

# THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



*a newsletter for Iowa's Democratic Left*

**March 2025**

## Don't let your children read this

A few Iowa legislators have discovered what film producers, TV directors, and best-selling authors have found: sex sells! House File 43 creates a crime when “the covered genitals of a male person that are in a discernibly turgid state” are part of an unsolicited photo. You have to wonder if you could get arrested for sending someone a YouTube video of a Led Zeppelin concert (Robert Plant always maintained a turgid appearance on stage). And HF 17 and SF 104 permits the defendant to be surgically castrated for “certain sex crimes.” Ouch!

Senate File 208 would carve into law that a “sexual attraction to minors is not a protected class for purposes of the Iowa Civil Rights Act.” Is this a major issue for Iowans?

From sex, the legislature reaches right into your neighborhood library. SF 235 and HF 274 repeal a provision in the obscenity statute that gives an exception to libraries. But to go a step further, SF 238 and HF 284 would cut off state assistance to libraries under the Enrich Iowa Program to libraries that pay dues to the American Library Association.

If the legislature cannot control what you read in the libraries, it will slither into the schools and decide what is best for students, such as HF 165 and Senate Study Bill 1030, requiring

“students to pass the United States citizenship and immigration services naturalization civics test as a condition of high school graduation and high school equivalency diplomas.” It sounds a bit like the loyalty oaths of the 1950s. And public schools, but for some reason not private schools, HF 166 requires a “display of the national motto (In God we trust) and the state motto, and to start each day of classroom instruction with silent time.” And HF 138 provides that schools may offer an elective social study course emphasizing religious scripture. Under the heading “education,” HSB 158 prohibits minors to view drag shows.

For schools struggling to understand the requirements of the previous paragraph, HF 334 allows schools to hire a chaplain – no qualifications necessary. And SF 280 allows a student to receive credits for religious instruction.

Have you heard that the House has created a new committee? The Committee on Higher Education. The intent must be to have Iowa adolescents and tenured professors leave Iowa sooner than they have in the past. A requirement (HSB 156) to post on a college’s website a syllabus that includes the professor’s name, a description of each major course, required or recommended reading material, a description of the subject

matter or each lecture or discussion, and any changes must be made as soon as practical. Also, under HF 295, an accrediting agency cannot be a government agency and allows the attorney general of Iowa to take legal action on behalf of the regents institution if it receives an adverse action from the accrediting agency.

SF 236 relates to “certain sincerely held religious or moral beliefs of child foster care providers and prospective adoptive parents.” HF 280 prohibits the governor from closing or regulating a place of worship during times of an emergency proclamation.

The Cedar Rapids Gazette and the Des Moines Register published expansive articles relating to the discussion of a subcommittee meeting (HF 191) that regulates cloud seeding. Contrails are being mistaken for chemtrails, and it seems as though contrails are poisoning residents of Iowa as jets fly over the state. “Atmospheric experts and government agencies say there is no basis for the chemtrail conspiracy theory.”

Shining further into that dark space is a bill (HSB 144) that would create a license plate with the Gadsden flag; two bills (HSB 166 & HSB 168) allowing judicial officers, including Supreme Court justices, to legally

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# Batshit crazy

Can bat shit make you go crazy? Probably not directly, but it certainly can put an Iowa worker's life into a tailspin.

Guano can be a polite word for bat poop. Wherever bats have been allowed to congregate in human dwellings over time, significant amounts of guano can be found. A problem then emerges when workers are directed to perform some type of work on a part of a building which has been neglected and served as a home for bats.

Unsuspecting workers are typically sent without respirators into the bat haven and inhale more bat poop than anyone wants to inhale.

Within a couple of weeks, some workers may become infected with histoplasmosis, a fungal infection which impacts the lungs. Initially, it presents as a cold or pneumonia. When the symptoms do not abate, and a physician is allowed to get imaging on a person's lungs, at that point a histoplasmosis mass in the lungs will reveal the guano exposure as the culprit for illness and infection.

