

Opinion & Politics

Strengthening Iowa’s Voice

Focusing on practical solutions

By Linda Upmeyer, Co-Chair
Republican Party of Iowa

I have spent decades in healthcare, both in clinical settings and in policymaking, and one thing has become crystal clear to me: the best solutions for rural Iowa’s healthcare challenges come from Des Moines – not Washington, DC.

Under Gov. Kim Reynolds’ leadership, a conservative Iowa legislature, and a strong federal partner in President Trump, Iowa is taking bold, results-driven steps to solve the rural healthcare challenges Iowa families face. While Democrats resort to fearmongering and deception, Republicans here at home are focused on delivering real solutions.

Like every state, Iowa faces a shortage of doctors and healthcare workers. Rural hospitals are stretched thin, and the cost of care continues to rise. But instead of relying on top-down federal mandates, Iowa is building on a strong foundation

to solve problems the right way: by empowering local communities, cutting red tape, and investing in people.

That starts with keeping more Iowa-trained doctors in our state. New laws passed by Republicans ensure that medical and dental school slots prioritize Iowans and give preference to residency candidates with Iowa roots. Primary care residencies are now required to offer rural rotations, introducing them to communities that need them most. These smart, targeted reforms directly address the shortage and retention problem.

We’re also expanding access to maternal healthcare by removing outdated barriers that made it harder to open birthing centers. At the same time, Iowa is adding hundreds of new residency

UPMEYER
continued on page 8A

Stop making things worse

By Sen. Janice Weiner
Senate District 45

A cardinal rule as elected officials is not to break things – as in, if it isn’t broken, don’t “fix” it – not unlike the medical profession’s Hippocratic oath: first, do no harm.

Our state faces multiple self-inflicted healthcare crises that result from ignoring that rule.

- We have the second highest cancer rate in the nation and are one of just two states with a rising rate of new cancers.
- We have the lowest ratio of OB-GYNs in the country, paired with one of the steepest declines in access to maternal healthcare.
- We have high rates of mental illness, with deficient access to mental health care.
- We have an aging population, and serious problems with nursing homes

and other options for care.

- And then there are all the unknowns coming from Washington with respect to Medicaid and Medicare.

Decisions, whether made in Des Moines or in Washington – both controlled by Republican trifectas – are actively making caring for Iowans more difficult.

Take our state’s cancer crisis – we all know a friend or family member impacted by cancer. A rational person would conclude that Iowa needs increased funding for research and treatment, and an influx of medical professionals to tackle the problem. Instead, the federal government slashed National Institute of Health (NIH) grant funding to our universities (including ongoing patient trials), and

WEINER
continued on page 8A

Letters

Disruptive, overreaching behavior

Dear Editor:

Following the Sept. 29 Special Session, it is deeply concerning to witness once again the disruptive and overreaching behavior exhibited by Supervisor Heather Stancil. While she publicly admonishes others, such as Rob Sands, for staying within their appropriate roles, she repeatedly fails to adhere to this standard herself.

The matter at hand was the Opioid Task Force. Supervisor Fitch announced the inclusion of two highly qualified and respected community members to this task force. Yet, in a troubling pattern, Supervisor Stancil launched a power-driven tirade. Such episodes consistently involve belittling a fellow supervisor, including threatening language that insinuates Supervisor Jess Hobbs might usurp Supervisor Fitch’s responsibilities – an offer thankfully declined due to recognition of the competence already in place. Moreover, Supervisor Stancil felt compelled to remind attendees that ultimate authority resides with the Board of Supervisors, not the Task Force – ironically, the very dynamic that program members of this initiative have explicitly rejected in previous board meetings.

The National Opioid Settlement Agreement clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities here: The Board of Supervisors is entrusted with oversight and governance of the funds, ensuring strict compliance with settlement guidelines stipulating that expenditures target opioid prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts. The Board appoints advisory committees – like this Task Force – comprised of subject matter experts including law enforcement, emergency responders, behavioral health specialists with addiction expertise, substance use providers, and individuals with lived experience. This expert group’s task force role is to research, consult the community, and formulate informed recommendations. The Board then exercises fiduciary responsibility by approving or rejecting these recommendations in alignment with the

settlement’s intent. The very existence of the Task Force acknowledges the Board’s lack of specialized knowledge and underlines the necessity of relying on professionals empowered to guide these critical decisions.

The Board’s stewardship of opioid funds is a solemn trust that commands respect for both process and expertise. Supervisor Stancil’s insistence on exerting control undermines this trust and threatens to derail this carefully structured framework. It is imperative that the Board of Supervisors exemplify fiduciary integrity by sincerely engaging with experts and service providers dedicated to combating the opioid crisis.

What is urgently needed from Supervisors Stancil and Hobbs is to genuinely listen and seek to understand – not merely to hear while formulating preemptive rebuttals. This obstructive posture has already squandered valuable progress, wasted precious time, and disrespected all participants committed to this vital effort. Such conduct is unacceptable and must be curtailed. Supervisor Stancil, in particular, must acknowledge and take responsibility for her conduct, maintaining focus on her designated role rather than commandeering others’.

Madison County stands at a pivotal crossroads. This initiative holds the potential to position our community as a model in opioid abatement. However, this outcome is jeopardized if power plays and micromanagement continue. It is critical that every member of the Board knows their role, respects boundaries, and empowers the skilled professionals advancing this essential work.

Your presence at the upcoming regular Board of Supervisors meeting is vital. Stand with us in demonstrating unwavering support for this crucial program that addresses urgent community needs. Together, we can ensure its continued success and lasting impact.

—Gina Robinson, 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.

...

Leaf It to the Neighbors

It’s fall, the season when trees shed their coats, inspiring the phrase “I’ve fallen and can’t get up,” as thousands of leaves blanket the ground. Many people consider this their favorite time of year, when a slight morning nip in the air gives way to warm afternoons – a welcome change from the constant heat and humidity of summer. Others, however, dread the thought of trudging to the shed for a rake, knowing they’ll spend endless hours clearing the autumn debris from their yards, causing homeowners to employ different strategies to get the job done. In the spirit of autumn efficiency, here are a few effective methods for dealing with those endless leaves.

Several residents in the community who appear somewhat lazy are sold on the Neighborly Wind Strategy, waiting for a strong breeze to blow the colorful lawn litter east into their neighbor’s yard. Or they re-brand laziness as environmentalism by acknowledging that they are not skipping raking, but rather enriching the soil.

Others tell their kids it is a game, where the one who gathers the most leaves wins, neglecting to mention that there is a prize. While others convince themselves that the leaves look festive until the first snow buries them.

And you can’t miss the neighbors in the next block who are using the reverse psychology approach, shouting, “I love raking leaves!” hoping Mother Nature will quell their tune with a wind-storm just to shut them up.

For years, around this time of year, I have noticed someone using a leaf blower on my neighbor’s roof, seemingly trying to clear the gutters of leaves. It looks as if they are conducting an orchestra of chaos, with leaves swirling in the air like confetti. This makes me wonder if this is truly the safest strategy, especially since it is fall.



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