from the district due to open enrollment or home school choices which may be temporary. The rate of increase in SSA should be no lower than anticipated growth in state revenue (adjusted for legislated tax cuts), should keep up with other economic factors such as personal income or state gross domestic product over the long term, should maintain a balance of state and local property taxes, provide predictability, and be set timely to assure adequate notice for budget planning and staffing.

ASSESSING AND ADDRESSING STAFF/STUDENT SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

RSAI supports access to and funding for mental health services for children and supports for staff. July 1, 2020 Return-to-Learn Plans required school leaders to determine how to meet an increased demand for social emotional supports anticipated due to school closure. RSAI thanks the Legislature and Governor for addressing telehealth services at school without creating an undue administrative burden for schools and the addition of a social worker position to operational sharing. Despite these advances, our educators are neither prepared nor qualified to become providers of mental health services for children. Iowa needs to address a shortage of qualified mental health professionals and provide resources over the next two years for local districts to determine how best to train school staff based on a local assessment of need and consideration of local community tools and capacity to collaborate for a collective solution.

EDUCATOR SHORTAGE AND QUALITY INSTRUCTION

RSAI knows that rural school leaders are driven to find the very best staff they can to engage students in rigorous learning. RSAI supports maximum flexibility to hire staff to provide great instruction and support to all Iowa students. RSAI supports: 1) district flexibility to meet offer and teach requirements, 2) teacher or other staff shortage loan forgiveness programs and incentives to encourage staff to work in rural schools, 3) a special education generalist credential to teach special education across all grades, 4) creation of a Public Service strand in Iowa's CTE system to prepare Iowa's future teaching workforce and minimize college student loan debt of future teachers, 5) flexibility to hire retirees without negative IPERS impact, and 6) elimination of barriers to licensure for educators. RSAI supports continued BOEE focus on greater flexibility for substitute licensure.

Licensure reciprocity with other states is of great benefit. The BOEE should accept evidence other than strict transcripts to show skill mastery for educators from other professions. Colleges of teacher preparation and the BOEE are encouraged to lessen the college course requirements for new teachers, to make them no more burdensome than those of other professions.

FORMULA AND TRANSPORTATION EQUITY

RSAI supports formula and transportation equity. The Legislature should continue the commitment to close the \$155 gap between the state and district cost per pupil within ten years and continue transportation equity support, bringing down all districts to no more than the state average per pupil transportation cost, without requiring burdensome reporting requirements from school districts.

OPPORTUNITY EQUITY

RSAI supports resources for at-risk students. Resources should be based on need, such as the percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL), in addition to enrollment of the district. The current disparity in dropout prevention capacity, (some districts held to 2.5% and others allowed to access up to 5% of regular program district cost) is arbitrary, based on history no longer relevant to supporting student needs. All school boards should be able to realize the full 5% dropout prevention funding. The formula must further recognize the disproportionate cost of providing equal educational opportunities to low-income students. School districts should be granted spending authority for FRPL eligible students' fees mandated to be waived by state and federal law. The COVID-19 experience has also shown us glaring differences among student home support. This includes both the ability to engage in learning based on lack of internet connectivity, as well as parents not being able to stay home to support required continuous learning because of work requirements to support their families. Experts anticipate a COVID-19 ripple effect which will increase achievement gaps. RSAI supports full attention to and implementation of the December 2019 School Finance Interim Committee recommendation to study the impact of poverty on educational outcomes, including other states' formulas that provide resources for students from low-income families which are showing successful student achievement outcomes for at-risk students. [HF 2490](#) Poverty Weighting Study was approved with strong bipartisan support in the House Education Committee in the 2020 Session serves as a good starting point for continued conversation.

SHARING INCENTIVES AND EFFICIENCIES

RSAI supports extension of sharing and efficiency incentives. Rural students benefit from opportunities to achieve efficiencies, share capacity to operate, and redirect resources to educational programs. The 2019 addition of a licensed social worker position to qualify for operational sharing incentives is appreciated. RSAI supports additional critical school staff, such as

additional mental health professionals, school safety personnel and work-based learning coordinators. Additional positions are welcomed, but the cap of 21 students should be increased to allow all districts to access any new flexibility. Whole Grade Sharing, Reorganization, and Operational Sharing Incentives should be extended.

QUALITY PRESCHOOL

RSAI supports full funding of quality preschool. Quality preschool has been proven to minimize negative student outcomes (special education, dropout, limited lifetime wages, home and car ownership, for example) while maximizing student academic success. Preschool is the ounce of prevention that saves future taxpayers a pound of cure. Additionally, expansion to provide quality preschool for three-year-olds would benefit parents, the business community and the economy, in addition to the student. Due to changing demographics in rural Iowa, significant transportation costs, and lack of quality daycare, preschool should be fully funded at the 1.0 per pupil cost. The 2020 bill, [HF 2490](#) Poverty Weighting Study, should be moved forward in the 2021 Session and include a discussion of weightings which should be applicable to preschool students' programs.

SCHOOL SAFETY

RSAI supports school safety investments. Rural schools need the resources, training and support necessary for Iowa student and staff safety at school, including additional funding for security personnel and training to protect against emergency situations presenting harm. For rural schools in particular, distance from emergency support compounds an already stressed situation lacking sufficient resources to fully train staff and provide security supports.

BONDING CAPACITY

RSAI supports a simple majority, 50% plus 1, voter approval for school bond issues. RSAI supports the 5% calculation of property valuation which limits a district's bonding capacity to be limited to property tax debt issues and not include debt backed by the school infrastructure state sales tax revenues.

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS

RSAI supports continued state and federal efforts at expanding access to high-speed internet geographically to all Iowans for student and staff access to critically needed information. Access to virtual learning and information is required for rural students to fully experience quality STEM programs. The future of rural quality of life, entrepreneurship and access to a whole host of critical services depend on citizen access to high-speed internet. RSAI supports incentives, investments, and creative solutions to close the technology gap for all students, their families, and businesses and community members in rural Iowa. Lack of sufficient income should not be a barrier to internet access.

REMOTE LEARNING AND INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

RSAI supports the ability for local leaders to determine when school should close, for emergency situations and safety, including but not limited to weather cancellations, emergency infrastructure conditions, or for purposes of public health, as long as engagement in virtual learning opportunities is required for students and staff and needs of all students are anticipated and met. Under such conditions, instructional time delivered during the closure counts toward minimum instructional days or hours and is not required to be made up at the end of the school year.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD AUTHORITY

RSAI believes that those locally elected leaders closest to the community care most about those impacted by their decision making and are in the best position to determine the best interest of students, staff and stakeholders. In education policy, one size does not fit all school districts, classrooms or students. District leaders need maximum flexibility to provide a great education to all students. The state role is to define what outcomes are necessary for all students, leaving flexibility to schools in expenditures and policy to best determine how to deliver those intended outcomes. Statutory Home Rule, articulated in Iowa Code 274.3, gives locally elected school boards broad and implied authority. The Legislature, the Governor/executive branch and the courts should follow the law and liberally construe the Iowa Code and legislation to effectuate local control.