I currently represent four workers infected with histoplasmosis after working in confined spaces full of guano. Most of my clients are doing reasonably well. Some go through a regimen of anti-fungal medications. Some have entirely recovered from the illness; some have a chronic cough. There may be calcification which remains in the lungs, but we are told by physicians this by itself is not a lasting concern.

On the other hand, if the worker has a pre-existing condition which leaves them immune-compromised in some way, this becomes a

much bigger challenge. If a person suffers from rheumatoid or psoriatic arthritis, they are likely to already be medicated with immuno-suppressant drugs. Folks suffering from an arthritic condition may also receive steroids to help deal with their inflammation. If immune-compromised, the histoplasmosis infection is likely to be more severe and if on a steroid, the steroid can grow the infection.

Unsuspecting workers...inhale more bat poop than anyone wants to inhale.

Fine, just take the person suffering from arthritis off their regular medications while they take anti-fungal medications. Well, now you may have just blown up inflammation and pain in multiple places in the worker's body. The histoplasmosis is now under control, but the guy has 10-out-of-10 pain and swelling.

Now imagine the workers' compensation insurance company at this point. The insurance adjustor may be patting herself on the back for having been willing to cover treatment and pay weekly benefits for something so exotic as histoplasmosis. Well, that is now under control, and they want the worker back to work.

Arthritis? Well, that was a pre-existing condition. He has had that for years and we didn't cause that. They find a doctor who says the 10-out-of-10 pain, swelling,

and basic inability to function is something purely of a personal condition. The worker is released to return to work, with no restrictions. Oh, you can't come back to work? Well, that's your choice but we are cutting off your weekly benefits.

A worker who had well-maintained their arthritis for years gets exposed to bat poop and the treatment for the resulting infection blows up the arthritis. The insurance company cuts off medical care and weekly checks. The employer cuts off regular health insurance if you are not working. Now, you have no money or health care. Hope you have someone who will take you in and good luck with Medicaid. So, while bat shit may not directly cause you to go crazy, it can turn a worker's life upside down to the point where only the most resilient will be able to cope.

—Nate Willems lives in Mt. Vernon and practices law in Cedar Rapids.

Print is an essential part of our value. We want to be pasted on your refrigerator.

—Art Cullen,  
Editor, Storm Lake  
Times Pilot

# The people are kind

*Author's note: This is an excerpt from *The People Are Kind*, available from Wipf & Stock and (hopefully) your local bookstore, as well as behemoths that I don't want to contemplate my labor augmenting, although such is capitalism. I hope this book adds to our discussion about how religion has been used as a cudgel instead of a balm, how that was not inevitable, and how it was and is contested. In this excerpt I have removed the footnotes, but I do want to acknowledge that it was George William McDaniel of St. Ambrose who unearthed the Slater sit-in story*

Iowa has played a part in many theological movements, but of only one can it be said to have played a crucial role: the Christian Socialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The originality and boldness of George Herron, the protectiveness of Herron's position and the extension of the Social Gospel to issues of militarism and racism by George Augustus Gates, and the linking of Christian socialism to the struggles for racial equality by George W. Slater stand out.

While concepts of class dominated early twentieth century socialism, often downplaying race, some African-Americans found hope in the message of Christian Socialism. Prominent among them was George W. Slater, pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Clinton during much of his time in the Christian Socialist movement. His sermon at Second Baptist Church in Ottumwa made him noticed in Iowa and led to his hiring at Clinton.

He is remembered today (if at all) as the father of Duke Slater, football star at the State University of Iowa during the 1920s and later a judge in Chicago. Slater Hall is named after him at his alma mater.

The elder Slater moved to Des Moines in the 1920s and initiated a successful and groundbreaking civil rights case when he was refused service at a downtown cafe, a couple of decades before Edna Griffin and the Progressive Party challenged Katz Drug Store's discriminatory serving policies in 1948.

After moving to Canada, Slater returned to Des Moines and then moved on to Council Bluffs in the 1930's, where in 1932 he organized a successful campaign to remove "No Colored Trade Solicited" signs from the windows of local restaurants.

In moving to Council Bluffs, Slater could access educational opportunities across the river at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Omaha. While he had attended the

Some African-Americans found hope in the message of Christian Socialism.

