



**Coco wishes you
a Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year!**

WORK CONTINUES ON THE CEDAR FALLS LEVEE PROJECT

The trail near [Peter Melendy Park](#) is currently closed (see photo). Please avoid the closed portion of the trail to give construction workers space to do their jobs as quickly and efficiently as possible. The City of Cedar Falls is sending out regular updates on the project, including trail news. To subscribe to this or other Cedar Falls updates, go to www.cedarfalls.com/List.aspx



DRIVE SAFE CEDAR VALLEY

Did you know that every 33 seconds a child under the age of 13 is seriously injured in a vehicle accident?

In the Cedar Falls-Waterloo area alone, automobile crashes are responsible for deaths, needless injuries and significant property damage each year. Every time we get behind the wheel, the lives of others are in our hands.

Drive Safe Cedar Valley—the first public awareness program of its kind in Iowa—is dedicated to changing the culture of driving in the Cedar Valley by educating and encouraging drivers to be safer and smarter behind the wheel.



What are you doing to stay safe on the road? What intersections do you find dangerous or problematic in your neighborhood? Weigh in. Share your stories and concerns. Learn more about Drive Safe Cedar Valley and help spread the safety message at <http://drivesafecv.com/>.

WATERLOO IJAG TO EXPAND

Congratulations to [IJAG](#) at [George Washington Carver Academy](#) in Waterloo. The program will expand thanks to a gift from AT&T and matching contributions. Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates (IJAG) helps keep students in school and on the path to successful, fulfilling careers.



CV COMPANIES TO PROVIDE STEM INTERNSHIPS

Two Cedar Valley businesses are getting funding to provide STEM-related internships. They are providing a great opportunity for Iowa college students to gain solid work experience, while recruiting fresh talent to fill their skilled worker needs. Learn more about Iowa's STEM Internship Program at www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/stem.

Congratulations to VGM, which was awarded \$29,580 to help provide eight internships, and to DISTek, which will get \$50,000 to help provide 11 internships.

A STATE BUDGET THAT REFLECTS IOWA VALUES & PRIORITIES

A new poll shows Iowans [are unhappy with what the state is doing](#) on many fronts – mental health, health care, education and taxpayer dollars.

Senate Democrats are ready to help turn things around by listening to Iowans and making decisions at the Capitol that reflect your values and priorities. No matter where you live—a small Iowa town, rural county or city—you deserve access to:

- Better jobs
- Great schools
- Affordable health care
- Opportunities for fun, learning and expression

Considering Iowa's very low unemployment rate, focusing on jobs is a must. We can build on proven initiatives to create more good jobs—and improve our communities at the same time—when we:

- Invest in community colleges, apprenticeships and job-training that help Iowans get ahead
- Put local employees and businesses first
- Commit resources to better roads, water and other critical community infrastructure
- Make sure families have affordable housing and safe neighborhoods

As we head into the 2018 session on January 8, please keep sharing your ideas, concerns and questions. When I head to the Statehouse, I take with me—and put first—the values and priorities of you, my constituents.

Education funding, mental health, taxes, on voters' minds in 2018 election

For each state government policy area, please tell me if you approve or disapprove of the way this is being handled by the state Legislature and executive branch. Also, please tell me if you think this issue will or will not be a major consideration when you choose how you will vote in the 2018 election — just answer yes or no.

	Approve	Disapprove	Not sure	Major consideration
Funding for K-12 education	35%	55%	10%	79%
Mental health	25%	64%	11%	77%
Taxes	34%	53%	13%	77%
Medicaid	30%	56%	14%	72%
State budget	37%	48%	15%	72%
Funding for higher education	35%	54%	11%	67%
Guns	47%	39%	13%	65%
Economic development	54%	31%	15%	64%
Water quality	48%	36%	17%	58%
Abortion	31%	46%	23%	55%
None of these/not sure	-	-	-	3%

SOURCE: IOWA POLL OF 802 ADULTS, DEC. 3-6 | NUMBERS MAY NOT ADD TO 100 PERCENT DUE TO ROUNDING
NUMBERS MAY NOT EQUAL 100 BECAUSE RESPONDENTS COULD OFFER MULTIPLE ANSWERS

PUT IOWANS BACK IN CHARGE OF MEDICAID

Medicaid is supposed to ensure our most vulnerable citizens—our friends, family and neighbors— have access to the health care they need. That hasn't happened in Iowa since the Branstad/Reynolds Administration decided to have out-of-state, for-profit companies run our Medicaid system.

We're now watching Iowa's health care system fall apart. That's why I signed a [letter](#) asking for a bipartisan solution to end Iowa's failed Medicaid privatization experiment.

For the past 20 months, frantic Iowans of all ages have contacted lawmakers with real problems caused by the chaos, confusion and incompetence of privatized Medicaid. It's been nothing but trouble for almost everyone concerned:

- Iowans aren't getting healthier. In fact, some have died because the services and care they needed were cut off.
- Hospitals, nursing homes and other health care providers face financial hardship because they aren't getting reimbursed for the care they provide to patients.
- Costs to taxpayers are going up, as the state forks over more and more money to private, out-of-state companies.
- Three of the four companies initially hired to run Iowa Medicaid have quit, causing repeated upheaval to the health care of our very poor elderly and severely disabled Iowans.

