

Your Capitol Voice

I want to highlight a report by a nonpartisan organization called the Common Sense Institute. Last week they officially released their report on Affordability in America. Affordability varies drastically from state to state and I am happy to report that Iowa came in #1 in the entire country for affordability. In this week's column I will describe the data and metrics that were used to come to the conclusion that Iowa is the most affordable state in the country to live and raise a family.



YOUR CAPITOL VOICE

Rep. Bobby Kaufmann

Iowans were definitely affected by the surge in inflation like the rest of the country. People are hurting. But the impact here was noticeably different. Iowa households spent \$9,000 more on basic expenses (housing, utilities, groceries, health and car insurance, gas, and childcare) in 2025 than they did in 2019. That is over 40% less than the average \$15,400 increase seen across the country. Prices have risen but Iowa households have seen their spending power increase. After covering the basics, Iowans are holding onto 4% more of their paycheck – outpacing the US average by 10%. Another key statistic is that while income grew by 30% between 2019 and 2025, expenses only grew by 22% during the same timeframe. That 22% increase is the fourth lowest in the nation.

My friends on the left like to talk about affordability but while they talk about it, Republicans in the State House have been leading on this issue. Endless talking is one thing – actions and results are another. I am proud to have been a leader on this critical issue. I will continue to fight to bring down the expense of childcare and healthcare while maintaining Iowa's leadership as the most affordable place to live in the nation. This is what conservative leadership gets you. We have made smart decisions when handling our state budget and have been innovative in our legislative solutions to help Iowans through the years of soaring inflation.

In previous columns, I discussed health insurance, childcare, and other kitchen table issues. In future columns I will be discussing property taxes and many more affordability issues.

Contact Representative Kaufmann:

e-mail: Bobby.Kaufmann@legis.iowa.gov
phone: 563-260-3355
mail: 1527 330th Street, Wilton, Iowa 52778

Konfrst and Rowley Named 2026 Hoover Uncommon Public Service Award Recipients

State Representative Jennifer Konfrst and State Senator David Rowley have been recognized as the 2026 recipients of the Herbert Hoover Uncommon Public Service Award by the Hoover Presidential Foundation. The Foundation created the annual award to be presented to one member of the Iowa House and Iowa Senate who demonstrates uncommon service to the people of Iowa above and beyond their legislative duties.



Rep. Jennifer Konfrst

Representative Bobby Kaufmann, Wilton, announced the award recipient to members of the House at the opening of the day's session. Representative Jennifer Konfrst was praised by her nominee; as the first woman to serve as Iowa House Democratic Minority Leader, she has modeled leadership for women, girls and all Iowans across the state.



Sen. David Rowley

Long before and throughout her service in the Iowa House, she has invested deeply in her community-serving in leadership roles with local school organizations, mentoring students through mock trial

SEE HOOVER UNCOMMON, P10

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Private Schools Should be Held to Same Accountability Standards as Public Schools

by Dr. Pam Vogel

Public education has stood as a foundational pillar in Iowa for almost 200 years. However, in recent years public schools have received meager increases in yearly state aid which fails to keep up with inflation. This, while the number of private schools in Iowa has grown due to the voucher program created by lawmakers in 2023. And almost half of Iowa's 99 counties do not have any private schools, so the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars going to vouchers have no benefit to communities in these areas.

Iowa is currently home to 325 public school districts and 234 private schools accredited by the Iowa State Board of Education. Additionally, Iowa has 116 private schools not accredited by the State Board of Education.

All private schools in Iowa have the discretion to choose which students they admit and turn away those they choose not to admit. This admission process often means that students with disabilities or other special needs may be excluded, which may also unintentionally affect other groups of students, such as students of color. Our public education system takes all students, regardless of their background or educational needs.

For the 116 private schools not accredited by the state, there is no requirement to report student achievement results or hire certified teachers. These students may attend school for as few as 148 days a year, compared to 180 days for public school students. These private schools do not have school board elections and are not required to address concerns that arise from parents or community members around spending or what is being taught. And they may adopt their own curriculum—often based on religious beliefs.

Public and state accredited private schools must regularly report student achievement results, keeping parents informed and enabling the public to evaluate school performance. These reports include data such as state test scores, curriculum standards, graduation rates, and other critical information. This allows families and the community to understand how well schools are serving students and ensures that schools are held to a high standard of accountability.