University of Chicago and Illinois Wesleyan University, as he had had to pursue his education one semester at a time, he was not eligible for his Bachelor's in Theology at Omaha until he completed undergraduate work at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, which he did, in his sixties. Slater's pastoral and Social Gospel career, from Christian Socialist to civil rights activist to theological enthusiast, is a striking example of what a grassroots African-American minister's life might embody in the early twentieth century.

Several other Christian Socialists not named George were active in Iowa in the early twentieth century. Oscar F. Donaldson was a real estate and insurance agent and lay Congregationalist in Webster City and founder of the national newspaper *The Christian Socialist*. While the periodical soon moved to Danville, Illinois, and then to Chicago, Donaldson loyally kept supporting it financially.

Donaldson had a startlingly brilliant vision of religion that supported his democratic argument for the ordinary person, even if it was one destined for obscurity. Here is his blending of creation and eucharistic theology to argue for solidarity:

*God spreads the bounty of every land and clime, providing by the recreative powers of nature for the sustenance of man...Commerce gathers and brings to each and all these bounties, preparing and serving—THE LORD'S SUPPER. Christians ask that commerce (the observance of the Lord's Supper) be so arranged so that we can say to our fellow man, "Take, eat."... The Lord's Supper is not separate from our everyday life...Your religion is what you do every day, including Sunday, not what your idea of the Creator is or the formal worship you participate in.*

Iowans, whether religious or not, should celebrate such original and fertile ideas.

—Bill R. Douglas lives in Clutier, Iowa.

# Hog-tied, Part Two

Since its founding about nine months ago, Driftless Water Defenders, on behalf of its nearly 200 members, has initiated litigation on several fronts.

- On June 5, 2024, DWD President Chris Jones petitioned the E.P.A. Region VII, imploring that agency to take over enforcement of federal Clean Water Act laws from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with respect to concentrated animal feeding operations in the Driftless Area, due to the DNR's utter neglect of its regulatory duties.
- DWD members have attended public hearings in Winneshiek County and have filed petitions in the Iowa District Court to challenge zoning changes and the issuances of permits made by the Board of Supervisors and Board of Adjustment, respectively, to local farming operations to allow out-of-state investors to construct dairy-cattle manure digesters. The digesters, DWD alleges, will cause local dairy herd sizes to increase, with resulting increased amounts of nitrate-saturated residuals to be placed on the area's fragile karst landforms and fragile soils.
- DWD is filing court documents in support of appeals made by others of a decision by the Iowa Utilities Commission, which has allowed Summit Caron Solutions to use eminent domain to benefit its private equity owners in the construction of the ill-advised CO2 pipeline.
- On December 23, 2024, DWD issued to Agri Star Meat & Poultry, LLC, located in Postville, a 60-day Notice of Violations and Intent to Sue under the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA). In that Notice, DWD has alleged that Agri Star has repeatedly violated its discharge

permits issued pursuant to the CWA and that, as a result, DWD will be seeking, in the Federal District Court for Northern Iowa, in its capacity as a so-called "private attorney general," declaratory and injunctive relief, civil penalties and other relief allowed by law.

- DWD is filing a formal complaint with the DNR, asking that agency to cancel a water use permit renewal earlier issued by it to Supreme Beef, thereby enabling a 10,000-head cattle feeding operation located in Clayton County, at the headwaters of Bloody Run Creek, one of Iowa's purest streams to accumulate and spread manures and nitrates on farm land forming the creek's watershed. The complaint follows a major ruling issued by Administrative Law Judge Toby Gordon, who determined that when renewing the water use permit the DNR should have but failed to consider the impact of such a permit on the public interest and surrounding environment, as required by Iowa Code.
- DWD drafted and supports a new amendment to the Iowa Constitution (under Section 1 of Article 1) which expressly recognizes the fundamental right of Iowans to access clean water and air. In addition to protecting this fundamental right, the proposed amendment also imposes an affirmative public trust duty upon our government, under which agencies are charged with taking positive steps to protect and improve our natural resources. Three states in the United States currently have such public trust doctrines set forth in their constitutions: New York, Pennsylvania, and Montana.

