

Opinion & Politics

To our loyal readers and subscribers

For many years, it has been our privilege to serve this community by sharing local news and sports, telling the stories of our neighbors, and reporting on the issues that matter most here at home. At its heart, The Madisonian has always been about connection, and we remain deeply grateful for the trust you place in us each week.

It has been more than a decade since we last adjusted our subscription rates. During that time, the costs of printing, delivery, and daily operations have steadily increased. Like many local newspapers, we are working hard to balance these rising costs while continuing to provide the hometown journalism our readers expect and deserve.

To ensure we can continue delivering the weekly coverage you rely on, we have adjusted our subscription rates accordingly. This change reflects a 50% increase. We understand this is not a small adjustment, and it was not a decision made lightly. This update will help us sustain local reporting, preserve the quality of our paper, and continue serving our community for years to come.

We also want to make this transition as easy as possible. To help with budgeting, we are pleased to offer convenient monthly payment options. Subscribers may choose automatic

monthly withdrawal from a bank account or debit card at no additional cost. Monthly payments by credit card are also available, with a 3% processing fee. Please contact Wendy at 515-462-1535 if you would like to set up a monthly plan or if you have any questions.

The cost of the paper will increase to \$1.50 at the stores on April 1, 2026. In Madison and surrounding counties (Adair, Dallas, Polk, Warren, Clarke and Union) subscriptions will be \$75/year or \$6.25/month. Elsewhere in Iowa, subscriptions will increase to \$78/year or \$6.50/month. Our out-of-state subscriptions will change to \$81/year or \$6.75/month.

In addition, we offer a digital-only subscription for readers who prefer to access The Madisonian online. Online subscriptions are available for \$4.99 per month, providing another affordable way to stay connected with local news and community coverage.

Thank you for your continued loyalty and support. This newspaper exists because of you, and we are honored to remain part of your weekly routine. We look forward to continuing to serve our community with care, integrity, and dedication.

With sincere appreciation,

—The Madisonian

Brass Tacks from Rural Iowa

Guest Columnist Barb Kalbach
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A Pair of Somber Anniversaries

Monday, March 23, was the 16th anniversary of the signing of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) into law. Roughly 50 million Americans have gained health insurance coverage either through the ACA marketplace or Medicaid expansion. Since 2013, the number of Americans uninsured decreased by nearly half, from about 14.5% to just under 8%.

I think most of us would agree that our healthcare system, including the ACA, is imperfect and that we could do more to ensure access to healthcare for all Americans. But programs like the ACA and Medicaid have made strides in closing some of the gaps in access to care for millions.

Yet instead of taking more steps forward to ensuring care, we seem to be sliding backwards, and rather quickly. Because of Trump's "Big, Ugly Bill" passed last summer, approximately 114,000 Iowans are estimated to lose Medicaid or ACA coverage. Nearly the same number of Iowans on the ACA marketplace are now paying double or more for their health insurance due to the continued failure by Congress to extend the ACA tax credits at the end of 2025.

Another anniversary is on the horizon. April 1 marks the 10-year anniversary of when Iowa privatized its entire Medicaid program. The cruel joke that this occurred on April Fools' Day is not lost on thousands of Iowans dependent on for-profit managed care organizations like Iowa Total Care to approve the care they need.

One doesn't have to look far to know Iowa's privatized Medicaid hasn't been a success by many measures. Either from someone in your own family, a neighbor, or friend at church we've heard ten years of stories of delays in needed care or outright denials of service. Support groups on Facebook for those dealing with Iowa's Medicaid program are littered with phrases like "Iowa Total Care sucks," "How do we fight the fight without getting mentally drained," and more.

So what are our current crop of elected officials doing in response? At least it appears they've abandoned their attempt to lock us into privatized Medicaid for years to come. But care is still being denied.

I read an article in KFF Health News recently about a family in Ottumwa who is fighting a decision by Iowa Total Care to cut their adult child's in-home care coverage by about a third of what they were covering. A manager for Iowa Total Care testified that state officials advised the company to focus mainly on "skill building" time, not supervision.

Reading between the lines, this sounds a lot like advice on how to cut costs, not provide the care our loved ones, neighbors, and others need. And it's in large part because of the massive cuts to Medicaid in the Big, Ugly Bill last summer so billionaires could get more tax breaks.

Our rural hospitals, our nursing homes, people we love rely on Medicaid and the ACA to access the care we need, when and where we need it. They can be lifelines to a fulfilling life and vibrant communities. And they should be strengthened, not gutted to line the pockets of people who barely know the value of a hard day's work.

