

OPINION



DAVE NAGLE
Iowa Capital Dispatch

Struggling rural hospitals will need Iowa’s help after ‘big, beautiful bill’ takes its toll

Dave Nagle, of Cedar Falls, is a former Iowa Democratic Party state chairman and three-term U.S. congressman from Iowa.

(SBA) - Now that Congress has sent the “big, beautiful bill” to the president’s desk, our focus needs to turn to how we handle the aftermath of its implementation.

We already know that in Iowa, at least 20 rural hospitals are seriously threatened with closing and six are almost certainly gone. The problem is greater than hospitals closing or individuals being denied immediate, necessary medical care. The impact is going to be felt by the communities that are home to those medical care centers.

Our challenge will be, as a state, how we handle the impact of loss for many of those on Medicaid coverage, and the drastic cutbacks on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The real proof of the magnitude of the problem is that nationwide, 70 million people are on Medicaid and 40 million are beneficiaries of SNAP. Furthermore, the effect is even greater in rural states.

Our first concern must be for care centers and hospitals. Hospitals are rather mysterious places by design. This is because the nature of the work is confidential. Everyone is entitled to privacy when treated medically. In addition, the institution funding is a total dark web with government payments, insurance coverage, write-offs, etc. So, they exist somewhat in isolation from the rest of town.

But the individuals who work at hospitals are not a secret. They are your neighbors, shop at the same stores, serve on their church communities, coach the little league softball and baseball teams, send their kids to our schools, and take a place on the school board or city councils.

But when the hospital closes, they will be different because (a) they will be unemployed and (b) they will find work someplace else. It is not just the medical staff, nurses, doctors, techs, and the bookkeepers who chase the insurance companies for reimbursement (may God have mer-

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Divided we fall

By Jack Devine, The Patriot Post | SBA Guest Commentary

(SBA) - I’m writing this on Independence Day, July 4th, the nation’s birthday and our annual joyous celebration of everything American. We, the luckiest people on the planet, are blessed to be American citizens. How good is that?

But despite all the July 4th festivities — the American flags flying everywhere, the fireworks shows — I can’t shake the sense that we are not a happy public these days. Unfolding reports of the flash flood tragedy in Texas, along with the ever-dour social media posts and the relentless negativity in news broadcasts (including disgusting video of flag-burning protesters), dampen our usual high spirits on this day.

The unpleasant truth is that our partisan divide is wider and deeper than ever — even after the decisive 2024 election outcome (the one that we’d naively hoped would pull us together), and the steady stream of positive achievements by the new administration in its first six months.

Published opinion polls tell the tale. Across the board, more than half of respondents do not approve of Mr. Trump’s performance, with an average margin of about 10%.

As a recent case in point, public reaction to Trump’s One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) is dismal; respondents disapprove by a two-to-one margin. While it is always possible to find things we don’t like in a 1,000-page legislative package, nothing in this bill was much of a surprise — it was largely a codification of everything that candidate Trump had promised to do. (Imagine that — a president who does what he promises!)

Regardless, I can think of no federal legislation that has aroused so much interest — and antipathy — as this one. Democrats, with

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Election season is coming:

Why every vote still matters in Sergeant Bluff

By Timothy Loftus, Editor & Publisher | Sergeant Bluff Advocate

(SBA) – It’s that time again. The yard signs will start popping up and blooming again like Iowa wild-flowers, campaign mailers will start stacking up on kitchen counters, and you won’t be able to stream YouTube or drive down Highway 75 without seeing a smiling candidate pledging to fight for you. If it feels like we just got through the last round of elections, well... we did. That’s the rhythm of American democracy — and here in Iowa, we’re practically on the front lines.

Every two years, like clockwork, the gears start turning again. Local and state candidates emerge, stump speeches return, debates heat up, and yes — our mailboxes and social media feeds get a little louder. It can feel endless at times. Campaigns never really stop anymore. They just pause to catch their breath and then dive back in. But before we get too jaded, maybe it’s worth pausing to recognize something important. This noisy, repetitive, and sometimes overwhelming process is actually a gift — and a powerful one.

Here in Woodbury County, and especially in a city like Sergeant Bluff, we know that the issues on the ballot aren’t just talking points. They’re real. They’re personal. They affect our families, our neighborhoods, our future. Think about what’s at stake this time around, school funding, Iowa’s high property taxes, infrastructure projects, broadband expansion, and economic development — all issues that impact us directly. Whether you’re a young family, a retiree, a business owner, or just someone who wants better roads and reliable internet, this election will help shape what comes next.

