



First Friday News & Views



IOWA'S LGBTQ+ NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST FRIDAY BREAKFAST CLUB

October 2024 | Volume 29 | Issue 10

Next Meeting
Friday,
October 4
7:00 a.m.



Location
Hoyt Sherman
15th & Woodland
Des Moines



Speakers
Coming Out
Speaker
Panel



Website
ffbc Iowa.org



Gay Halloween

by Byron Huff, Board President

The picture depicts Jim and myself in orange prison jumpsuits for a Halloween party; we sewed names on them highlighting the criminal trials of Scooter Libby and Tom DeLay. Scooter Libby resigned from his three government positions after he was indicted in October 2005 by a federal grand jury concerning the investigation of the leak of the covert identity of Central Intelligence Agency officer Valerie Plame Wilson. DeLay was indicted on charges of conspiring to violate Texas political fundraising law and forced to step aside as majority leader in September 2005.



Halloween, a holiday celebrated each year on October 31, has ancient roots and a modern-day cultural significance that spans across various groups, including the LGBTQ+ community. Its transformation from a pagan festival to a night of costumes, celebration, and expression is deeply intertwined with queer history.

Halloween originated from the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, a pagan celebration marking the end of the harvest and the beginning of the darker half of the year. Samhain, celebrated on October 31, was believed to be a time when the veil between the living and the dead was at its thinnest, allowing spirits to cross into the mortal world. Bonfires were lit, and people wore costumes to ward off malevolent spirits.

With the rise of Christianity, Samhain was absorbed into the Christian calendar and renamed All Hallows' Eve, the night before All Saints' Day, which honored saints and martyrs. Over centuries, this religious holiday evolved into Halloween, as we know it today, celebrated with costumes, trick-or-treating, and parties.

In the 20th century, Halloween became a secular holiday in the United States, primarily focused on children, costumes, and candy. However, it also grew in popularity as a night for adults to celebrate. Halloween's association with masquerade, role-playing, and the suspension of societal norms made it an appealing holiday for people seeking an opportunity to express parts of themselves not typically accepted by mainstream society. This is where its connection to gay culture began to develop.

FOR MANY IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY, HALLOWEEN OFFERS A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION AND EXPERIMENTATION.

[continued on page 2]



["Gay Halloween" continued from page 1]

For many in the LGBTQ+ community, especially in the mid-20th century when being openly gay was socially dangerous, Halloween offered a rare opportunity for public expression and experimentation. The costume aspect of the holiday allowed people to play with gender roles, disguise their identities, or embrace flamboyance and extravagance, often in ways they couldn't throughout the rest of the year.

In the 1970s, as the gay rights movement gained momentum, Halloween took on even greater significance for the LGBTQ+ community. Gay bars and nightclubs began to host Halloween parties and costume contests, making the holiday a staple of queer nightlife.

HAPPY HALLOWEEN



While Halloween has long been a night for celebration and self-expression in gay culture, it has also been a tool for political commentary. Many in the LGBTQ+ community have used Halloween as an opportunity to challenge societal norms and critique the status quo. Satirical costumes often reflect ongoing struggles for acceptance, equality, and civil rights. Halloween parades and events frequently include participants dressed as political figures, caricatures of traditional gender roles, or exaggerated representations of societal fears.

Halloween's connection to gay culture is rich with history and meaning. It has evolved from a pagan ritual to a mainstream holiday, while also becoming a cornerstone of queer expression. **For the LGBTQ+ community, Halloween provides a night of liberation, creativity, and defiance, where costumes serve as both disguise and revelation.** In celebrating Halloween, gay culture has embraced its potential for self-expression, performance, and the playful upending of norms, continuing to make it a night where individuality and community thrive.



Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **Joe Raetz** for introducing our September speaker, **Mayor Connie Boesen**. Thanks to **David Cotton** for managing our website, to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our Microsoft IT infrastructure, and to **David Wilfahrt** for managing FFBC's finances. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thank you to everyone who contributes to our newsletter!*

The **deadline** for the 2024 **November newsletter** will be **October 21**. If you have something on your mind to share, type it up and email it to Wade (wadecpetersen@gmail.com) by the deadline.