Under the amendment, Iowa's courts will be required to give strict scrutiny to any governmental action

that impedes a citizen's exercise of that fundamental right. Further, under the amendment, the State of Iowa will have a new affirmative duty under the public trust doctrine: to protect our natural environment—including, importantly, our water supplies—for public benefit, now, and into the future.

We are on the cusp of a new civil rights movement in Iowa—one dedicated to protecting this fundamental right. Like all civil rights movements in the past, this one, too, may well take many years and many election cycles before it becomes the law of our state. In Iowa, a constitutional amendment in identical form must be approved by the House and Senate in two consecutive legislative sessions. The amendment must then be approved by a majority of Iowa voters.

Until then, citizens of all political persuasions (cancer does not recognize political boundaries; nobody wants to drink or bathe in shit-water) would be wise to demand that their local, state, and national government officials protect public access to clean water and air.

In the yawning gap between the needs of Iowans for environmental protection and justice on the one hand, and on the other hand the lack of focus of our political leaders on these matters, Iowa citizens, acting on their own volition or working with others through citizen-advocacy groups such as DWD, are encouraged to take action to support the civil rights movement that lies ahead of us. Let's get going.

—*Jim Larew practices law in Iowa City. Part One of this article appeared in the January 2025 issue of The Prairie Progressive.*

# Worsening conditions

In articulating how bad things have gotten in Iowa, it is tough to know where to start. To make matters worse, I've got two things in my mind at once: the worsening condition of our state and the worsening condition of an old man lying in a hospital in Rome.

One could point to the January 2025 "reminder" letter Governor Kim Reynolds has sent to Iowa regents' universities, urging compliance with legislation last session soon to take effect, and recent executive orders from President Trump, deeming diversity, equity and inclusion programs illegal.

One could also point in despair to universities' decisions, under the thumb of the Board of Regents, to comply with these orders prematurely. They quickly moved to eliminate DEI programs, offices, and staff. This was an abdication of the universities' collective status as a bastion for advancing knowledge, decency, and ethics. The university, as a species and not only in Iowa, caved to the national assault. Recovery from that will be next to impossible.

Decades of careful work in raising awareness and nurturing intelligent and challenging conversations about how all of us view the world and the consequences of that, gone. Decreed "illegal." Why? Because we already have federal laws that "guarantee" all are free from discrimination in employment, accommodations, college admissions, and more. Except we don't. What we had before DEI and additions to state civil rights codes was federal wording, largely ignored. Discrimination ruled the day, creating workforces and student bodies and corporate structures that in no way resembled the American

citizenry. We enshrined the ultimate anti-meritocracy, and today's GOP wants it back.

Here's a taste of the Reynolds letter, ringing in 2025 for our state universities. Citation from the *Des Moines Register* article, Jan. 25, 2025, by Kyle Werner:

"Taken together, existing state law and this federal executive action should remove any justification for retaining illegal DEI offices, policies, or staff within your universities," Reynolds said in the letter to the presidents of Iowa's universities. "I trust that your respective institutions will faithfully implement this executive order and the forthcoming guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice."

But universities aren't the only places left reeling in Iowa. Consider Iowa's defunding of K-12 schools through a massive voucher giveaway to private school enrollees. Also planted last year, its fruits emerged this year, bright and ugly. Private schools raised their tuition, putting them beyond reach of many "diverse" potential pupils who might have taken the bait and gone private. The state is not providing information on how many recipients of the support were already enrolled in private school. Randy Richardson, a former official with the Iowa State Education Association, took a crack at a number, writing in *Bleeding Heartland*. He estimated it was 76% of voucher recipients.

Public schools were given an added poison pill – the "restructuring" of in-school help for students with special needs that shocked and angered parents across the state. Iowa's AEA system was beloved and strong, providing needed tools

and staff to help these students. Money once going to AEAs is now going to school districts proper, with no guarantees that money will be effectively used for its original purpose. It's a looming disaster for Iowa's smallest communities.