LEGISLATIVE TIMELINE

IOWA'S LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Generally, is held from the second week of January through the end of April. The full Session Schedule can be found on the Iowa Legislative website at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/schedules>

- Session Begins – The first day of Iowa's Legislative Session is generally the second Monday of January each year
- Final Date for Bills out of their Chamber – Friday of the 8th week of Session
- First Funnel Week – 10th week of the Session
- Final Date for Bills out of the Opposite Chamber – Friday of the 12th week of Session
- Second Funnel Week – 13th week of the Session
- 110th Calendar Day of the Session – is when per diem expenses end and generally seen as the target for the end of the Session
- Each Session, legislators may change this timeline subject to agreement with the House and Senate

IOWA 89th GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR 2021

	2021 Session
House of Representatives:	
• Republicans	59
• Democrats	41
• Independents	0
• Total	100

Senate:	
• Republicans	31
• Democrats	18
• Independents	0
• Total	49

NAVIGATING THE IOWA LEGISLATIVE WEBSITE

The Drake Law Library has a number of videos and tutorials on how best to navigate and use the resources on the Iowa Legislative website (<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/>). These tutorials can be found at: <https://libguides.law.drake.edu/IowaLeg/Tutorials>

VISITING THE IOWA STATEHOUSE

GENERAL INFORMATION

General information on visiting the Iowa Statehouse as an individual or part of a group, along with videos of the building and brochures with FAQs, can all be found on the Iowa Legislative website at: www.legis.iowa.gov/resources/tourCapitol.

MAPS

Public maps indicating the location of the legislative committee meeting rooms on each floor of the Iowa State Capitol can be found at: www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/resources/LegislativeCommitteeRoomMaps.

Capitol parking maps assist in locating accessible parking for persons with disabilities, visitor lots, overflow lots, motorcycle parking spots, employee parking, service/delivery vehicle parking, and temporary parking around the Iowa State Capitol, and can be found at: <https://das.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/general/pdf/CAPITOL%20COMPLEX%20PARKING.pdf>.

CONNECT WITH RSAI

If you are in Des Moines during the legislative session and would like to connect, contact RSAI's Professional Advocates, Margaret Buckton, on her cell phone at (515) 201-3755, to learn about the activities at the Statehouse that day, get assistance connecting with your legislators or finding important committee meetings.

FINDING YOUR LOCAL LEGISLATORS

HOW TO FIND YOUR LOCAL LEGISLATORS

Search by School District:

If you don't know which legislators represent your school district, don't worry, you can look them up. Visit <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find?district=>, then select your school district's name from the drop down list. If you have a legislative information page on your school district's website, we recommend you consider posting this information which includes each legislator's contact information.

View Using an Interactive Map

You can also find your legislators using the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) interactive map. Visit <https://gis.legis.iowa.gov/FYL/index.html>, then type in your ZIP code, town or county.

Search By Committee Assignments

A list of legislative committees and committee members that closely influence education follow in the next few pages. The complete list of Legislative Committee assignments can be found on the Iowa Legislative website at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees>

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR



Governor Kim Reynolds



Lt. Governor Adam Greg

Governor's Office

1007 East Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50319






Phone: (515) 281-5211

Website: <https://governor.iowa.gov/>

LEADERSHIP

2021 LEADERS OF THE IOWA SENATE

Leaders of the Iowa Senate and House of Representatives, past and current, can be found on the Iowa Legislature website at: www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/leadership.



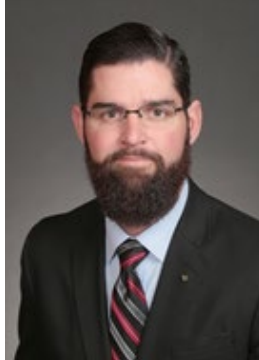


 <p>Jake Chapman President</p>	 <p>Brad Zaun President Pro Tempore</p>	 <p>Jack Whitver Majority Leader</p>	 <p>Zach Wahls Democratic Leader</p>	 <p>Amanda Ragan Democratic Whip</p>
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Majority Whip:	Amy Sinclair
Assistant Majority Leader:	Chris Cournoyer
Assistant Majority Leader:	Carrie Koelker
Assistant Majority Leader:	Mark S. Lofgren
Assistant Majority Leader:	Zach Whiting
Assistant Democratic Leader:	Nate Boulton
Assistant Democratic Leader:	William A. Dotzler Jr.
Assistant Democratic Leader:	Pam Jochum
Assistant Democratic Leader:	Herman C. Quirmbach
Assistant Democratic Leader:	Jackie Smith

LEADERSHIP

2021 LEADERS OF THE IOWA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Leaders of the Iowa Senate and House of Representatives, past and current, can be found on the Iowa Legislature website at: www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/leadership.

				
Pat Grassley Speaker	John H. Wills Speaker Pro Tempore	Matt W. Windschitl Majority Leader	Todd Prichard Minority Leader	Jennifer Konfrst Minority Whip

Majority Whip:	Mike Sexton
Assistant Majority Leader:	Cecil Dolecheck
Assistant Majority Leader:	Joe Mitchell
Assistant Majority Leader:	Brent Siegrist
Assistant Majority Leader:	Jon Thorup
Assistant Minority Leader:	Eric Gjerde
Assistant Minority Leader:	Lindsay James
Assistant Minority Leader:	Charlie McConkey
Assistant Minority Leader:	Brian Meyer

HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

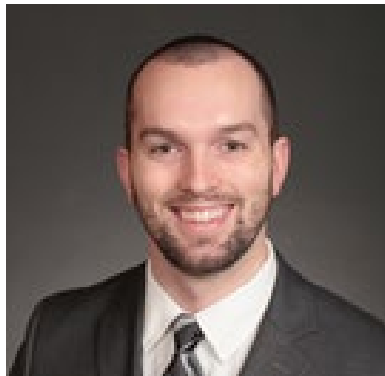
PURPOSE

This Committee considers all legislation related to Public and Private PK-12 education policy and laws impacting the Iowa Department of Education (DE), Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE), Department of Community Colleges, Regents Institutions, Area Education Agencies (AEA), special education, and early childhood. School funding bills may start in this Committee or in the Appropriations Committee.

2021 LEADERSHIP



[Dustin D. Hite](#)
(R, District [79](#)), Chair



[Skyler Wheeler](#)
(R, District [4](#)), Vice Chair



[RasTafari I. Smith](#)
(D, District [62](#)), Ranking Member

2021 OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- [Jacob Bossman](#) (R, District [6](#))
- [Holly Brink](#) (R, District [80](#))
- [Sue Cahill](#) (D, District [71](#))
- [Cecil Dolecheck](#) (R, District [24](#))
- [Molly Donahue](#) (D, District [68](#))
- [Tracy Ehlert](#) (D, District [70](#))
- [Joel Fry](#) (R, District [27](#))
- [Ruth Ann Gaines](#) (D, District [32](#))
- [Garrett Gobble](#) (R, District [38](#))
- [Chad Ingels](#) (R, District [64](#))
- [David Kerr](#) (R, District [88](#))
- [Mary Mascher](#) (D, District [86](#))
- [Tom Moore](#) (R, District [21](#))
- [Sandy Salmon](#) (R, District [63](#))
- [Ray Sorensen](#) (R, District [20](#))
- [Sharon S. Steckman](#) (D, District [53](#))
- [Henry Stone](#) (R, District [7](#))
- [Phil Thompson](#) (R, District [47](#))
- [John H. Wills](#) (R, District [1](#))
- [Cindy Winckler](#) (D, District [90](#))

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

PURPOSE

This Committee considers all legislation related to Public and Private PK-12 education policy and laws impacting the Iowa Department of Education (DE), Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE), Department of Community Colleges, Regents Institutions, Area Education Agencies (AEA), special education, and early childhood. School funding bills may start in this Committee or in the Appropriations Committee. This Committee also approves the Governor's appointees to key Executive Branch positions such as the State Board of Education and Director of the Iowa Department of Education.