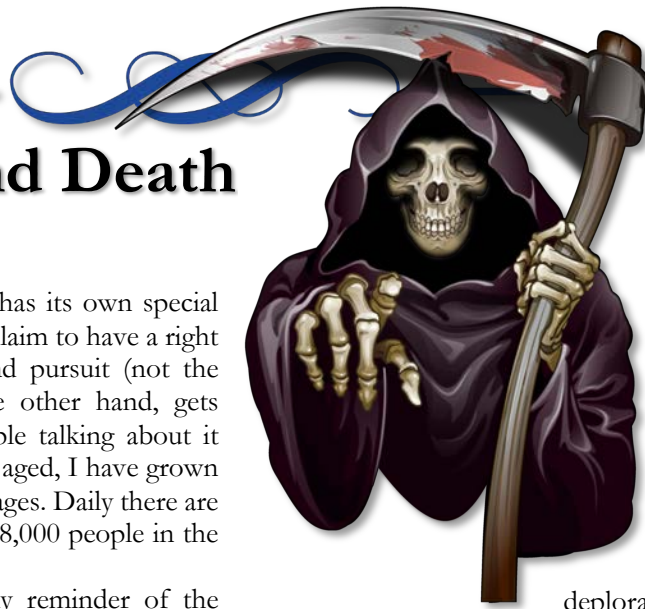
Fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have awarded over **\$495,000** for scholarships to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider a tax-deductible **contribution** online or by sending a check.



A special **thank-you** to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the **Donor Direct** program of **United Way**. Contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.



United Way



First Friday Breakfast Club
Founder **Jonathan Wilson**

Matters of Life and Death

by Jonathan Wilson

Life gets all the accolades. It even has its own special interest group, the so-called Pro-Lifers. We claim to have a right to it, along with (circumscribed) liberty and pursuit (not the achievement) of happiness. Death, on the other hand, gets almost no play. You hardly ever hear people talking about it much and never in positive terms. As I have aged, I have grown more interested when reading the obituary pages. Daily there are multiple people listed. Give or take, around 8,000 people in the United States die **daily**.

The obituary pages provide a daily reminder of the universality and inevitability of death, the one thing we all have in unavoidable common. It has occurred to me that death has been getting a bum rap.

It's death, after all, that gives life its **sense of urgency**. If our time alive were limitless, there would be no motivation ever to get around to much of anything – a procrastinator's paradise. And, it's death that puts people on the cutting edge of **excitement**. The chance of death puts people in fast cars, on high wires, on bungee cords, in white water rafts, or doing other crazy things, to feel the exhilaration of flirting with death and beating it, for a time.

In a similar way, it's death that defines **courage and valor**. Without the risk of death, we'd all qualify for a Purple Heart. The very real fear of death separates the timid from the heroes. We find one way after another to honor the heroes among us because they overcame the fear of immediate death.

It's death that makes **education** important. Think of all the knowledge that the deceased take with them when they die. The cycle of life in its beginning and ending creates sort of an intellectual relay race against extinction of the human race. The Jewish tradition gets it right when it characterizes each of us as a link in a chain that is never ending into the past *and* into the future.

The handful of things that cause the deaths of folks on the obituary page provide **motivation** for much of the medical and science communities (heart disease, cancer, strokes, HIV, respiratory complications, and myriad other terminal afflictions). Frankly, our **work ethic** and our desire to make a “mark,” as well as the satisfaction that comes from some measure of success, owe much of their origin to our appreciation for our impending demise.

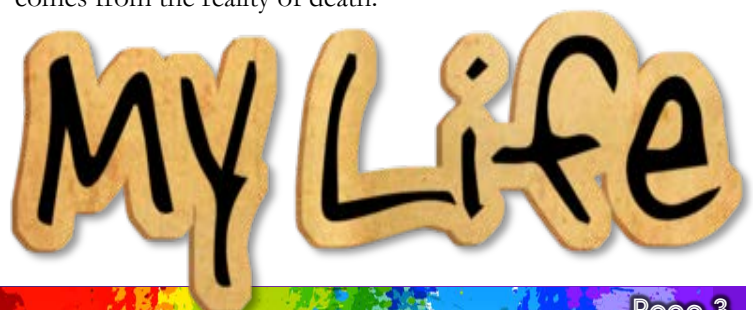
Death spawns **estate planning and philanthropy**. You never see a cemetery-bound hearse pulling a U-Haul – because you can't take it with you. Wisdom itself is measured by the number of times we have visited the cemetery and been reminded of our own mortality. And, it's death that we use as the ultimate **punishment** for the most heinous criminal offenses. At that point, the death penalty defines the limits beyond which Pro-Lifers stop being pro-life.