Now to that man in Rome. Pope Francis is in rough straits. Yes, he's used some highly vulgar and insulting terms for gay men and I'm angry about that. Yes, he's head of a church that for centuries has perpetuated the limitation of women, the oppression of poor people via its upholding of hierarchical institutions to the exclusion of social progress, and other horrid positions. But he can't change the history of his church. (And the church has always been home to many who work hard to advance the cause of the poor and forgotten.) He can only work to change its future, and in his way he has.

He has infuriated many with his focus on humble, direct action rather than haughty isolation and the production of intellectually satisfying but cold treatises on minutiae of faith and doctrine. He's written his share of encyclicals, but spends Maundy Thursday washing the feet of Roman prisoners, a powerful object image and lesson for our world. His daily calls into Gaza to speak to its parish priest draw howls of outrage from all directions. He's practical and speaks in practical terms, not worrying much about the fallout, leaving us to think about it after the fact. His is, surely, no Prada papacy. He is a man of balance, willing to model for us and pray that we all regain our balance in this belligerent era. As I view Iowa's decline, I see him as a symbol of who our leaders need to become in order for us to recover.

—Kim Painter is the Johnson County Recorder.

# Radical tithing

The concept of tithing is a religious one. It is defined in this context as a person pledging, or tithing, a tenth of an individual's income to the Church.

I'd like to redefine "tithing." With the Trump administration and the State of Iowa wreaking havoc on many marginalized communities and local governments, it affects us all profoundly. I began thinking about what I can do. What can I control?

There is a laundry list of things we must do. We don't all have to do all of them. Pick a few that are doable for you and our collective efforts will be felt. Congressional phone lines are already beyond capacity, and it has made a difference. On an average day, there are 400 calls per minute. Since January 20, 2025, there are now 1600. There are protests to join. There are service providers in every community needing volunteers.

For those of us with retirement funds of any kind, we have the privilege of having a pool of money to combat injustice. Mine might get larger because billionaires have even more and express control of the economy through the US Government. My retirement fund may grow by a larger margin.

There are two strategies I might use to figure out my radical tithe for 2025.

The first strategy begins by finding the average growth of my fund for the last ten years. Then, I will compare it to its growth in 2025. The increment of increase will be the amount I tithe to my community, focusing on organizations the hardest hit by the authoritarian times in which we find ourselves. This amount will be on top of my current cash and volunteer donations I make in my community.

Let's say I have \$100,000 in my retirement fund and it has generated on average 5% interest and dividends over the past ten years. My fund's current value would be \$162,890 at that 10-year mark, assuming I haven't dipped into these monies. At a 5% rate of return in year 11, my fund would be valued at \$171,035. If in 2025, my fund generates 6.5% interest and dividends, my fund would be valued at \$173,488. I have 1.5% incremental increased income generated by a system I find corrupt. This difference between a 5% rate of return and 6.5% rate of return for year 11 translates to \$2,443. This is the amount of my tithe. My old lady fund is still growing. Therefore, I have extra to give.

The second strategy would be to use that "lifetime" program many financial planners use. I can input my retirement age, the age I will start taking social security, car payments, travel, home repair, etc. Add radical tithing to your list. Then, get wild. Say you gift \$1,000 a year and when you run this program, you will have 98% of what you need to live out your life. Then add a zero to this and rerun the program. You may stay at 98%. This means you could gift \$10,000 a year. Quite liberating!

If you employ a financial planner or advisor in your life, you can ask them to generate these numbers for you. You can ask them to pass this idea on to other customers who have a social conscious. They could narrow down their customers to whom they might make this suggestion to those who request their funds be invested in socially responsible investments.

Some suggestions of where you might home your tithe in relation

to oppressive policies of Des Moines and Washington, DC (in alphabetical order):

- Center for Worker Justice: <https://cwjowa.org/>
- Emma Goldman Clinic: <https://emmagoldman.networkforgood.com/>
- Inclusive Economic Development (this fund will be set up in the near future)
- Immigrant Welcome Network: <https://www.iwnjc.org/donate>
- Iowa Trans Mutual Aid Fund: <https://www.iowatransmutualaidfund.org/donate>
- SILT (Sustainable Iowa Land Trust): <https://silt.org/donate>
- World Central Kitchen: <https://wck.org/donate>
- Wright House of Fashion: <https://www.wrighthousefashion.com>

Look for a community gathering in the spring to illustrate this concept. Radical tithing. Let's redefine the tithe and control what we can control.