2021 LEADERSHIP



[Amy Sinclair](#)
(R, District [14](#)), Chair



[Jeff Taylor](#)
(R, District [2](#)), Vice Chair



[Herman C. Quirnbach](#)
(D, District [23](#)), Ranking Member

2021 OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- [Jim Carlin](#) (R, District [3](#))
- [Claire Celsi](#) (D, District [21](#))
- [Chris Cournoyer](#) (R, District [49](#))
- [Eric Giddens](#) (D, District [30](#))
- [Tim Goodwin](#) (R, District [44](#))
- [Craig Johnson](#) (R, District [32](#))
- [Tim Kraayenbrink](#) (R, District [5](#))
- [Ken Rozenboom](#) (R, District [40](#))
- [Jackie Smith](#) (D, District [7](#))
- [Annette Sweeney](#) (R, District [25](#))
- [Sarah Trone Garriott](#) (D, District [22](#))
- [Brad Zaun](#) (R, District [20](#))

EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

PURPOSE

This Committee reviews prior year budgets and drafts and approves a bill including Education Appropriations impacting the DE, AEAs, Community Colleges, Regents Universities, Early Childhood and some line item appropriations impacting school district funding and other education entities. They may start the bills on the percentage increase in State Supplemental Assistance, SSA, the per pupil amount which determines formula funding, but don't always weigh in on that funding. If it doesn't start in this Committee, it will start in the full Appropriations Committee.

2021 LEADERSHIP



SENATE
[Chris Cournover](#)
(R, District [49](#))
Chair

SENATE
[Jesse Green](#)
(R, District [24](#))
Vice-Chair

SENATE
[Jackie Smith](#)
(D, District [7](#))
Ranking Member

HOUSE
[David Kerr](#)
(R, District [88](#))
Chair

HOUSE
[Garrett Gobble](#)
(R, District [38](#))
Vice-Chair

HOUSE
[Cindy Winckler](#)
(D, District [90](#))
Ranking Member

2021 OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Senate:

- [Herman C. Quirnbach](#) (D, District [23](#))
- [Annette Sweeney](#) (R, District [25](#))

House:

- [Sue Cahill](#) (D, District [71](#))
- [Cecil Dolecheck](#) (R, District [24](#))
- [Tom Moore](#) (R, District [21](#))
- [Brent Siegrist](#) (R, District [16](#))
- [Art Staed](#) (D, District [66](#))
- [Dave Williams](#) (D, District [60](#))

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

PURPOSE

This Committee is primarily responsible for the state budget. Members approve any bill with an appropriation that comes from another Committee or is referred to Appropriations from the floor or from the other chamber. Appropriations bills can originate in this Committee, too, such as the Standings Appropriations bill which includes the funding for the school foundation formula. The most important decision for school funding, the increase in state supplemental assistance (SSA), which is the per pupil percentage increase in the formula, traditionally requires approval of the Appropriations Committee, too.

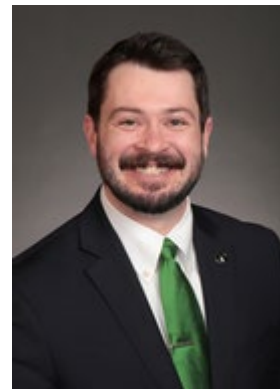
2021 LEADERSHIP



Gary M. Mohr
(R, District [94](#)), Chair



Shannon Latham
(R, District [54](#)), Vice Chair



Chris Hall
(D, District [13](#)), Ranking Member

2021 OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- [Jacob Bossman](#) (R, District [6](#))
- [Holly Brink](#) (R, District [80](#))
- [Dave Deyoe](#) (R, District [49](#))
- [John Forbes](#) (D, District [40](#))
- [Joel Fry](#) (R, District [27](#))
- [Steven Holt](#) (R, District [18](#))
- [David Kerr](#) (R, District [88](#))
- [Jennifer Konfrst](#) (D, District [43](#))
- [John Landon](#) (R, District [37](#))
- [Ann Meyer](#) (R, District [9](#))
- [Norlin G. Mommsen](#) (R, District [97](#))
- [Jo Oldson](#) (D, District [41](#))
- [Kirsten Running-Marquardt](#) (D, District [69](#))
- [Ray Sorensen](#) (R, District [20](#))
- [Sharon S. Steckman](#) (D, District [53](#))
- [Phyllis Thede](#) (D, District [93](#))
- [Phil Thompson](#) (R, District [47](#))
- [Ross Wilburn](#) (D, District [46](#))
- [Dave Williams](#) (D, District [60](#))
- [John H. Wills](#) (R, District [1](#))
- [Cindy Winckler](#) (D, District [90](#))
- [Gary Worthan](#) (R, District [11](#))

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

PURPOSE

This Committee is primarily responsible for the state budget. Members approve any bill with an appropriation that comes from another Committee or is referred to Appropriations from the floor or from the other chamber. Appropriations bills can originate in this Committee, too, such as the Standings Appropriations bill which includes the funding for the school foundation formula. The most important decision for school funding, the increase in state supplemental assistance (SSA), which is the per pupil percentage increase in the formula, traditionally requires approval of the Appropriations Committee, too.

2021 LEADERSHIP



[Tim Kraayenbrink](#)
(R, District [5](#)), Chair



[Mark S. Lofgren](#)
(R, District [46](#)), Vice Chair



[Joe Bolkcom](#)
(D, District [43](#)), Ranking Member

2021 OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- [Claire Celsi](#) (D, District [21](#))
- [Mark Costello](#) (R, District [12](#))
- [Chris Cournoyer](#) (R, District [49](#))
- [William A. Dotzler Jr.](#) (D, District [31](#))
- [Jeff Edler](#) (R, District [36](#))
- [Julian B. Garrett](#) (R, District [13](#))
- [Dennis Guth](#) (R, District [4](#))
- [Craig Johnson](#) (R, District [32](#))
- [Mike Klimesh](#) (R, District [28](#))
- [Carrie Koelker](#) (R, District [29](#))
- [Liz Mathis](#) (D, District [34](#))
- [Janet Petersen](#) (D, District [18](#))
- [Amanda Ragan](#) (D, District [27](#))
- [Jeff Reichman](#) (R, District [42](#))
- [Ken Rozenboom](#) (R, District [40](#))
- [Jackie Smith](#) (D, District [7](#))
- [Todd E. Taylor](#) (D, District [35](#))
- [Craig Williams](#) (R, District [6](#))

WHY ADVOCACY MATTERS

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is about building support for an issue to inform and influence those who make policy decisions. *Effective* advocacy can be defined as “gentle persuasion applied relentlessly”.

IS ADVOCACY PART OF MY JOB?

Student success depends on effective advocacy for resources, supports, staff, programs, and the priority of public education. If not those of you who are closest to the needs of schools and students, then who?

WHO ELSE IS AT THE PARTY?