Why do we continue down this failed path? Other states have seen fit to turn back. When Connecticut realized its privatized Medicaid was not working, state leaders decided to return to a publicly managed system. Connecticut is now getting much better results. They are saving money and improving care.

We should do the same for Iowans.

If you'd like to follow our on-going efforts to fix Iowa's Medicaid mess, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/democrats/medicaid, where can subscribe to periodic updates on the topic.

CONGRESS MUST CONTINUE HEALTH CARE FOR IOWA KIDS

Iowa's outstanding health insurance for kids could end because Congress has failed to reauthorize funding for the [Children's Health Insurance Program](#) for the first time in the nearly 30 years.

In Iowa, our children's health insurance is known as [hawk-i](#) – Healthy & Well Kids in Iowa. We've made health insurance for kids a priority because it is so important to their success in school and life.

However, without federal action, Iowa will have to pay millions more to insure fewer kids. About 44,000 Iowa children could lose their hawk-i insurance completely when funding runs out in a few short months.

Another 16,000 Iowa kids will keep their health insurance for at least the next two years, but the state will have to cover the cost. That will add another \$10 to \$15 million per year to our already troubled state budget.

Let's encourage our [Congressional delegation](#) to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program, and call on [Governor Reynolds](#) to join us in making the case for all Iowa kids having access to affordable health care.



"It's this simple: If CHIP isn't reauthorized, 44,000 fewer children in our state will have access to the high quality health care hawk-i provides."

RETIREMENT SYSTEM IS GOOD FOR IOWANS & COMMUNITIES

We've heard talk this year that some lawmakers want to make changes to Iowa's public retirement systems.

Why change a system that has worked so well for so long?

Iowa's public retirement systems are in good financial shape. The contributions Iowans put toward their pensions have been invested well and the benefits are reasonable. Since 1953, Iowa communities have reaped the benefits when Iowans spend their pensions locally.

However, unnecessary changes could destabilize our retirement systems, hurting retirees and their communities.

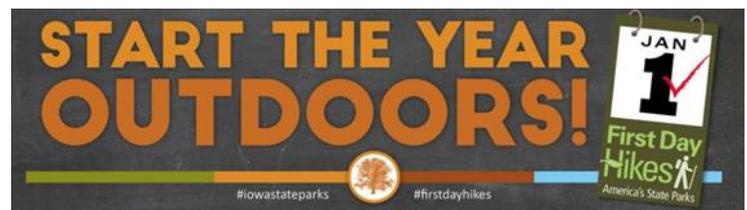
Changes to IPERS or any of Iowa's pension programs must be approved by the Legislature. Rest assured, I will not support a proposal that shortchanges Iowans on their well-earned pensions. We must keep our promises to workers and retirees.

If this issue matters to you, follow what we're doing and sign up for periodic action alerts at www.senate.iowa.gov/democrats/iowa-public-retirement-alerts.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Start the new year with a First Day Hike

Kick off 2018 with a free, guided hike in an Iowa State Park. Explore Iowa's winter scenery at 26 state parks with DNR staff providing interpretation along the way. Find a hike near you at www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Hiking-Biking/First-Day-Hikes.



Excellence in Mentoring Award nominations

Through January 16, Volunteer Iowa is accepting nominations for the 2018 Excellence in Mentoring Awards, which recognizes those who demonstrate a commitment to mentoring young people in Iowa. Nominees should possess a compelling mentoring story that illustrates how positive experiences alter the life of a young person for the better. Details and nomination materials are available at www.volunteeriowa.org.



Volunteer Hall of Fame Award nominations

Through January 16, Volunteer Iowa is accepting nominations for the 2018 Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame Awards. Any Iowa individual or group who has made a long-lasting difference through their volunteer service may be nominated. Induction into the Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame is the highest state-level honor volunteers can receive; the people selected have changed the community, the state, the nation or the world with their time and talent. Details and nomination materials can be found at www.volunteeriowa.org.

Cyber security tool helps Iowa small businesses

America's SBDC Iowa has a free tool to help small businesses evaluate their cyber-security risk and resources to prevent cyber-security threats. You don't have to be tech savvy to benefit. The information at www.iowacyber.com is for small business owners and employees who are non-technical. It includes webinars, best practices and industry articles.

In addition, a workbook for small businesses can help you learn more about cyber security and develop a plan for your own cyber-security initiatives. Download the workbook at www.iowasbdc.org/cyber-security.



Iowa Women at Work Project

IOWA WOMEN: Would you like to share your experiences in the workforce? Iowa's Office on the Status of Women is launching "[Iowa Women at Work](#)" to collect stories from paid and unpaid female workers.

Topic areas include:

- Pregnancy, Maternity/Adoption leave and Breastfeeding
- Family/Caregiving Leave
- Child care
- Workplace flexibility
- Path to leadership
- Harassment/discrimination in the workplace

For complete details or to share your story, go to

<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cas/icsw/iowa-women-work-project>.

Submissions will be compiled and released with the help of Grand View University.



Contact information

State Senator Jeff Danielson serves Hudson, Cedar Falls and Waterloo. He can be reached at 319-231-7192. E-mail him at jeffdanielson@gmail.com.

Senator Danielson is ranking member on the Education Budget. He also serves on the Appropriations, Education, State Government and Transportation committees.

For further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/danielson and www.jeffdanielson.org.