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

Amy Sinclair

STATE SENATOR

Week 10 of the 2026 legislative session began with a major winter storm and followed with a storm of committee activity. The committee actions were up against a deadline on Friday that marked the end of eligibility for many bills. This week was the final week for the Senate to consider House bills and the House to consider Senate bills through their committee work. Tax and spend bills are exempt from this deadline and have come into focus this week. Most notably, the Senate has voted out of Ways and Means their bill to address the issue of property taxes and Iowa's Revenue Estimating Conference (REC), which projects Iowa's revenue estimates, announced the numbers for the FY27 so the Appropriations Committee can

start building their budget.

Legislation highlights

The Senate Ways and Means Committee passed Senate Study Bill 3001, the Senate's property tax overhaul to bring relief to Iowa homeowners and families. It reforms Iowa's property tax system to make it fairer for Iowans, provides more certainty for city and county governments, and automatically lowers levy rates when property inflation is more than two percent.

Senate Study Bill 3034 is the property tax bill proposed by Governor Reynolds. The Iowa House is also proposing a plan to address Iowa's property tax growth with House Study Bill 596.

Editorial Page Guidelines: We want to hear your perspective and views on local issues. We welcome letters with a unique viewpoint that are supported by facts and offer a solution if applicable. Send your letter to the editor to editor@wintersetmadisonian.com. Letters to the editor should be no more than 600 words. Submissions 200-300 words have the best chance of being published. You must include your name, address, and a daytime phone number for verification. All submissions of letters to the editor become the property of The Madisonian and may be edited for length, redundancy, clarity, civility, and accuracy and may be published or distributed in print, electronic, or other forms. Our intent in editing is not to change your opinions expressed, but to ensure your views are clear, concise, and easy to understand. We will try to contact you if we need to edit your letter, but cannot guarantee we will be able to do so because of time constraints. Not all letters submitted will be published. Typically, we will only publish one letter per writer every 30 days. We will not print letters that make false or damaging statements about another person or that are factually inaccurate.

Letters

Grassley's belly-aching is corporate ag hogwash

Dear Editor:

According to his website, Chuck Grassley is once again railing against California's Prop 12, a measure voters approved in 2018 by nearly a 2-to-1 margin. Grassley's belly-aching is nothing but corporate ag hogwash. It's time to move on, Chuck. Or as The Eagles sang in one of their hit songs, Get Over It!

By passing Prop 12, consumers were telling the factory farm industry to treat its animals a bit more humanely. It gave gestating sows a few more square feet to move around in their tightly confined crates, and also said most pork sold in California grocery stores needed to comply with this standard.

Corporate ag groups like the National Pork Producers Council and the Farm Bureau have been squealing about Prop 12 for years now. They don't like it when consumers – and voters – tell them, in landslide numbers, to change their practices. But really, isn't that what we – the consuming public – should be doing to rein in this out-of-control industry? I guess they don't like democracy.

While factory farms continue expanding across Iowa and producing billions of gallons of toxic manure that too often ends up in our drinking water, Grassley is cheering them on. Maybe he and our other Republican legislators should start paying more attention to everyday voters and less attention to the corporate ag industry. I for one am looking forward to the November midterm elections.

—Hugh Espey, Des Moines

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.

Sixteen Seeds of Madness

It's not really Spring Fever, even though spring has officially arrived. What we see goes far beyond that. This is pure chaos, a total departure from logic and common sense. In Iowa, this madness shows up as passionate basketball fans from two major universities caught up in the exhilarating frenzy of March Madness. It turns into shared, exaggerated excitement, wildly irrational by any normal standard, a spectacle so irresistible that people happily pay top dollar just to be part of it.

Okay, maybe it feels a bit spring-like.

Because it all starts with seeds. Sixteen of them.

Some seeds prove stronger than others, so they play a game to determine a winner and a loser. Cinderella, the underdog, just like in the fairy tale, prays her seeding proves worthy. If she survives, she moves out of the anonymity of the first round of 64 on Selection Sunday and suddenly gains attention, transforming into a beautiful Sweet 16. Thanks to a buzzer-beater, she advances again, becoming one of the Elite Eight.

Heading closer to the big dance as part of the Final Four, she might lose her ruby slipper. But from downtown, under a full-court press, she makes three very valid points for why she should still be allowed to dance. She survives. She advances. And at long last, she joins the others, scissors in hand, cutting down the nets.

I once heard a song that said, "Fairy tales can come true; it can happen to you." Of course, it all depends on how the ball bounces.

And the best part? It isn't over. Both teams keep playing, keep moving forward, and give us just enough hope to derail whatever logic we have left. We whisper analysis with confidence, knock on wood, change sweatshirts, and refuse to tempt fate. Madness, after all, isn't something we conclude; it's something we live with, at least until the final buzzer tells us whether this fairy tale ends with confetti or a very quiet drive home.

Catch the Winterset City Government Update with Mayor Tom Leners on the second week of each month!



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