- There is a lot of competition for a legislator’s attention and for public resources.
- There are 992 registered lobby groups in Iowa: business organizations, farmers organizations, unions, utilities, builders, civil liberties groups, lawyers, cities and counties, colleges and universities, home schools/private schools, textbook companies, testing companies, hospitals/health care groups, law enforcement, environmental groups, insurance companies, bus builders, truckers, religious groups, nursing homes, media, alcohol distributors, gaming institutions, gun owner groups, gun control advocates, hunters, PETA, anti-tax organizations, and many more.
- As often stated, quoting David Lyons, former Iowa Insurance Commissioner, *“If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.”*

BASIC ADVOCACY CONCEPTS FROM JOEL BLACKWELL, “THE GRASS ROOTS GUY”:

Mr. Blackwell says that so few people actually engage in the process, that those who do have disproportionate power. *“If you can break through the social media noise and establish a good relationship, you can be one of those people.”* Mr. Blackwell continues:

- *“Our political system is not designed to decide who is right and who is wrong. It is designed to decide who has the majority.”*
- *“If you can’t prove that lots of people are with you, you will fail.”*
- *“There are no right or wrong positions in politics, just decisions made by human beings for good reasons or bad reasons, or out of indifference.”*
- *“If you have the votes in the legislature or Congress, you’re right. If you don’t, you’re wrong.”*
- *“No political decision is permanent; the fat lady never sings.”*
- *“All things being equal, politicians will go with the flow. Your job is to create the flow.”*

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT ADVOCACY

- Your opinion matters. Lobbying isn’t just for the professionals. The process is better when more voices are involved.
- Don’t be intimidated. Be impressed with the building, the history, the institution, but don’t be intimidated when speaking to an elected official. It’s their job to represent you, so they work for you. The only way they can do that is if you tell them what’s on your mind.

- You likely know more details about the subject you're discussing than the legislator. But don't worry if you're not an expert; do the best that you can and suggest more specifics can be answered by your RSAI Professional Advocate or others.
- Don't ever be afraid to say you aren't sure of an answer, but volunteer to find out the answer for the legislator.
- Follow up on anything you promise. Keep your RSAI Professional Advocates in the loop and ask for help with next steps.
- Remember advocacy efforts aren't just during the legislative session. Advocacy is a year-long process. Focus on creating a long-term relationship to increase your influence.
- Keep your communications and requests concise. And always put it in writing for them.
- You can't say "thank you" enough. Thank you for running or serving, thank you for listening to our concerns or ideas, thank you for considering or voting for or against.

ADVOCACY ACTION STEPS

Steps to advocate successfully.

STEP 1 – KNOW YOUR LEGISLATORS (WHO)

Find out who represents you and their core values and positions on issues. Learn about their background. Build a relationship.

STEP 2 – KNOW YOUR PRIORITIES (WHAT)

Establish what's most important to your district. What is it you want to happen? Learn about how much will it cost and what's involved in a solution? What are both sides of the issue and the pros and cons? Look to RSAI Position Papers and Calls to Action for details.

STEP 3 – KNOW YOUR DATA (WHY)

Why is the issue important? What is the impact to your district and to your legislator's constituents? Prepare to be direct about the issues, using layman's terms, explain the issue and why their action is necessary on behalf of the students in your school.

STEP 4 – PREPARE YOUR ASK (WHAT DO YOU WANT THEM TO DO)

Prepare for what you want the legislator to do. Be specific about your "ask" (vote for or vote against). Keep it short and simple, concise and to the point. Use the language of your legislators' core values. Be positive, don't be critical of others when making your case.

STEP 5 – CONTACT YOUR PROFESSIONAL ADVOCATE

It's always a good idea to make sure you're on the right track with another set of eyes on your Message Worksheet (from page 33). Get access to already prepared resources and make sure you have current data and talking points around your issue. Check out RSAI's Legislative webpage for tools and key messages.

STEP 6 – CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR AND MAKE THE ASK

Be sure to illustrate the impact of the solution. Ask for a commitment. If they disagree, listen to their position and keep channels of communication open. Follow up in writing afterwards.

STEP 7 – FOLLOW UP

Say thank you. Be persistent and consistent.

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH LEGISLATORS...AT THE BOARD TABLE

APPROVE YOUR DISTRICT'S PRIORITIES AT A PUBLIC MEETING

Be deliberate about what is important to your district by having a discussion at the board table and taking action on your district's priorities. Share those priorities with RSAI.

COMMUNICATE YOUR PRIORITIES

Send a press release or write a letter to the editor of your local paper. Share your adopted priorities with all of your legislative representatives. Communicate why they are important.

MAKE ADVOCACY A PRIORITY

Assign a lead individual for each district priority, or for each advocacy organization, to closely follow issues and report back to the board throughout the year. Consider including advocacy and building legislator connections into board/administrator job descriptions. Ask for advocacy updates in the regular superintendent's report or include an advocacy agenda item during your board meeting.

RECRUIT ADVOCATES

Build an advocacy team at your district or delegate that action internally. Determine who else cares about your issues and recruit advocates such as a Community Legislative Action Team (CLAT), or Legislative Advocacy Action Team (LAAT), and engage with parent groups, student groups, and community stakeholders, Chamber of Commerce, Retired Teachers Association, etc.

PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS

Share RSAI Calls to Action with your board members and administrative team, participate in Calls to Action from home and Lobby Days at the Statehouse, and create conversation opportunities at home.

RECOGNIZE YOUR LEGISLATORS, PERSONALLY AND PUBLICLY

Send your legislators thank you notes or emails personally, but also thank your legislators publically during public meetings or send letters to the editors or post on social media recognizing their efforts.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Strive for balance (whether or not you have balanced representation). Invite both sides and ask balanced questions.
- Prepare them for success – never try to sandbag or trap them. Share questions and concerns in advance so they are prepared to respond.

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH LEGISLATORS...AT THE STATEHOUSE

REMEMBER THAT LEGISLATORS HAVE MANY RESPONSIBILITIES

A normal day for legislators during the legislative session begins at the Statehouse around 8:30 a.m. but many of them begin earlier with receptions and meetings before the start of business. Their days are filled with debate in the House or Senate chambers, caucuses (which are not open to the public), committee meetings (which are open to the public), and many receptions, demonstrations, and discussions. Members of the public can observe a committee meeting, but can only speak when the committee chair has invited comment or committee members vote to allow someone from the public to speak.

The schedules for each day are listed on boards in front of each chamber on the second floor of the Capitol. The House Lobby Lounge (to the right of the House Chamber) includes television sets with scrolling subcommittee and committee meetings. Subcommittees are also taped to a bulletin board in the Senate Lobby Lounge (to the left of the Senate Chamber).

Subcommittees are one place where democracy happens at the Iowa Statehouse. Generally, members of the public are invited to provide their opinions of the legislation on the agenda, can bring written information, or speak and/or ask questions about a bill. If you are visiting the Statehouse, ask your RSAI Professional Advocacy if there are any subcommittee meetings on the day's business that you should observe, or even provide testimony at, if you are willing.

Each legislator has a desk on the floor of the House or Senate Chamber, and each legislator has a clerk that helps them keep up with daily paperwork. The clerks are often family members of the legislators or friends. They can help you locate your legislators if they are not available when you send in your notes. The best way to reach a legislator if you don't have a previously scheduled appointment is to go to the door of the House or Senate Chamber. Even if you have a scheduled meeting, be patient and remember that legislators may be delayed and are not always in control of their own schedules.

GO TO THE HOUSE OR SENATE CHAMBER

Both Chambers are located on the second floor of the Capitol. The House is on the north side and the Senate is on the south side. If you face the Law Library from the middle of the second floor, the House is on your right and the Senate is on your left.

SEND A MESSAGE TO YOUR LEGISLATOR THROUGH THE DOORKEEPER

The public is only allowed in the chambers when they are with a legislator, and only after they get permission from leadership, so don't just walk into the chamber. You should fill out a "slip" and send it into your legislator through the doorkeeper. The slip is yellow for the House, and pink for the Senate. They are located at tables directly in front of each chamber entrance.

The slip includes space for you to fill in your name, the name of the legislator you wish to

contact and their SEAT NUMBER (not to be confused with their district number). Legislators are listed alphabetically on a sheet of paper located on the board above the table, just outside of the Chamber entrance. The paper also lists legislator seat numbers.