Private schools not accredited by the state do not offer transparency or accountability. Without this, there is less certainty that students are being challenged academically or supported in their development, making it difficult for parents and the community to know whether students are advancing in their knowledge and skills each year.

Significant criticism has also emerged surrounding the voucher program's limited financial oversight. Distributing voucher funds begins with the state issuing the money directly to the parents, who are then responsible to transfer these public dollars to the private school. This indirect method allows private schools to avoid showing the public how taxpayer dollars are being spent. This system has been uncovered in other states to reveal instances where public tax money was misused and diverted to personal or luxury purchases rather than educational expenses.

In the Iowa Senate, Senator McClintock (R, District 42) introduced Senate File 2008, a bill designed to prevent private schools from mishandling public funds and to establish safeguards to ensure students in private schools receive a quality education. All private schools would have been required to adhere to the same reporting and auditing requirements as public schools. The bill aimed to guarantee fiscal responsibility and safeguard against waste, fraud, and abuse.

Without transparency and accountability from all of our school systems, citizens cannot know if expectations for educational quality and responsible stewardship of resources are being met. Iowans deserve to know if every school, regardless of its public or private status, operates with integrity and in the best interests of students and the broader society. These high standards are essential if our state is to demonstrate our schools remain a foundational pillar in Iowa. How else will we know if every child receives the high quality education they deserve?

Dr. Pam Vogel is a former special education teacher and school superintendent in Iowa and Connecticut. She was an instructor in the superintendent licensure program at Iowa State University. She is a member of Iowa CCI and Public School Strong.

YOUR VIEW

Higher Property Taxes, Home Costs, Utilities Equal Families Leaving Area

After attending the city and county meetings regarding the proposed property tax I feel compelled to reach out to the school board, legislative, and you, the public.

Do you know that 80% of property tax money for our school goes to salaries? I didn't until the county meeting. NOT to maintenance, future improvements, or technology upgrades. And this is decided by the school board and not voted on by us, the citizens.

Did you also know there is no cap for senior citizens or disabled individuals? Increased property tax is driving older residents out of their homes.

With the city and county making cuts as well as to their own salaries, we need to let the school board know they need to also make cuts where they can instead of raising property tax year after year.

I firmly believe modernizing the school isn't going to bring in new families and

teachers. It is the more affordable homes that make it worth commuting to jobs. The higher the property taxes, home costs, and utilities is why families are leaving the area.

If this concerns you email or call the Tipton School Board. This information is listed on the School's Website.

Also, email/write letters to the state legislature. They are currently working on this until April.

--Pat Grassley (R), Speaker of the House: pat.grassley@legis.iowa.gov

--Shannon Lundgren (R), House Ways and Means Chair: shannon.lundgren@legis.iowa.gov

--Brad Sherman (R), House Ways and Means: brad.sherman@legis.iowa.gov

--Jane Bloomingdale (R), House Ways and Means: jane.bloomingdale@legis.iowa.gov

--Dan Dawson (R), Senate Ways and Means Chair: dan.dawson@legis.iowa.gov

--Mark Costello (R), Senate Ways and Means: mark.costello@legis.iowa.gov

Amber Jasperson
Tipton

A Rose By Any Other Name

Four centuries ago, William Shakespeare wrote, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." This line from Romeo and Juliet is valid for today's column, even if used out of context.

We are largely who we are regardless of our name. I've been an Arvid for more than 78 years but if my parents had named me Ralph or Elmer, I'd probably still be the same loud, outspoken storyteller I am today.



COUNTRY ROADS

Arvid Huisman

At some point of development, we recognize and accept our name and then become protective of it. Some folks may choose to use their middle name or even change their name. Whatever we are comfortable being called, we like it and respond to it.

Hold on, my rambling leads to something relevant.

After several years of writing news for a radio station and then a newspaper, it became apparent

I needed a job that provided a better grade of hamburger. I tried my hand at advertising sales and discovered that (a) I enjoyed the work and (b) I enjoyed some success at it.

While I never got rich, the commissions and bonuses did provide a better grade of hamburger.

One of the first rules of salesmanship is knowing your client. That, of course, includes remembering their names. From the beginning of my sales career, I made a noble attempt at remembering names, especially those of my clients.

