

# Opinion & Politics

## Strengthening Iowa's Voice

### Iowans deserve clean water, and we're making progress

By Mike Naig  
Iowa Secretary of Agriculture

Every Iowan deserves clean, safe drinking water. That's not negotiable. It's fundamental to our health, our communities, and our quality of life. As Secretary of Agriculture, protecting our natural resources while keeping Iowa agriculture strong has been one of my top priorities. Those goals are not conflicting – they go hand in hand. Let's start with the facts. Iowa's treated drinking water meets national safety standards, which are regularly reviewed and updated, most recently in 2024 under the Biden administration. At the same time, we know there is more work to do upstream to continue improving water quality, and we are making significant progress across our state.

Iowa is an agricultural powerhouse because we are blessed with naturally nitrogen-rich soils. Nitrogen is essential for crops to grow but can create challenges if it leaves the field and enters waterways. That's why farmers across our state are implementing thousands of responsible farming practices that keep soil in place, reduce runoff, filter nutrients, and protect downstream water sources.

In 2024, Iowa farmers planted nearly 4 million acres of cover crops, up from fewer than 400,000 just a decade ago, a 10x increase. Cover crops hold soil and nutrients in place, improve soil health, and are a good source of forage for livestock.

Farmers are also building nitrate-re-

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A new monthly feature, in partnership with the Iowa Newspaper Association, offers perspectives from both major political parties. This month's focus is water quality.

### It's time to pass the Iowa healthy water act

By Elinor Levin  
State Representative

Every Iowan, every human, needs water to survive. Whether to drink, to grow plants, to fish, swim, kayak, and paddle, or to uplift amazing local breweries, wineries, and cideries, the water we access simply must be healthy and plentiful for us to have a future.

Right now, Iowans across the state are recognizing and speaking out about the fact that we have a real water challenge. And they are no longer asking us to make a change. Some are begging, some are demanding, and some are crying out from their children's hospital rooms.

And Iowa doesn't start from a great position – unlike many states, we don't have a strong understanding of our water resources. Without the under-

ground data of a century-old oil and gas industry; without monitoring of non-point sources; without fully funding our State Geologist's office like other states do to map aquifers; and without finding the funds for the Iowa Flood Center to maintain and grow the Iowa Water Quality Information Sensor network; we have pieces of a very big puzzle, but too many are missing.

What do we know? Our waters are impaired, but our majority leaders want to stop looking, stop monitoring, and stop protecting us. Our well levels are dropping, but water use permits are still under consideration that would send Iowa water out of state. And Iowans, so, so many Iowans, are

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## Winterset City Government Update

By Tom Leners  
Winterset Mayor

Thank you to the *Madisonian* and reporter Gail Blader for publishing an article in the March 4 edition of the *Madisonian* about the Winterset Fieldhouse. Specifically, the financing components of the project. I hope you find the article informative.

City Manager Barden and I attended the Iowa League of Cities Legislative Forum on Wednesday, March 4. This event took place in the State Historical Building and then most of the attendees went up the Capitol. We had scheduled a meeting with Senate President Sinclair which others attended. I do believe the Iowa Legislature will work on property tax reform this year. What the reform will be is still to be decided as three plans are still working their way through the process.

Spring appears to be ready to begin. We have experienced moderate temperatures lately and a nice rain fell earlier this month, but

I bet we'll have one more measurable snow. I would remind the eager gardeners and yard workers that yard waste pickup begins in April and runs through November. Check the City of Winterset website for more information.

Construction continues on the Waste Water Treatment Facility. The relatively mild winter has allowed workers to make good progress. We are still in the building rebar steel cages and pouring cement phase. This work will last until approximately June of this year. I will share details of the construction progress in this article monthly.

If you haven't heard Friends of Winterset Parks and Rec are caring for the flower baskets around the square this year. It is not too late to donate or volunteer to water the flowers. I can tell you that it is a fun chore and doesn't take very long. Many thanks to the Trasks and Olson who ran this project for more than 15 years.

My wife and I had about 3 weeks of vacation away from Winterset in late January and late February. We really do live in a wonderful place and sometimes it is good to get away and rediscover your hometown.

All for now.

## Relatively Minor

Vicki Minor, Editor  
editor@wintersetmadisonian.com

*Laughter does not have to come from a major source. It could indeed be ... relatively minor.*

### A Matter of Time

Last Sunday, I lost an hour and had no idea where it went. Possibly, I just forgot that I gave it up for Lent. It made me a little anxious and threw my day off track. Maybe it was led astray or had fallen through a crack. I kinda miss that single hour, those 60 minutes I lack. Hopefully, it's just a matter of time before I have it back.

Had it been a senior moment, a brief period in time, it might not be so bad, and I probably wouldn't mind. There's no time like the present, so I asked my spouse to look, totally interrupting him as he intently read his book. Peering at me over his glasses, thinking I'd likely lost my mind – actually, he might have a point – it's just a matter of time.

Where could that hour have gone? How could it fly away? Could it be underneath the furniture next to where the dogs usually play? My life's extremely busy; it just doesn't seem quite fair, also very problematic if that hour isn't there. Some people will not notice, and others won't even care – except when facing a deadline without even a minute to spare.

It kind of makes me wonder just where that hour went. The old phrase "time is money"... maybe those 60 minutes were already spent? I'm gazing at the clock, still trying to understand why my precious minutes weren't caught by the first or second hand. They were systematically rotating around the face of the clock; perhaps during a minute of weakness, the hour just fell off.

Communicating it digitally were four other clocks in the house. I realized they'd been changed, apparently by my spouse. He soon explained his reasoning, so I could rest my mind – the hour that went missing was from Daylight Saving Time.

*Have something to share with the community?*

*Send your letter to editor@wintersetmadisonian.com*

*Letters must be signed by the author. Guidelines below.*

## Zach Nunn

U.S. CONGRESS

For the second time in just a few months, Iowa is mourning warriors who gave their lives in service to this country.

Sergeant Declan Coady of West Des Moines and Major Jeffrey O'Brien of Waukee were killed in Kuwait while serving with the 103rd Sustainment Command, the Army Reserve unit based in Des Moines. Six American service members were killed in the strike, and nine more were wounded.

Sergeant Coady was just 20 years old – one of the youngest in his unit and, by every account, one of the very best. He served as an IT specialist with the Army Reserve while pursuing a cybersecurity degree online from Kuwait. Major O'Brien was a husband, a father, and a dedicated leader who spent decades serving his country – always finding ways to stay present for his family, even from 7,000 miles away.

As a combat veteran and part of a military family, Kelly and I understand the quiet weight military families carry while their loved ones are deployed. This week, that burden fell

heavily on Iowa.

On Saturday, I stood with the Coady and O'Brien families at Dover Air Force Base as their loved ones were brought home. There are no words that truly capture that moment – only the quiet understanding that freedom is never free, and that the families who bear that cost carry a burden the rest of us can only strive to honor.

In moments like this, grief deepens our resolve. We honor Declan and Jeffrey. We pray for the nine service members recovering from their wounds. And we stand beside every military family carrying the weight of this loss.

Sunday night at Walter Reed Hospital, we stood with our 103rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command wounded warriors who just returned home from Kuwait, making sure they have the care and support they've earned.

Iowa will remember their sacrifice. And we will continue to uphold our responsibility to the families they leave behind and to every service member still standing the watch.

## Connect with your legislators

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