If you are part of a group, just fill out one slip and indicate “a group from ___ school district” or “High School Principal Mrs. Smith and 10 students from ___ school district”.

Circle the option called “waiting to see you.” It is also good to write on the note where you are from (for example, Jane Doe of Belmont, Iowa) so legislators know if you have come a long way to see them. Also, include your cell phone number so they can reach you before you leave the building if they cannot see you immediately.

Hand the slip to the doorkeeper and wait for a response. Sometimes it may take your legislator 10-15 minutes to come out. (They may be finishing up a call or conversation before coming out to talk to you.)

If your legislator is not available or not in their seat, a page or doorkeeper will come back out and call your name. You may need to listen closely as the rotunda can be loud. If your note does not come back out, it means your legislator was there and will be out soon to talk to you.

Sometimes a staff person will come out to speak to you if the legislator is occupied. Be polite and treat this staff person as you would the legislator — a lot of times the staff person is a friend, relative, daughter/son or spouse of the legislator.

Be prepared and be patient. The Capitol can be noisy and crowded, and you may feel jostled if the crowd that day is particularly large. If you’re bringing a group, it’s always a good idea to let the legislator know in advance (and let your RSAI Professional Advocate know as well so we can support you).

SAMPLE SLIPS

THE SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
DATE: _____ TIME: _____	SEAT NO: _____
TO: _____	REPRESENTATIVE: _____
SEAT NO: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> OR CLERK: _____ (NAME)
MESSAGE:	OF: _____ (TOWN, COMPANY, ORGANIZATION)
.....	1. IS WAITING TO SEE YOU
NAME: _____	2. HAS LEFT LITERATURE
CELL PHONE #: _____	3. HAS LEFT THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE:
_____ IS AT THE REAR OF THE CHAMBER AND REQUESTS TO SEE YOU	DATE: _____ TIME: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> AT THE MAIN DOOR	<input type="checkbox"/> AT THE MAIN DOOR

GENERAL ETIQUETTE & REMINDERS

Don't be nervous, legislators are there to represent you. Use the legislator's title (Senator or Representative) as if it's their first name. Clearly identify yourself including your name, position, and school district. Be brief, focusing on one or two issues. Always be courteous, thanking them for their support or consideration. Be clear about what you are asking them to do: Will you consider supporting this issue? Will you vote against this bill? Send them a follow up. See more details and our Message Worksheet on page 33 of this Handbook.

LEAVING MESSAGES

If your slip comes back out and your legislator is not available, take the time to write a short "sorry I missed you" note that states very briefly the issue you wanted to talk to them about. It's okay to continue writing on the back of the note if you run out of room. You can leave a Position Paper or written explanation of your issue along with the note.

Circle the option "Has Left the Following Message", send the note back and ask to have it left on their desk. Be sure to mark the time of day and date that you left the note.

Write something like:

"I was here today with ___ School District and wanted to talk to you about ___." And

"...I will email you information about the issue." or

"...I live in [city] and would like to take a few minutes today while I'm in town. I will be here until [time]. Should you be available, please call me on my cell phone at 555-555-5555."

CONNECT WITH THE GOVERNOR

The Governor's formal office is on the 1st Floor of the Statehouse. You can arrange in advance for your group to visit the Governor in her office. If she's not available or you did not schedule in advance, you can leave a note in her office with your contact information and background on an issue. The Governor is very fond of connecting with students and will strive to make time in her busy schedule if you plan ahead.

CONNECT WITH THE IOWA SECRETARY OF STATE

The Secretary of State's Office is on the first floor of the Statehouse across from the Governor's Office, next to the replica of the U.S.S. Iowa Battleship. If High School students are with you or people new to Iowa, they can register to vote and take a quick tour of the Secretary of State's office during your visit.

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH LEGISLATORS...FROM HOME

GENERAL LEGISLATOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Individual legislator contact information including photo, email, cell phone, home phone, home mailing address are typically posted on the Iowa Legislative Website. Lookup your legislators at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>, then click an individual legislator to find their personal information. Emails can be sent to the Governor through the Governor's website at www.governor.iowa.gov/contact

MAILING ADDRESSES

Write to your individual legislators at:

Senator ____ or Representative ____
State Capitol
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Use "Dear Senator Last Name" or "Dear Representative Last Name"

Write to the Governor at:

Governor Reynolds or Lt. Governor Gregg
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Use "Dear Governor Reynolds" or "Dear Lt. Governor Gregg"

PHONE NUMBERS

Call your legislators at the Capitol:

Senator Switchboard: (515) 281-3371
House Switchboard: (515) 281-3221
Governor's Office: (515) 281-5211

Leave a specific message such as, "This is Jane Doe from the Happy Valley School Board. Please support HF 1234 on today's calendar. Call my cell phone at (555) 555-5555 if you would like to discuss."

Use your legislators' home or cell phone number to call them on weekends or when the legislature is not in session. Use the Message Worksheet on page 33 prior to your call to help you stay on message.

GENERAL TIPS

- Phone or email is generally preferable for urgent issues, while mail is generally preferable for thank you notes or more detailed background information.
- Be sure to always identify yourself and your role at the district, and let them know you are a constituent in their district.
- Reference Bill Numbers and Bill Name when possible (ask your RSAI Professional Advocate for assistance as bill numbers change throughout the process).
- Always thank them for considering the issue, taking your call, or for their leadership.

USING EMAIL EFFECTIVELY

More legislators are accustomed to communicating via email today than ever before. It is a good idea to check with your legislator early in the process to see how they prefer to receive information and to confirm that email is OK, or perhaps they would prefer a text message. As they may receive hundreds of emails or text messages a day, always identify yourself in the subject line: with something like "Request from Jane Doe, Superintendent from __ CSD, regarding vote on SF 123 today." Make sure you include your email address for a reply.

Start with a thank you, include your "ask" (what you want them to do), and provide some background justification. You can use key messages provided by various associations that are asking for your timely action, but if you have time, personalize them and provide local district examples.

If things are time-sensitive, you can call the House or Senate Switchboard and leave a message, directing them to your email or text. If time allows, you can also print a copy of the email and drop it in an envelope addressed to them at the Statehouse, just to make sure they received it. If you have a group in favor of a position, include a "cc" on the email to others that will also be able to chime in or show the broad support of your issue.

When sending email during the school day in particular, some legislators are very sensitive to the perception of the sender's time, whether they are on the clock or using school resources to communicate. Although advocacy is part of an administrator's or board member's job description, you can avoid any ill perception by using a personal email address. Again, just confirm with the legislator before the session starts if they have concerns about which email address you should use and behave accordingly.

Lastly, always use a respectful tone in email and text messages. Be aware that anything you put in writing could wind up on the front page of the paper.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Local media coverage matters, as legislators know that civically engaged voters often read the newspaper. Short letters to the editor encouraging support or defeat of a particular bill, with two or three sentences on why it matters for students or taxpayers can be very effective. Recruit a few others to follow-up with another letter to the editor agreeing with your letter. Cut out the article and write a note on it, and send it to your legislator through the mail. You can also do this with information that is celebrating a student or school success or highlighting an issue that needs their support or attention. Ask your RSAI Professional Advocate for assistance in drafting letters to the editor or strategies to build media coverage or support.