Recognizing that our names are important to us, I made this a priority and now that I am long retired, I still remember many of the people I have worked with over the years and their names.

Because my name is unusual, however, I am not easily offended when someone doesn't remember it or calls me by a different name.

An early advertising client in Sioux City referred to me as Dick when I called on him. He was a good guy and was becoming a good customer, so I let it slide. After several months, however, I worried he might be upset with me if I never corrected him, so I decided to set the record straight.

On my next call, he greeted me with a pleasant, "Good morning, Dick!" I politely responded, "Please don't misunderstand, I'm not offended by being called Dick, but my name is actually Arvid."

"Sorry," the middle-aged man responded, "but you remind me of Dick Butkus."

Dick Butkus was a linebacker for the Chicago Bears from 1965-1973 and I was not upset by the confusion. I've been confused with worse.

Several years later a young man from our church suffered a brain injury and upon completing a lengthy rehabilitation process returned to our community. He was a good guy and upon his return to church I welcomed him back. He had known me for some time, and I could sense he was mentally searching for my name. Finally, he smiled and said, "I'm going to call you 'Big Guy!'" From then on, I was Big Guy to him and that was fine with me.

Popular names change over the years and in recent times I have noticed that some younger people have unfamiliar names. This is the result of creative parents and the increasing diversity in our community. Remembering how I felt as a young person with an uncommon handle, I have been asking people with an unusual name on their ID badge or uniform how they pronounce it.

Particularly among younger people who are clearly introverted or uncomfortable with speaking with old guys, I can sense a bit of relaxation when they pronounce their unusual name for me and I compliment them on it.

I have seen quiet, bashful young people smile and even engage in a bit of conversation when I have said, "Wow! That's a unique name. And it fits you perfectly!"

When I was a kid, I wanted to be a Billy or a Tommy, but as an adult Arvid has served me well. My greatest frustration back then was that novelty stores and tourist gift shops didn't stock merchandise personalized with my name.

Over the years I have been called Avid, Arid, Arvin, Arvurd, Arlon... even Dick and Big Guy. I take no offense. They are all preferable to some of the other names I have been called.

By any other name, I wouldn't necessarily smell as sweet as a rose, but I am still Arvid.

(Arvid Huisman can be contacted at huismaniowa@gmail.com. ©2026 by Huisman Communications.)

Visit Our Website

www.tiptonconservative.com

Tipton Friends of the Library Spring Book Sale April 9, 10, 11

Friends of the Tipton Public Library is preparing for its Spring Book Sale on April 9, 10 and 11 at the Tipton Public Library during regular library hours. Friends is again offering a \$5 and \$1 bag sale each day of the sale. The public is invited to come and find books for summer reading.

Again, this spring, the Tipton Rotary is providing every PreK-12 student the opportunity to select two free books at the book sale. Parents are encouraged to bring their children to select two free books. The Rotary covers the cost of the books selected by the students as a way to help promote reading and to help Friends support library activities.

The book sale offers fiction and non-fiction books for adults as well as many books for teens and younger children. Some large print books as well as the classics by 'authors of note' are also available. Throughout the year, Friends display used books on shelves at the east entrance of the library and in a section in the library itself.

Friends is a volunteer group that gives ongoing support to the Tipton Public Library and its many programs for children, teens and adults as well as helping pay for equipment and improvements for the library, not covered by tax support. A thank you goes to the library director and staff for developing these programs for the Tipton

community.

Any individual, organization or service group interested in supporting the library and its programs can join Friends. Memberships are Individual - \$5; Family - \$10; Supporting - \$25 or more. Send to Friends of the Tipton Public Library, % Sandy Childs, Treasurer, 211 Walnut St., Tipton, IA 52772.

Additional community support is encouraged through donations of materials. Acceptable donations include adult fiction and non-fiction [hardcover and paperback], cookbooks, craft books, reference materials, 'table top' books, CDs, DVDs, etc. Children's books are always welcome including storybooks, board books, chapter books, craft books, and pre-teen and teen books.

Anyone interested in donating materials to the Friends may contact the Tipton Public Library or any of the following Friends Board members: President Becky Bohde, Vice President Cindy Kunde, Secretary Jo Treadwell, Treasurer Sandy Childs, or the other Board members: John Barnum, Deb Cook, Tanya Demmel, Linda France and Kelly Thomas.