



Optimal Health for All Iowans



# Swatches

## Connecting Rural Iowa

November 2016

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### **President's Message - Elections Recap**

submitted by Kate Walton, IRHA Board President

The 2016 election defied conventional wisdom from the start and the results surprised most political observers. The coming days and weeks will bring additional perspective and analysis, but I wanted to provide a short summary of what we know now. This summary should probably be sent in **RED** type-face because the recent election was a Republican wave by any measure.

As you all know, Republican Donald Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton in what many view as an upset. Here in Iowa, President-elect Trump won handily, besting Clinton by nine percentage points. Senator Charles Grassley easily retained his seat, defeating Democratic challenger Patty Judge by 15 percentage points to be elected to his seventh term in the Senate. Republicans will retain control of the Senate in Washington, DC.

At the Congressional level, all four of Iowa's members of the House of Representatives were re-elected. Congressmen Rod Blum (Republican - 1st District), Congressman David Loebsack (Democrat - 2nd District), Congressman David Young (Republican - Third District) and Congressman Steve King (Republican - Fourth District) will all return to Congress where Republicans will continue to hold the majority.

On the federal level it is difficult to predict what a change to a Trump administration will mean for health care issues in the coming year. At a minimum there will be new leadership at Executive agencies like the Department of Health and Human Services and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.



IRHA membership renewal notices will be sent in December. The new membership year will begin January 1,

2017. When you receive the renewal notice, please take a minute to renew your membership. Your continued support through membership allows IRHA to continue the work to attain Optimal Health for All Iowans.

Benefits of being an IRHA member:

1. Health advocacy with a rural perspective
2. Access to resources through the IRHA and NRHA websites and email distribution lists
3. Networking opportunities with professionals from diverse disciplines
4. Input opportunities for State and Federal Policy issues
5. Discounted rates for Annual Conference
6. Opportunities for leadership development

Republicans now control all three branches of government in Washington, DC and many, including President-elect Trump, were elected on the promise of repealing the Affordable Care Act/Obamacare. We don't know how fast or how sweeping changes to health care we will be, but we can certainly expect the next year to be tumultuous.

At the statehouse level it was also a big night for Republicans. In the Iowa House, Republicans picked up two seats and extended their majority to 59-41. No Republican members of the Iowa House were defeated, including Representative Chris Hagenow, Majority Leader who was running in a competitive race. The House Republican caucus re-elected House Speaker Linda Upmeyer and House Majority Leader Chris Hagenow to those leadership positions. House Democrats re-elected Representative Mark Smith to serve as Democratic leader.

In the Iowa Senate Republicans defeated six incumbent Democratic Senators to take the majority in the Iowa Senate. For the first time since 1998 Republicans in Iowa will control the Senate, House and Governorship. Senators Brase, Wilhelm, Schoenjan, Courtney, Sodders and... perhaps most surprisingly Democratic Majority Leader Mike Gronstal all lost their bids for re-election giving Republicans 29 seats in the Iowa Senate. All Republican Senators were re-elected. There will be a special election on December 27th to replace Senator Joe Seng (Davenport) who died earlier this year. The district favors Democrats, but the outcome of that special election won't impact control of the Senate. Senator David Johnson changed his party registration from Republican to Independent this summer, in part over concerns with Iowa's transition to Medicaid managed care. We don't know if he will continue to serve as an Independent or re-join the Republican caucus.

Senator Bill Dix was elected by the Senate Republican caucus to serve as Majority Leader, Senator Jack Whitver will serve as the President of the Senate. Senator Rob Hogg has been elected by the Senate Democratic caucus to serve as their leader.

At the state level the biggest uncertainty for health care is the potential impact on Medicaid managed care and mental health reforms in both the adult and children's systems. As with any election year there will be new faces with new perspectives and priorities that will influence the discussion. We look forward to keeping you updated going forward into 2017.

Thank you for your  
continued support  
of IRHA!

**Iowa Rural  
Health  
Association**  
515-282-8192  
[www.iaruralhealth.org](http://www.iaruralhealth.org)

## *DELIVERING THE VISION OF COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL IOWA*



December 1, 2016 • Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines

There is still time to register for the Rural Health Conference to be held on December 1. Please join as for this educational conference designed to address the rapid and significant changes that are occurring in health care delivery and to give special attention to how these changes affect Iowa's health system and rural communities.

