



LEGISLATIVE FORUM – CEDAR FALLS

February 23 @ 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm
Central Rivers AEA, 1521 Technology Pkwy
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613 + [Google Map](#)
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SPUR GROWTH IN EVERY COMMUNITY

With almost one-third of the 2018 legislative session behind us, I hope that we start spending more time helping Iowans get ahead.

Iowa has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country at [2.8 percent](#), but that doesn't mean everybody has the job they want or the income they need to make ends meet. We must ensure every Iowan has the tools to thrive whether in our small towns, rural areas or cities.

I am eager to get to work on proposals that [Puts Iowans First](#). It's time to get back to the basics—to help improve Iowans' everyday lives and provide more opportunities. That means focusing on our shared values, including better-paying jobs, great education and affordable health care.

CUTS DO NOT REFLECT IOWANS' PRIORITIES

In a recent [Iowa Poll](#), Iowans shared what they see as the biggest issues facing our state. The majority of Iowans surveyed think Iowa has major problems with:

- Mental-health services (73 percent)
- Child welfare (58 percent)
- Student debt (60 percent)
- University tuition (55 percent)
- The state budget (51 percent)

Unfortunately, Republican cuts that passed the Iowa Senate on February 8 could hurt those priority areas even more. [SF 2117](#) immediately slashes funding for critical services provided by the Department of Human Services, and significantly cuts our investment in community colleges and state universities. That will lead to more out-

of-pocket expenses and fewer opportunities for working families.

I voted "no" on those deep, mid-year budget cuts because they do not reflect Iowa values and priorities. In this [two-minute video](#), my Senate colleagues highlight the consequences of failing to use your hard-earned tax dollars on Iowa's critical needs.

We must Put Iowans First and tackle the things you say matter most. If you haven't had a chance to take our [short survey](#), please share your thoughts on what will help you, your family and your community get ahead.

IMPROVEMENTS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Iowa's lack of mental health care is a leading worry for the majority of Iowans. The recent [Iowa Poll](#) shows that almost all of us believe there are problems with our state's mental health care system.

New recommendations from a [Complex Needs Workgroup](#) will help address Iowa's mental health concerns. The goal is to provide the right services at the right time to those struggling with severe, complex mental health or substance abuse needs.

A new bill ([SF 2252](#)) will begin the process of making the recommendations reality. I am hopeful that all legislators are ready to do what it takes—including providing adequate funding—to fix Iowans' most pressing concern.

Recommendations include:

- Maintaining intensive residential services for at least 120 Iowans.
- Establishing six Access Centers at strategic locations throughout Iowa to provide immediate, short-term assessment and treatment to those who need significant support and services not available to them at home.
- Adding more Assertive Community Treatment teams. ACTs provide individualized treatment to Iowans in their home and community. Team members are trained in psychiatry, social work, nursing, substance abuse treatment and vocational rehabilitation. RHD

provides these services in Black Hawk County, but the report recommends we add another ACT team to meet local needs.

The Iowa departments of Human Services and Public Health will work with the Courts to implement these and other recommendations. Court involvement is crucial because so much crime stems from mental illness and substance abuse.

Mental health services, student loan debt among top issues considered crises or big problem

For each general area of Iowa life that is supported by state government, please tell me if you believe the situation to be a crisis, a big problem, a little problem, or if you think things are working just fine.

	Crisis	Big problem	Little problem	Working just fine	Not sure
Mental health services	35%	38%	13%	9%	5%
Water quality	12%	26%	27%	29%	5%
K through 12 public education	15%	32%	29%	20%	4%
State university tuition	13%	42%	25%	12%	8%
Funding for the Iowa court system	8%	19%	28%	27%	19%
Child welfare services	20%	38%	23%	12%	7%
The state budget	14%	37%	24%	14%	11%
The availability of a skilled workforce	9%	31%	32%	20%	7%
Student loan debt for Iowa college graduates	20%	40%	21%	11%	7%

USA TODAY NETWORK GRAPHIC | SOURCE: IOWA POLL OF 801 ADULTS, JAN. 28-31
NUMBERS MAY NOT ADD TO 100 PERCENT DUE TO ROUNDING.