MEETING VIRTUALLY

There's nothing like a global pandemic to improve everyone's skills at virtual meetings. Invite your legislator to a Zoom meeting (or virtual platform of your choice) to discuss your district's priorities or a key piece of legislation. Invite others from your district who can chime in and give everyone a specific issue or talking point to communicate, or just ask them to listen and provide support. Have a brief agenda and specific time commitment (if it's 30 minutes, stick to that timeframe and be prepared to schedule a follow-up meeting to continue the discussion if necessary). Start with introductions, thank the legislator(s) for their time and service, and stick to the agenda. Listen closely for follow-up needs or next steps. End with a thank you. Send an email or written thank you note as well, including thanking them for their specific commitment made to take an action.

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH CANDIDATES...BEFORE AN ELECTION

IDENTIFY THE CANDIDATES

A listing of candidates running for an upcoming election can be found on the Iowa Secretary of State's website at <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/candidates/index.html>. Select Primary, General, City or School for the respective election.

SEND THEM A NOTE

Thank them for running for office. Offer to be an educational resource for them. Wish them good luck or ask to meet and talk about their vision for education. Communicate and build relationships with all candidates.

SIGN UP FOR THEIR EMAILS/NEWSLETTERS, AND CONNECT WITH THEM ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Find links to sign up for newsletters on the Iowa Legislative webpage for each legislator.

FIND OUT WHO ELSE SUPPORTS THEM

Check each candidate's social media pages or website for endorsements. You can also find a listing of those that contribute \$25 or more to a candidate's campaign on the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board (IECDB) website at <https://webapp.iecdb.iowa.gov/PublicView/search.aspx?d=statewide>. Type in the candidate's last name or a PAC or party name. (You may need to search more than one report to find a complete list.) You can search the results by city or name to find those that donated from your community that may help you build relationships with the candidates.

CONTRIBUTE TO A CANDIDATE'S CAMPAIGN

You can contribute to a candidate's campaign in many ways. You can volunteer to make phone calls, stuff envelopes, distribute flyers, or hold a virtual or in-person meeting. You can share relevant information on educational priorities or serve as a resource to answer their questions. You can also donate personally to their campaigns. A \$25 donation or higher lists you as a donor on the IECDB reports. Just for your information, a \$100 contribution is a large personal donation for most local elections.

HOLD A MEETING WITH THE CANDIDATE

Meet over Zoom, over coffee, or at the local diner or ice cream shop. Make introductions. Exchange contact information. Learn something personal about them such as where they went to school or if anyone in their family served in education. Share your district's legislative priorities and give them a Position Paper (or two) or another handout on your most important priorities. Ask them about their education priorities and what committees they want to serve on if elected.

SHARE YOUR CONTACTS WITH YOUR RSAI PROFESSIONAL ADVOCATE

Always share information about your legislative contacts with your RSAI Professional Advocate. We are here to support your continued connection.

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH CANDIDATES...AFTER AN ELECTION

SEND THEM A NOTE

Congratulate them on being elected. Offer to be an educational resource for them to answer questions. Offer to review legislation for them and share the impact of proposals on your district, staff and students.

SHARE YOUR DISTRICT'S PRIORITIES

Share your district's priorities with them right away so they can share them at their caucus. Also, school funding is supposed to be decided within the first 30 days of the release of the Governor's budget, so focus on school funding issues first.

SCHEDULE ANOTHER FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

Although one-on-one meetings are good, consider a joint effort with other school leaders in the legislator's district. Or, include a School Board Member, Administrator, Teacher, and Student. Reach out to your RSAI Legislative Advocate for resources before the meeting so you are well prepared. Make introductions. Exchange contact information. Learn something personal about them such as where they went to school or if anyone in their family served in education. Share your district's legislative priorities and give them a Position Paper or two on your most important priorities. Ask them about their education priorities and what committees they want to or will serve on. Consider taking a photo to use on social media or send to the local paper summarizing the meeting. Follow up after the meeting with a thank you and copy of the photo.

COMMUNICATE REGULARLY

Communicate regularly with your legislators. Let them know the impact of proposals on your local district. Prepare local resources, facts, and figures. Contact your RSAI Professional Advocate for information.

SHARE YOUR CONTACTS WITH YOUR RSAI PROFESSIONAL ADVOCATE

Always share information about your legislative contacts with your RSAI Professional Advocate.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

ASSUME THE BEST IN YOUR LEGISLATORS

Your legislators are learning about and making decisions on hundreds of bills each year, making it difficult to keep track and know all the details about every issue. Give them the benefit of the doubt and assume they are doing their best to do the right thing.

FIND COMMON GROUND

Remember that most Americans have more in common than the current political environment may lead you to believe. According to Phillip Boyle, *Local School Board Governance, 2004*, public decisions involve choices and public choices always involve values. Core Values such as:

- **Liberty:** freedom, autonomy, choice, opportunity, individuality, privacy;
- **Community:** safety, security, belonging, social order, quality of life;
- **Equality:** fairness, justice, tolerance, diversity, equal treatment, equal opportunity; and
- **Prosperity:** productivity, efficiency, growth, markets.

FOCUS ON CORE VALUES

Which of those Core Values is critical to any particular policy choice? Which of these Core Values is central to your legislators' framework? Tie your district's priorities back to these Core Values by translating your needs into their language. For example:

Prosperity/growing the Iowa Economy:

- Investments in PK save tax dollars down the road (prevention is worth a pound of cure or efficient use of tax dollars).
- Quality schools prepare a quality workforce (prepared graduates become tax contributors rather than tax consumers).
- What does it take for a quality teaching workforce in Iowa? Sufficient salaries and benefits to compete for human capital.

MESSAGE WORKSHEET / PREPARING FOR YOUR CONVERSATION

Before you meet with your legislators, use the following Message Worksheet to help you develop your message and talking points. Have it in front of you during the meeting or call. Use the bottom portion to take notes during the discussion.

YOUR ISSUE/STORY (IN 50 WORDS OR LESS):

KEY POINTS TO MAKE:

WHAT DO YOU WANT THEM TO DO:

DURING THE MEETING, WHAT DID THEY COMMIT TO:

DURING THE MEETING, WHAT FOLLOW UP DID YOU AGREE TO:

THANK YOU (in-person) and follow up later with another thank you.

**Don't forget to exchange contact information during your meeting.*

ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN

Use this basic template to create your own action plan and timelines for connecting with candidates before an election or as a guide for advocacy to use throughout the year.

Steps I will take to learn more about my legislators

-
-
-

Steps I will take to learn more about the issues

-
-
-

Specific Advocacy Actions I will take before the General Election

-
-
-

Specific Advocacy Actions I will take after the General Election

-
-
-

<u>Possible Action Steps</u>	<u>Date</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Find your candidate contact information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Find out which legislative House & Senate district you live in at https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find ○ Find if there are one or two (or more) candidates running for that seat from this link to the Secretary of State's general election candidates' list which includes their address, phone and email at https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/candidates/index.html 	Sept. 16
<input type="checkbox"/> Sign up to receive incumbent legislators' emails or newsletters	Sept. 16
<input type="checkbox"/> Reach out to each candidate running for office with a note <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask them what their priority is for education, ○ Offer to be an informational resource, ○ Give them your contact information and thank them for running for office. 	Sept. 21
<input type="checkbox"/> Offer to help – send a check, get together and talk about issues, share Position Papers, provide information and data	Sept. 28
<input type="checkbox"/> Send a congrats note to the winners (include contact information and offer to have a meeting)	Nov. 9
<input type="checkbox"/> Share Position Papers and talking points on key issues	Nov. 20
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilize key moments for connecting (your board approved resolution adopting priorities, attendance at IASB, RSAI, UEN, or SAI Annual Meetings, etc.)	As they occur
<input type="checkbox"/> Convene a group of key education friends (school board member, parent, teacher, supportive local business owner or farmer, etc.) and discuss priority issues	Dec. 15
<input type="checkbox"/> Add AEA Superintendent's Lobby Day to your calendar. Let your legislators know you are attending	(Two weeks) in advance)
<input type="checkbox"/> Write a letter (or recruit another person to write a letter) to the editor of your local paper about the priority of adequate school funding	Dec. 15 – Jan 8
<input type="checkbox"/> Recruit someone to comment positively on your letter to the editor	Jan. 8
<input type="checkbox"/> Copy the letter and the responses and mail or email it to your legislators with a thank you note for prioritizing public education in advance of their decision	Jan. 18

RESOURCES TO HELP

POSITION PAPERS

RSAI Position Papers summarize an individual issue providing data, statistics, and talking points. These are a great resource to take with you to meetings with your legislators and share with your advocacy teams.