The conference agenda includes:

**Keynote Presentation by Clay Alspach**, Leavitt Partners, Washington DC - *Health Care Policy Landscape: Market Trends & Frontline Perspectives*

### **Telemedicine Panel**

**Medicare Access & CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) Panel**

**Post Election Discussion with Legislators: Focus on Health Policy Issues Facing the Iowa Legislature During the 2017 Iowa Legislative Session**

For complete information visit [www.iaruralhealth.org](http://www.iaruralhealth.org)  
To register online, [click here](#).

**Iowa Has a Mental Health Crisis**  
Where are the services for your citizens?

An uncomfortable topic for many to converse about is "mental

illness". Despite the secrecy of the topic, mental illness is very prevalent. Annually, one in five people experience a mental illness, including children and adolescents; 4.1 percent of the population have severe mental illness or 127,000 people in Iowa.

Mental illness is an equal opportunity disease. It strikes families from all walks of life regardless of age, race, income, religion and education.

Mental health care in Iowa has some critical issues which need to be addressed:

1. Funding: The mental health levy dollars to provide services through counties/regions has been frozen for 20 years. Urban counties are struggling financially since major population shifts have increased the number of people who've moved to their area causing increased needs. Increased needs have not been matched with increased dollars which means hardship for persons and their families accessing critical care.

2. Workforce: Iowa has an inadequate mental health workforce. So inadequate that it endangers the wellbeing of Iowans. Critical shortages of providers are common. In the category of prescribers, the state of Iowa has less than 300 prescribers (psychiatrists, psychiatric advanced nurse practitioners, and psychiatric physician assistants). Iowa is ranked 47th in the nation for number of psychiatrists based on our population, 46th for the number of psychologists, and 44th for overall mental health workforce availability.

3. Children's mental health system: While there are pockets of children's mental health services in Iowa, there is no children's mental health system.

4. Multiple levels of care are needed for an adequate public mental health system outside of the correctional system. There are only 731 staffed acute care beds in Iowa.

Ask state legislators what they plan to do to improve the mental health system. Make your community needs known. Deliberate efforts must be made to address the shortage with leadership, vision, planning and long term commitment. Solving this crisis requires a comprehensive coordinated effort of state leaders, insurers, provider groups and community organizations.

To find the services and providers available to residents in your community - please consult <https://dhs.iowa.gov/mhds-providers/providers-regions/regions>

- There is a map of mental health regions in the state of

Iowa.

- Contact the Regional CEO for the region your community is located in, and ask for a list of services and providers available.

Having this information available for your citizens, city staff and first responders will be helpful in an emergency or to access care to alleviate symptoms.

Teresa Bomhoff  
NAMI Greater Des Moines President  
IRHA Board Member

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### **Oncology Medication Donation Initiative**

It's no secret that the rising cost of oncology medications prevents many people from seeking the treatment they need. One study examining the financial toxicity of cancer treatment found that 24% of cancer patients do not take prescribed treatments at all because they cannot afford the medication. Iowa is one of the few states in the country that has a mechanism for collecting and redistributing life-saving medications to individuals in need. With support from the Iowa Cancer Consortium and the Iowa Department of Public Health, SafeNetRx, a pharmaceutical safety net provider, has launched an initiative to increase the donation of life-saving oncology drugs through its Iowa Drug Donation Repository.

The Iowa Drug Donation Repository was established by the Iowa legislature to accept, inspect and redistribute medications to uninsured or underinsured Iowans whose income is at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and below. The Repository can only accept medications and medical supplies that are not controlled substances, have an expiration date greater than six months from the date of the donation, are contained in original sealed or unit-dose tamper-evident packaging, and do not require refrigeration.

Last year, the Repository provided medications valued at \$3.48 million to Iowans, of which \$1.18 million was in the form of cancer medications. Despite the great work and progress the Repository has made so far, requests for cancer medications far exceed the supply of donated cancer medications available. To address this expanding need, SafeNetRx is placing tamper-proof medication donation receptacles at cancer centers across the state. The goal of this initiative is to increase cancer medication

donations by 40%.

Patients and their families who receive treatment at the centers will have the opportunity to donate eligible cancer medications that have been prescribed but not used, by contacting cancer center staff. The receptacles will be returned to the Iowa Drug Donation Repository for inspection and redistribution.

To learn more about how to request cancer medications on behalf of a patient or to donate medications, please call (515)327-5405 or visit [SafeNetRx.org](http://SafeNetRx.org) and click on the Iowa Drug Donation Repository.

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