4 CRITERIA FOR FISCAL FAIRNESS

Iowans want a tax system that is fair to everyone, not just the special interests. Because of the state’s cobbled together tax policies, many Iowans believe the system is rigged against them. Iowans deserve a tax system that works for all of us and increases prosperity.

At a time when the state budget is not balanced, we must approach tax changes carefully.

A tax plan proposed by Governor Reynolds has started a conversation at the Statehouse and across Iowa. Similar plans in Kansas and Oklahoma have been devastating for education, public safety, health care and other vital services. In fact, Kansas abandoned its failed trickle-down tax cuts, and Oklahoma’s Republican Governor is now proposing higher taxes to dig her state out of its fiscal mess.

Last June, Senator Pam Jochum of Dubuque, lead Democrat on the Senate’s tax policy committee, [wrote a letter](#) to the Governor offering to work together on a tax plan. Senator Jochum pledged to work in a bipartisan way

on true tax reform that benefits Iowans by meeting these principles:

1. **Tax reform must be fair** - According to the [Iowa Policy Project](#), when all state and local taxes are accounted for, Iowa’s lowest earners pay the largest portion of their income in taxes. We must not make the problem worse.
2. **Tax reform must simplify the tax code** - Iowa’s confusing collection of credits, deductions and exemptions makes our taxes look like some of the highest in the nation. What Iowans actually pay in taxes ranks us in the middle of the pack, according to the [Tax Foundation](#). Simplifying Iowa taxes will highlight our competitiveness as an attractive place to live and do business.
3. **Tax reform must fit our budget** - State government has made big cuts to critical services that Iowans depend on. We must not repeat the mistakes of other

states, where massive tax cuts have caused an ongoing crisis that has forced them to pay for necessities by stealing from road funding and raising other taxes.

4. **Tax reform must examine corporate tax credits -** Programs that help children, the elderly and vulnerable Iowans have seen cuts. Yet corporate tax credits remain the same. We must make sure tax credits give us a good return on investment and are in the best interest of Iowans—not just a few big, out-of-state, for-profit businesses. The Governor’s plan does not address corporate tax credits.

SUMMER JOBS WITH THE DOT

Through March 1, the Iowa Department of Transportation is accepting applications for summer help on a statewide traffic survey. Data collected will be used in roadway planning, engineering and maintenance decisions. For complete details and to apply, go to <https://iowadotseasonaltemporary.ourcareerspages.com/job/297790>

CLEAN UP NUISANCE PROPERTIES

Through April 4, applications are being accepted for [Derelict Building Grants](#). The Legislature created the program to help small, rural communities deconstruct or renovate abandoned commercial and public structures.

The program emphasizes reuse and recycling of building items, helps improve street appearance and commercial development, and alleviates the environmental concern these buildings can pose. Financial assistance includes asbestos removal, building deconstruction and renovation, and other environmental services.

For more information, visit the Iowa DNR’s [Derelict Building Program](#) page.

SHARE THOUGHTS ON HISTORY & CULTURE

The Department of Cultural Affairs is seeking public input on how well it’s meeting Iowa’s needs through the Arts Council, Historical Society and film production office. Provide your feedback in an anonymous survey: www.surveymonkey.com/r/IDCA.

STEM & SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Through March 26, Iowa high school students can register for the 2018 Iowa Youth Institute on April 30 at Iowa State University. During the day-long event, students will research agriculture issues and how we can meet the world’s food needs. Each student who submits a paper and attends the event will be recognized as a Borlaug Scholar and get a \$500 scholarship to ISU’s College of Ag & Life Sciences. More information is available through the [Iowa Food Prize](#).

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.

GLOBAL CHALLENGE

THE IOWA YOUTH INSTITUTE
APRIL 30, 2018

Registration due: MARCH 26

www.worldfoodprize.org/IOWAYOUTH