

# Opinion & Politics

## Letters

### Accidental or intentional obstruction?

Madison County Taxpayers,

It is imperative that you attend upcoming Board of Supervisors meetings – whether in person or by phone – to witness firsthand the troubling conduct and decisions of our elected officials. What we see is not mere governance; it is intentional obstruction, an opposition to growth, and the creation of needless hurdles that lack justification. These actions not only stall progress but also risk costly lawsuits for our county. There continues to be failure to respect clear roles and responsibilities.

On Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2025, during a Board of Supervisors meeting, Auditor Michele Brant advised the BOS of an urgent matter needing address. In an effort to be transparent, Brant explained that in order to garner direction from the State Auditor’s office to correct accounting errors made in Fiscal Year 24/25, the State would need a commitment that they would continue to be engaged with Madison County’s 24/25 Audit. Madison County has used the State for their audit since before 2009. Without this endorsement, our third-party vendor was hesitant to proceed assisting with the resolution of this critical matter.

To be clear: the audit July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024, remains unconfirmed – an unprecedented and alarming situation. Once again, instead of acknowledging the delay may well be linked to the ongoing investigation and dereliction of duty in the Treasurer’s office, Supervisor Stancil threw down insults.

Two supervisors immediately opposed Auditor Brant’s request to confirm these critical audits and to engage the State Auditor for the 2025 audit as well. Their stated reason: hollow claims of “political bias” and so-called cost savings. These same two supervisors have no problem bleeding Madison County taxpayer dollars on: a private attorney at taxpayer expense rather than utilize the County Attorney; rubber stamping a no-bid contract for Craig Bergman which cost us approximately \$7,500 and for which we received nothing in return; letting go of our IT Director for a third party vendor “Solutions” which I feel confident will

NOT be a cost savings based on the review of said contract; and voting for a no-bid, un-budgeted \$10,000 third party inspector to second guess a construction project that was already accepted and closed. Shouldn’t these two Supervisors question these decisions if they truly were worried about efficiencies?

Worse still was Supervisor’s Stancil’s intent on fostering confusion: referencing investigations out of context, mis-characterizing ongoing audits and investigations, and pushing narratives with no factual basis. Supervisor Stancil’s attempt to alarm the public by referencing a “former reporter” allegedly in our election equipment room – failing to mention that this individual left journalism years ago and now works for the State Investigative team. What Supervisor failed to mention is our election equipment was being stored in the IT area and the investigator’s reasoning for being in that space was non-related to the election equipment. She in fact was with our IT Director on her last day collecting evidence in the investigation.

Fitch voted to bring in the State Auditor, citing continuity and institutional knowledge; the other two were unwavering “no” votes grounded only in partisan politics. Both Supervisors Stancil and Hobbs expressed support for a full forensic audit – preferably one that does not involve the State Auditor, perhaps implying a desire to reinstate previous auditor Schwarz for his forensic background. While they claim this forensic audit was budgeted, that allocation was a standard precaution from last year’s budget discussions, not a concrete plan.

You must ask yourself is this obstruction accidental, or intentional self-preservation? The only pattern that is clear is their growing fear of transparency.

Ask yourself: Do these two supervisors represent our county’s best interest or their own personal interest? Attend meetings, ask tough questions, and refuse to accept platitudes. Democracy works only if we insist our leaders work for us – not for themselves.

Sincerely,

—Wendy Frost, Winterset

## Relatively Minor

Vicki Minor, Editor  
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Laughter does not have to come from a major source. It could indeed be ... relatively minor.

### Searching for Smiles

I was beside myself the other day, even though I was the only one sitting in the chair. I couldn't think of anything funny to write. Nothing made me laugh.

I even tried a few knock-knock jokes, but apparently nobody was home. So I figured I'd have a little fun with some one-liners – but I overthought it and ended up writing an essay instead.