WEEKLY RECAP REPORTS AND VIDEO

The RSAI Weekly Recap Report and Video are typically distributed each Thursday evening during the legislative session summarizing the actions that took place that week and issues anticipated for the upcoming week. Designed to keep you updated on legislative activity with a quick read or under 10-minute video view.

CALLS TO ACTION

Calls to Action alert members when issues pop up requiring timely advocacy (such as adequate school funding, the priority of school funding in the budget, opposition to vouchers or elimination of desegregation plan open enrollment regulations, etc.). These are indications that it is time to reach out to your legislator via phone or email on an urgent matter. Share these with your board, administration, and advocacy teams.

RSAI WEBSITE

All of the resources mentioned here, and more, are posted on the RSAI website for quick access by members. Check the Legislative tab at www.rsaia.org/legislative.

SAMPLE LETTERS TO LEGISLATORS OR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Your Professional Advocates are here to help you draft or edit letters to your legislators or letters to the editor on issues important to your local district.

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

Produced annually, the RSAI Legislative Digest is a summary of all of the details and legislative actions that took place during the most recent legislative session impacting Iowa schools. Find it on the Legislative tab at www.rsaia.org/legislative.

QUICK LINKS

There are a number of educational organizations in Iowa that employ professional advocates at the Statehouse and work collaboratively for Iowa schools and students. Important links for the legislature and other education advocacy organizations follow:

- **Iowa Legislature** <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/>
- **Iowa DE Legislative Page** (includes Bill Tracking, Legislative Reports and Guidance and Updates on Legislation) <https://www.educateiowa.gov/resources/legislative-information>
- **Iowa AEAs Legislative Page** <http://www.iowaaea.org/about/legislative-priorities/>
- **IASB Legislative Page** [IASB Advocacy Center](#)
- **ISEA Lobbying Resources Page** <https://isea.org/lobbying-resources/>
- **Parents for Great Iowa Schools** <http://parentsforgreatiowaschools.com/>
- **RSAI Legislative Page** (includes weekly reports and Capitol Recap Video, Position Papers, Advocacy Resources, Transportation and Formula Equity Toolkit, and RSAI legislative platform) www.rsaia.org/legislative.html
- **SAI Legislative Page** <http://www.sai-iowa.org/advocacy.cfm>
- **UEN Legislative Page** www.uen-ia/legislation

OTHER RESOURCE

ISFIS Web Site: (includes access to webinars on DE guidance, implementation of legislative expectations, Governor's action & declarations, and district flexibility)
www.iowaschoolfinance.com

SOURCES

A special thank you to Iowans with Disabilities in Action, Infonet Iowa, Iowa Hospital Association, IASB, NSBA, and AASA for their good models of lobbying and advocacy practices, some of which are incorporated in this Handbook. Thanks also to Joel Blackwell (the Grassroots Guy), Drake Law Library, and Legislative Services Agency for certain content included as well.

NUTS & BOLTS OF POLICY

HOW AN IDEA BECOMES A LAW

A legislative bill is a written proposal for a law. Ideas for bills come from many sources: a legislator, two or more legislators, a legislator's constituents, businesses, government agencies, professional associations, interest groups, and other state legislatures. When a legislator recognizes or is made aware of a problem that could be pursued through legislation, that idea is put into the form of a bill.

Bills may be sponsored by a Senator or Representative, more than one Senator or Representative, or by a Senate or House committee. Bills may also be proposed by the Executive Branch, Governor's Office, and Judicial Branch for legislative sponsorship. When a bill is introduced by members of a legislative chamber, it must follow a process and, if passed, be sent to members in the other legislative chamber, where this process is repeated.

All bills must be approved in identical form by both the Senate and the House before being sent to the Governor for final approval.

BILL DRAFTING

The staff in the Legal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) provides legal and legislative research services necessary to draft a bill. This may include reviewing current Iowa Code provisions, locating relevant publications, or reviewing other state and federal laws pertaining to the subject matter of the draft. After the information is drafted into bill form, the drafter sends the bill to the legislative sponsor(s) for approval, and then the bill is prepared for bill introduction and floor debate.

INTRODUCTION

After the bill draft is completed by the LSA, it is returned to the sponsor for review and filed with the Secretary of the Senate or Chief Clerk of the House, who assigns the bill a number. The bill is reviewed by the Senate or House legal counsel's office, and most often on the following day, the bill's number, title, and sponsor's name are read to the Senate or House. The President of the Senate or Speaker of the House assigns the bill to a standing committee for review.

STANDING COMMITTEE WORK

A standing committee is a group of legislators chosen by the leadership of each chamber to examine bills relating to a specific subject area. Once a bill is assigned to a committee, the committee chairperson appoints a subcommittee. The subcommittee, usually composed of three members of the standing committee, reviews the bill in detail and reports its conclusions

to the full committee. The full committee then discusses the subcommittee's conclusions and makes recommendations to the entire chamber. The committee may recommend passage of the bill, passage of the bill with amendment, referral of the bill to another committee for study, review, or postponement of the bill indefinitely, or to send the bill to the floor for debate with no recommendation.

CALENDAR

A report of the committee's recommendation is sent to the Secretary of the Senate or Chief Clerk of the House, who will place the bill on the regular calendar, which lists bills that are eligible to be debated. The Majority Leader is responsible for deciding which bills on the calendar are debated and in what order; then the bills are brought up for consideration by the chamber ahead of the other bills listed before them on the calendar.

DEBATE

After the committee completes work on the bill, the subcommittee's chairperson usually becomes the bill's floor manager. The floor manager's job is to present the bill to the chamber and follow the bill's progress during debate, when members discuss and may propose amendments to the bill. Amendments are adopted by a simple majority of the Senators or Representatives voting.

A debate allows discussion about the bill on the chamber floor. It also breaks down key issues within the bill.

When debate on a bill is finished, the bill's title is read aloud to the chamber for the last time. This tradition of reading the bill's number and title originates from the early days of the Legislature, when bills were read in their entirety to the members since printed copies were not available for everyone. If a constitutional majority (at least 26 Senators or 51 Representatives) votes to pass the bill, the bill moves to the other chamber. If fewer legislators than a constitutional majority vote to pass the bill, the bill fails. Votes on bills and amendments may be reconsidered on a motion by a member who voted on the prevailing side of the issue. If the motion to reconsider is approved, a new vote is taken on the bill or amendment. If the bill is then approved by a constitutional majority vote and all motions to reconsider are cleared, it is delivered to the other chamber.