And that’s exactly why this political cycle — even if it feels like it never ends — matters so much.

Now, I’ll be honest. Like many people, I get tired of the ads, the billboards, the flood of flyers with bold slogans and smiling headshots. And while the steady hum of campaign promises can feel repetitive, it’s also a sign that people want to be involved. People care. In Iowa, we don’t just watch politics from a distance — we live it. Twice a year, Sergeant Bluff has what’s known as CommCon. Our local government leaders and schools invite residents to a forum that keeps us informed on what’s happening in our community and schools. It’s transparency at its finest. It has allowed Sergeant Bluff residents to ask questions or express concerns in a forum setting. In our area, it’s not unusual to run into a city council member, school board member, or state representative at Fareway or Hy-Vee — or to chat with them while picking up a coffee at Hawk’s. That kind of access, that kind of direct connection, is rare in most places. But it’s alive and well here.

Take Sergeant Bluff, for example. I’m personally impressed — and genuinely grateful — for the leadership we’ve seen here over the past several years. Our city has experienced real, tangible growth. You can see it in the new housing developments that seem to pop up every few months, in businesses like the new Kwik Star opening their doors soon, and in long-time local businesses like Sergeant Bluff Eye Care building a new office complex and expanding to meet growing demand. Little Red Embroidery in downtown Sergeant Bluff has expanded its space to accommodate new equipment for its growing local and national sales online. Sergeant Bluff Smiles added new construction to their existing building. Fareway invested in remodeling its exterior with new, attractive signage and expanded parking. Waterbury Funeral Service expanded into Sioux City and added additional services. Sioux Valley Community Credit Union has completed an interior remodel

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Timothy Loftus
Publisher, Sergeant Bluff Advocate

to enhance its customers’ banking experience. Sergeant Bluff even has Iowa’s Small Business Person of the Year, Cathy Bishop, owner of Aggie’s BBQ.

You can also see progress through thoughtful community improvements such as the Sergeant Bluff Community Foundation’s Light Tunnel Project, now being built at the Sergeant Bluff Recreation Complex. The Market, which held its opening day on July 6th, brings in hundreds of people to Sergeant Bluff from around Siouxland. The upcoming Pioneer Valley Days annual event will celebrate 50 years on August 15 & 16. Our parks are better and cleaner with enhanced public spaces, and the wildest thing is that this is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

That newly widened First Street paving project. That’s progress you can feel as you drive to work, drop off the kids at SBL, or head to the post office. It’s a visible sign of forward-thinking decisions made by local leaders who’ve earned the trust and support of the community. And that trust didn’t come from flashy campaign ads — it came from showing up, listening, and doing the work. And yes, there are going to be things residents don’t like about how something is handled or how it’s getting done, but local governing can get messy with all the demands and opinions.

We have it pretty good here in Sergeant Bluff. And that didn’t happen by accident. It happened because residents showed up at the polls. Because we took the time to learn about candidates, to ask questions, and to vote for the people we believed could help move our city forward. That’s the power of local elections. That’s the power of civic engagement. Electing the right people to enhance our community.

So while the election cycle might feel like a never-ending loop, it’s also our chance — again — to continue shaping our future. And not just at the city level. State and county decisions matter too. The officials we send to Des Moines will have a direct hand in determining how much funding our schools receive, how our property taxes are structured, whether infrastructure dollars make their way to our roads and bridges, and how aggressively Iowa pursues rural development. Just look at what Long Lines Broadband has achieved in Sergeant Bluff and the surrounding rural areas in just the last 2 years. Thanks to local government support and Long Lines’ belief in our community, we now have fast, reliable fiber-optic internet connecting us to the world more efficiently than ever before. That’s a real investment in our future — and a powerful example of what thoughtful local leadership can help make possible.

The truth is, we can’t afford to tune it all out — even when it feels overwhelming. Every sign, every flyer, every debate is a reminder that this is our process. That the direction of Sergeant Bluff, of Woodbury County, and of Iowa isn’t being dictated from afar — it’s being decided right here, by us.

And let’s be honest, it’s kind of exciting. There’s something about seeing your community grow and knowing you had a hand in it. That your vote helped make that new park possible. That the person you sup-

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