Then I thought maybe a riddle might be the key... until I got stuck on “What’s black and white and blue?” Turns out, it was a sad zebra. Which, frankly, didn't cheer me up either.

It was time to give a tongue twister a shot, and I was up for the challenge. The phrase was long and tough to say, but I gave it a try: “If a dog chews shoes, whose shoes does she choose?” That made me think of the pile of shoes on my bedroom floor. I sat there, worried the phrase might come true and my dogs would destroy my new shoes. Which certainly didn't bring a smile to my face.

To relieve my worries and frustration, I gave myself another chance and recited, “I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream.” Until the neighbor came over, wondering what was wrong – and I remembered I was trying to cut down on sweets.

So I took a break from writing and spent some time browsing the internet to recharge my creative spirit. I came across a contest that made me smile, so I decided to give it a try. Even though I was having trouble coming up with something funny on this particular afternoon, I consider myself good at wordplay. I entered ten puns into a contest to see which one would win...

No pun in ten did.

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## Brass Tacks from Rural Iowa

Guest Columnist Barb Kalbach  
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### The worst of the worst?

Leading up to last year's election, then candidate Donald Trump campaigned heavily on deporting immigrants on a massive scale. It's something he's followed through on, regularly claiming that his Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency would target “the worst of the worst.” It's a refrain Kristi Noem, Trump's head of Homeland Security, has echoed recently.

We all want safe communities, vibrant neighborhoods, and not to live in fear. People who commit violent crimes should be held accountable. I think there's very little disagreement with this. But looking at the evidence, Trump's mass deportation claims of “the worst of the worst” aren't adding up.

Across the country there are mothers, fathers, friends, and neighbors being snatched from the street, the workplace, or not returning home from a routine immigration check-in. Stories like these are happening here in Iowa too.

A few months back 200 or so workers at the JBS plant in Ottumwa had their visas revoked. I remember asking myself “now what did they do wrong or who did they pose a threat to?” All they did was wake up, go to work at a plant where the labor is demanding so we can get meat from the grocery store, and return home to their families. I bet they knew others in the community, shopped at local stores, and helped neighbors in need. Are they the worst of the worst?

Or the story of 20-year-old Pascual Pedro from West Liberty, who went to a routine immigration check-in only to be detained and

deported to Guatemala less than a week later. Pascual, who has no criminal background, was the star of his high school soccer team. He was a laborer and the godson of his parish priest. Was he the worst of the worst?

A few weeks ago, the Belmond-Klemme Community School district issued a shelter-in-place order during school hours due to the presence of Homeland Security in the area. Many thought ICE was conducting a raid in the area. Later it was reported that Homeland Security officers were there to conduct “welfare checks.”

I chatted with an Iowa CCI member who grew up in Belmond and still has family there. She said that so many in the community were confused, scared, and angry at what was happening. And I can't imagine how those students felt that day. More than a third of Belmond-Klemme's students are Latino.

Kudos to the Belmond-Klemme school for doing the right thing and protecting their students. Schools are, and should be, a safe haven for all kids. Public schools are an antidote to the division we face as they bring us together and promote civil discourse and the exploration of different ideas.

Just the other day I read about Kristi Noem and Trump's ICE having deported, or on track to deport, at least 18 DACA recipients. These are immigrant children who were brought to America with their parents, grew up here, made a life here. And we promised to protect them from deportation and provide a pathway for citizenship.

We need immigration reform, I believe that's clear. But we don't break promises. We don't terrorize children. We don't tear families and our communities and economy apart. We're better than this.

Barb Kalbach is a 4th generation family farmer, Registered Nurse, and Iowa CCI Board member in Adair County.

## Connect with your legislators

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### U.S. CONGRESS

Representative Zach Nunn (R) DC office: 202-225-5476  
U.S. Senator Charles Grassley (R) DM office: 515 288-1145  
U.S. Senator Joni Ernst (R) DM office: 515 284-4574

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