— Karen Kubby has been "the socialist pot-maker," a city council member, and director of the Emma Goldman Clinic; she now owns Beadology, a business in downtown Iowa City.

# Wisdom and good works

The proximity in time of former President Jimmy Carter's funeral and President Donald Trump's second inauguration roiled our political sensibilities as little else could have done. Their contrasting styles and values, culminating in the controversy over whether American flags should remain at half-staff on Inauguration Day, stirred vivid memories in Iowans of a certain age. I asked Dick and Doris Myers to share their recollections of the early days of the Carter presidential campaign in Iowa.

Richard E. (Dick) Myers grew up in Iowa City and has spent his life in Iowa with the exception of his years in the military. He ventured into electoral politics as a Republican but soon found his political home as a Democrat. He served on the Coralville City Council and as Mayor of Coralville, on the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, as a member of the Iowa House, and as House Minority Whip and Minority Leader.

Doris Myers grew up in western Iowa and trained as a nurse, working for many years at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, latterly at the former Hospital School. She and Dick owned Hawk I Truck Stop on what is now the Iowa River Landing site. Together they have four children, the youngest of whom was a toddler at the outset of Carter's presidential campaign. Dick and Doris's personal, professional, and political partnership brings immediately to mind the partnership of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter.

In 1975 Dick, then a committed Democrat and a member of the Coralville City Council, wondered which aspiring Democratic candidate could best take on President Gerald Ford in the 1976 election. He wrote letters to a number of those seeking the nomination—Fred Harris, Henry

"Scoop" Jackson, and others—asking about their views on civil rights, small business regulation, abortion, the environment, public transit, and other issues. Only one wrote back: Jimmy Carter. In a letter Dick later learned was written by Carter's soon-to-be chief of staff, Hamilton Jordan, Carter answered Dick's questions and asked for his support. Carter had declared his candidacy for the presidency in December 1974, as he approached the end of his term as governor of Georgia but was relatively little known at that time.

In hindsight, Carter's decision to follow George McGovern's example and devote resources to the early Iowa caucuses was crucial to his ultimate victory. When Dick received an invitation to attend a reception for Carter at the Hotel Ft. Des Moines in the state capital, he was impressed by Carter's responsiveness and his views on issues, and he accepted. Already inclined to throw his support to Carter, Dick was struck upon first meeting the candidate by his relatively small stature, his "quiet voice" and "non-imposing" demeanor. At the reception, then Iowa House Majority Leader Jerry Fitzgerald asked Dick if he'd like to "take a ride" with the candidate later in the day. The ride turned out to be several supporters joining Carter in a small plane as they hopped around the state seeking radio publicity. The first stop was in Newton where the radio station was adjacent to the small airport. Carter walked into the station without an appointment, introduced himself as the former governor of Georgia, and asked if anyone was available to interview him. When the surprised person behind the desk protested that no one was

prepared to conduct the interview, Carter produced a set of interview questions from his briefcase, and the interview proceeded. The day ended in Cedar Rapids where Doris picked up Carter, Dick, and the others and drove them all to The Purple Cow in North Liberty for dinner.

After that introduction, Dick and Doris became active supporters of the Carter campaign. Dick observed that people responded well to Carter and were impressed with his focus on honesty and integrity, especially so soon after Watergate. They believed Carter when he said, "I will not lie to you." His executive experience as Georgia governor, as well as his small business knowledge and the technical expertise gained as a Naval ensign, contributed to the air of calm confidence and competence he projected.

As the campaign wore on, Dick and Doris met Rosalynn Carter. When he first met her, Dick thought she was a staffer; he remembers her as "very quiet." They also met Andrew Young, Jordan, Tim Kraft, and others soon to be prominent in the new administration. Dick became part of the "Peanut Brigade," Carter's strategy to campaign and raise funds at small venues across the state. When Carter "won" the Iowa caucuses with 27% of the vote, ahead of all other contenders except "uncommitted," his strategy was vindicated, and his campaign became legendary in Iowa and to followers of retail politics everywhere. Even given how hard they had worked for him, his victory surprised Dick and Doris.