SECOND PASSAGE

Amendments adopted by the chamber of origin are incorporated into the bill before it is sent to the other chamber. As the bill follows its path through the Legislature, the procedure in both chambers is basically the same. A bill introduced in the Senate will retain its original Senate

number as it travels through the House, and a bill introduced in the House will retain its original House number as it travels through the Senate. If the bill is further amended by the other chamber, the amended bill is sent back to the chamber of origin for approval. The chamber of origin can also amend the amendment. If the chamber of origin concurs or agrees with the amendment(s), the bill has passed both chambers in identical form and will be sent to the Governor for review. If the chamber of origin refuses to concur with the other chamber's amendment(s), the bill is returned to the other chamber, which may recede from or insist upon its amended version of the bill. If it recedes, the bill is sent to the Governor; however, if the chamber insists upon its amendment(s), a conference committee is appointed to work out the differences.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Conference committees are composed of Senate and House members representing both the majority and minority parties and both sides of the issue in dispute. The 10 members of a conference committee are appointed by the Senate Majority Leader and Senate Minority Leader and the Speaker of the House and Minority Leader of the House to study the points of disagreement between the chambers in an attempt to reach a compromise. If an agreement is reached, it is presented to both chambers in a report that contains the compromise version of the bill. The report cannot be amended by either chamber. If the report is rejected by either chamber, a second conference committee may be appointed. If no agreement is reached, the bill fails. If the conference committee report is adopted, the chambers again vote on the bill. If the bill is approved, it will be enrolled and sent to the Governor for review.

ENROLLED BILL

Final preparation of a bill before it is sent to the Governor is called enrollment. When both chambers have passed the bill in the same form, it is prepared with all approved amendments incorporated. After the bill is enrolled, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House sign the enrolled version, and the Secretary of the Senate or Chief Clerk of the House certifies that the bill originated in that chamber. The bill is then sent to the Governor for final action.

GOVERNOR'S ACTION

Bills passed by the Legislature must be reviewed by the Governor. The Governor takes final action on all bills passed by the Iowa General Assembly. The Governor has three options: sign the bill, veto the bill (or item veto an appropriations bill), or take no action. In the case of a veto, the Legislature may override the veto with two-thirds of the members of each chamber voting to reconsider and pass the bill a second time. If, during session, the Governor does not sign or veto a bill, it becomes law after three calendar days. Bills received by the Governor during the last three calendar days of session must be signed or vetoed within 30 calendar days.

The Governor has the option to use three types of vetoes: the veto, item veto, and pocket veto. The veto indicates the Governor's disapproval of an entire bill. The item veto may be used only for bills that appropriate funds. It strikes a specific item of an appropriations bill. A pocket veto occurs when the Governor fails to take action within 30 calendar days on a bill received within the last three calendar days of session. The entire bill fails to become law. When the Governor vetoes or item vetoes a bill, a veto message explaining why the veto was made is delivered to the chamber of origin with the bill before it is filed with the Secretary of State. The Legislature may override the veto if two-thirds of the members of each chamber vote to pass the bill again. The Governor's veto messages can be accessed on the Iowa General Assembly website in the "Enrolled Bills" section and on Billbook.

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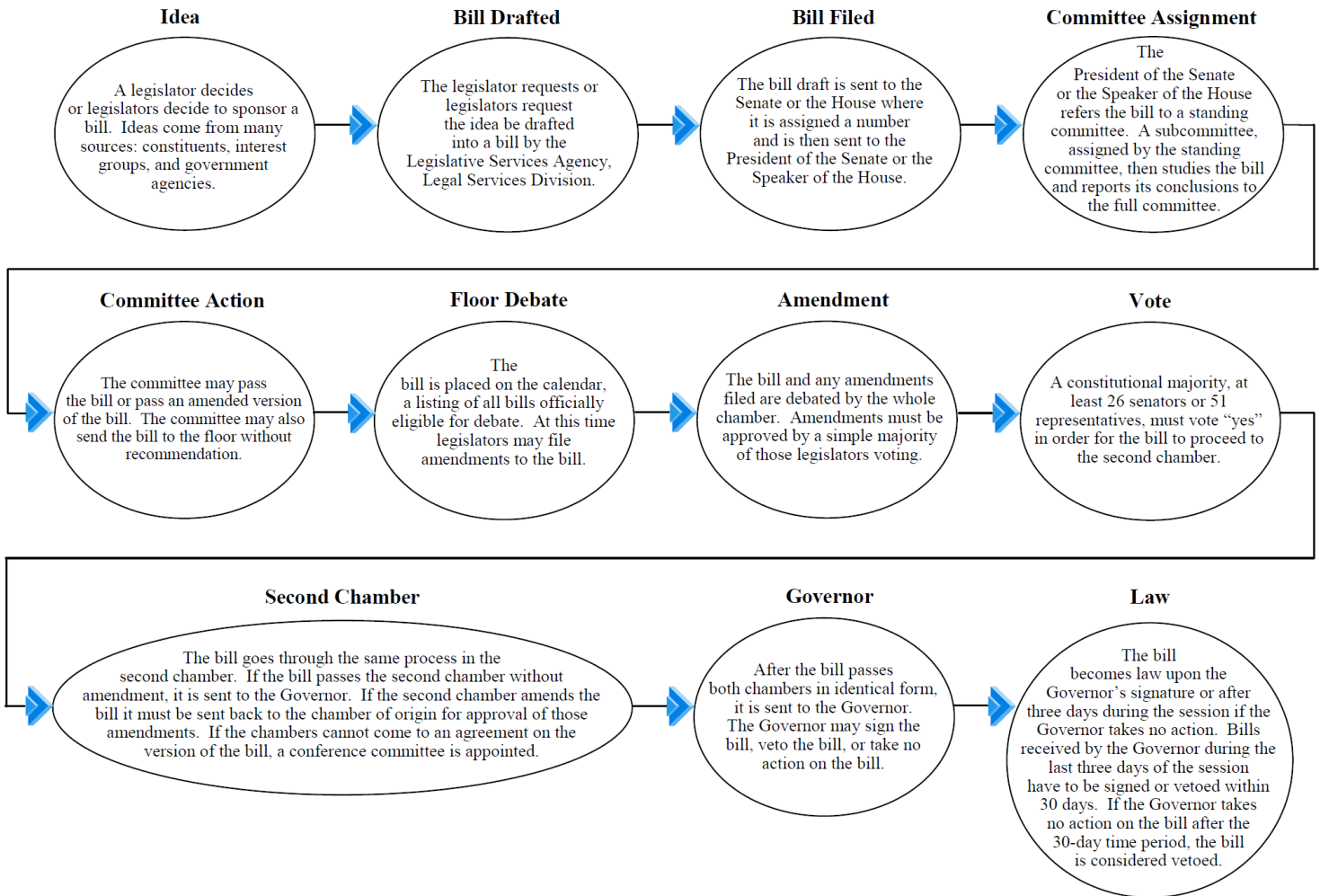
After the bill is signed by the Governor or is passed by the Legislature over the Governor's veto, it is sent to the Secretary of State, who is the custodian of original copies of all bills enacted into law. Bills normally go into effect July 1 following their approval, unless another date is specified in the bill. Bills passed by the Legislature before July but signed by the Governor after July 1 typically become effective August 15.

The enacted bills are then printed in the Acts of the General Assembly, published after each legislative session. The portions of the enacted bills that are laws of a permanent nature are incorporated into the Iowa Code, a compilation of Iowa laws published every year in electronic format and every other year in print by the Legislative Services Agency.

SOURCE:

Nuts & Bolts of Policy text is from the Iowa Legislative Services Agency website at:
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LP/696315.pdf>

How An Idea Becomes a Law



SOURCE:

How an Idea Becomes a Law graphic is from the Iowa Legislative Services Agency website at: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LP/696316.pdf>