They continued to work for Carter's election after the caucuses, though Ford carried Iowa in a very close

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# Don't avert your gaze

IOWA CITY, Feb. 22—At the edges of the stage stood two uniformed policemen. A podium was flanked by an American and a state flag on loan from Teamsters Local 238. All 725 seats at the Englert Theatre were filled, with hundreds turned away at the door. After fighting Hillary Clinton and Pete Buttigieg to virtual ties in the 2016 and 2020 caucuses, Bernie Sanders can still pack the house in Iowa.

Two University of Iowa students spoke first, followed by Brian Gibbs, a National Park Ranger at Effigy Mounds National Monument in Iowa who was fired by DOGE on February 14. A native Iowan, Gibbs was clearly devastated but still proud of his role as a protector of 2500-year old American Indian burial and ceremonial mounds. “I am the one who told your child that they belong on this planet...I am the lesson that showed your children that we live in a world of gifts, not commodities, that gratitude and reciprocity are the doorway to true abundance, not power, money, or fear.” The crowd rose to its feet and cheered when Gibbs asked, “Please, friends, stay present. Don’t avert your gaze.”

Sandy Burkey is the produce manager at Costco in Coralville, one of four Costco stores in Iowa. She is also an organizer for the workers who only the previous day had voted to unionize. The good that Costco management has done “is shallow if they don’t stand behind their workers.” Like Ranger Gibbs, Burkey urged the crowd to stand with her and with the workers: “We don’t have to be scared.”

Patrick Kearns, President of AFGE Local 247 at Iowa City VA Medical Center, blasted the billionaires now taking aim at veterans’ hospitals:

“They want to privatize the VA, then shut it down. This isn’t an accident. We don’t make a profit for them.” He ripped Elon Musk as “the definition of fraud, waste, and abuse.” Kearns repeated the previous speakers’ call for courage; despite firings and threats, “federal employees didn’t run and hide.”

By this time the crowd was amped up and ready for Bernie. He delivered in classic Sanders style, beginning with a stark description of what it’s like to live paycheck to paycheck: “We have one of the lowest life expectancies in the world,” much of it due to ever-present financial stress.

Bernie engaged with the audience more than in past appearances in this heavily Democratic town, frequently addressing them as brothers and sisters. “You all know Lincoln’s words at Gettysburg,” he said. “Of the people, by the people, and for the people—not for the billionaires!” A voice in the crowd rang out, “Eat the rich!”

In a town where a university, a community college, and a large school district are major employers, Bernie’s call for a minimum \$60,000 per year salary for teachers got huge applause. His litany of other policies people should demand of Congress included a minimum wage of at least \$17 an hour, expansion of Medicaid and Medicare, passage of the PRO Act, free tuition for all public schools, and high-quality affordable childcare.

“It’s a tough time, a scary time,” the Senator said, but history shows us we can win. When the colonists took on the King of England, they won. When women fought for the right to vote, they won. Slavery was

abolished. Workers won the right to unionize. Women won the right to control their own bodies—and will again.

Arms waving, Bernie arrived at The Ask. He came to Iowa City, he said, to urge people to call their US House Representative Marianette Miller-Meeks and tell her to vote No on any reconciliation bill that would cut funding for education, health care, or affordable housing while giving tax breaks to the wealthiest among us. And for good measure, demand that she hold a town hall to hear directly from her constituents (who only gave her a six-vote margin of victory in 2020 and less than an 800-vote margin in 2024).

“This is not the time for despair,” Bernie concluded. FIGHT OLIGARCHY said the sign on the podium. The hundreds who heard him today walked out into the chilly air, fired up and ready to fight.

—Prairie Dog

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election. They attended Carter's inauguration and admired his leadership style as President. Dick observed that, unlike many politicians, Carter would always answer questions posed to him. He impressed Dick as almost an intellectual – thoughtful, studious, and well prepared. In 1980, Carter asked Dick to serve as Iowa Director of the Farmers Home Administration, a federal agency that made low interest loans to farmers and homeowners. The agency had offices in every county and several hundred employees in the state. When Dick accepted the job, every county level director was male. He recalls with pride appointing a woman to that role.

As the 1980 election approached, it became apparent that some of the qualities that had made Carter a strong and compelling leader immediately post-Watergate rendered him vulnerable in a changed political landscape. At crucial moments, his confidence seemed like arrogance. His determination to study a problem closely and decide based on his own values and assessments suddenly cut him off from advisors and constituents. Doris recalls, "he wouldn't take advice." Dick remembers, "he had a constituency of one." Especially after the Iran hostage crisis became the nation's focus, Carter's determination to manage the

crisis from the White House and forego the campaign trail became a serious liability. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) challenged Carter for the Democratic nomination.

Loyal to the man who had so impressed him with his values and competence, Dick (along with longtime Johnson County Auditor Tom Slockett and others) traveled to Maine to campaign for Carter. When he encountered Rosalynn Carter there, he pleaded with her to urge the president to campaign across the country. Dick recalls that she responded coldly and said, "he's not leaving the Rose Garden." As everyone knows, Ronald Reagan won the election, leaving Carter vulnerable to the charge of opening the door to domination by the far right in American politics.

In his post-presidency, Carter became universally admired for both wisdom and good works. Dick and Doris visited Plains, though Carter was away at the time, and toured the Carter Center in Atlanta with Chip Carter as their guide. Reflecting on Carter's life and legacy, Dick's conclusion resonates on many levels: "He's Everyman."

*—Lois Cox is a retired law professor at the University of Iowa.*

## Don't let your children read this cont'd from Page 1

carry a gun; a bill (HF 25) creating the crime of wearing a mask in the commission of a criminal offense (speeding?); a bill (HF 24) including sharks as dangerous animals. HF 46 relates to law enforcement training to prevent motorcyclist profiling, and HF 353 states that a person may not run in a primary unless the person has been member of a political party for at least a year.

One of the first bills introduced during the 2025 Iowa General Assembly was House File 53, a bill that would make U.S. Highway 75 in Northwest Iowa the "President Donald J. Trump Highway." Ironically, Highway 75 runs across the border at Emerson, Manitoba, Canada, and keeps right on going into Winnipeg.

There's more, too much more. Some of these bills will not make it to enactment. Unfortunately, several of them will. Please stay in touch with your legislators. Keep in mind that all of this is designed to give you the "Freedom to Flourish."

*—Marty Ryan doesn't know whether to laugh or cry in Iowa's capital city.*

There has never been a case in these last 18 years of a trans woman going into a bathroom, a woman's shelter, or any kind of women's space to harass or abuse women, [and] never any man pretending to be trans to do the same. They are lying to you. They are fanning the flames of fear... and we wonder why people aren't staying in Iowa.

*—Iowa Rep. Aime Wichtendahl*

Staying apart,  
separate, distinct,  
afraid to mix, is the  
mistake of our world.

*—Woody Guthrie*

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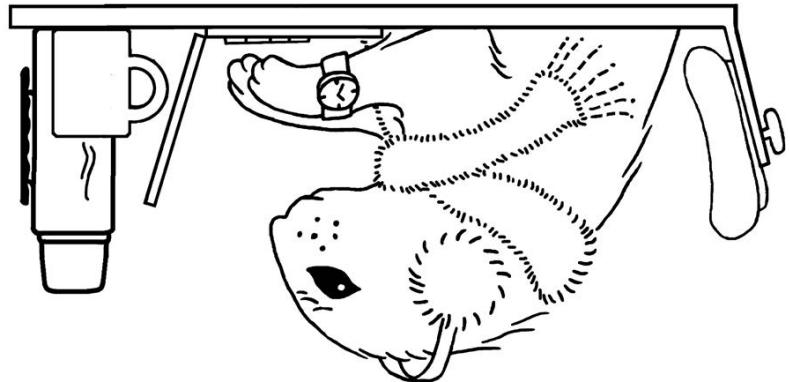
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