There would be more logic in keeping heinous criminals

alive as long as possible in deplorable conditions than there is in executing them. In the false hope that heinous criminals love life, we pretend that the ultimate punishment for them is their own execution. In fact, I figure that most of them have come to heinous criminality out of utter hopelessness about some aspect of their lives and they are miserable being alive. I prefer eating caged chicken rather than free-range chicken; on my plate, the former have been put out of their misery, and the latter didn't want to die.

We get a mixed, oxymoronic message on this subject from the ministry of Jesus. On the one hand, he claimed to have come so that we might have life and have it more abundantly. And, at the same time, he is touted as having achieved victory over death. That doesn't compute for me. With death responsible for so much that makes life abundant, focusing on supposed victory over death becomes an exercise in hoping to have your cake and eat it too. It becomes an exercise in believing in a victory that, if achieved, removes much of the meaning and abundance of life itself. It becomes an exercise in elusive capitalism, believing that we cash in after death on our life-time virtues. In the absence of any first-hand, testimonial evidence that it's true, it's no wonder there are many who refuse to subscribe. Think about it; how virtuous would you need to be in 80+/- years of life in order to lay up sufficient treasures in heaven to make your eternal retirement there actuarially sound? For my money, we should be good for goodness sake and not for a selfish interest in payback.

Somehow, it all brings me to the conclusion that those around us who are the wisest, the most balanced, the most engaged, the most productive, the most impatient with the status quo, the most energetic, and the most *alive*, are those with the keenest appreciation for death (perhaps subconsciously). Life gets all the accolades for sure, which is fine, but life's abundance comes from the reality of death.





Annual Gala

An *Eat, Drink, Sing*, Event

Thursday, October 17 • Scottish Rite Consistory



Exchange

ARTISTS WANTED

The Q Exchange works to elevate local LGBTQ+ & BIPOC artists, makers, crafters and musicians. Would you like to be a part of our Pop-up Shop to celebrate our Anniversary and National Coming Out Day on Saturday Oct 12? If interested, let us know.

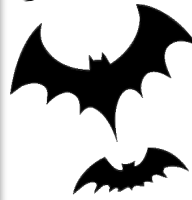
✉ theqexchangedsm@gmail.com



The Q Exchange



100 E Euclid Ave (Suite 107)
Des Moines, IA 50313



FFBC Membership

FFBC membership is open to all members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies.

We welcome EVERYONE, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

Meetings are held the first Friday of every month at Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines.

Membership Rates

The following rates help us to cover food and facility costs:

Annual Rate: \$180
(12 consecutive meetings)

Quarterly Rate: \$48
(3 consecutive meetings)

Month-by-Month: \$18

First-Time or One-Time Attendee: \$15

Full-Time Student: \$8

No charge to attend via Zoom

Payment Options

We accept cash, checks, or **credit cards** at the meeting.



Meeting Schedule

6:30 a.m. - Doors open
6:45 a.m. - Breakfast service begins
7:00 a.m. - Meeting begins



Hosted by Dixie Longate!

Join Us at the

Register Now!



to Raise Money for LGBTQ Youth

Capital Square | Des Moines

Friday, October 4, 2024 | 6 PM



HALLOWEEN

Halloween is a night when people can embrace their inner creatures, trying on identities that might feel off-limits the rest of the year, and take to the streets as whatever they want to be. Such freedom has long been alluring for LGBTQ+ people of all ages, who use Halloween as a space to explore and play in the messiness of identity.

IT'S NO WONDER IT HAS DEVELOPED A REPUTATION AS THE GAY HIGH HOLIDAY!





Speaker Series



**Blair
Imani**

**October 10
6:00 – 7:00 P.M.
Temple Theater**

Don't miss our October Speaker Series guest Blair Imani! She is a critically acclaimed historian, author, educator, and influencer. Her scholarship spans the subjects of intersectionality, gender studies, race and racism, sociology, and United States history. You may know her from her viral series "Smarter in Seconds," and The New York Times praises Blair Imani's unique ability to create "progressive lessons with vibrant visuals and a perky, quirky delivery."

She is the author of *Read This to Get Smarter: about Race, Class, Gender, Disability, and More* (2021), *Making Our Way Home: The Great Migration and the Black American Dream* (2020), and *Modern HERstory: Stories of Women and Nonbinary People Rewriting History* (2018). She serves on the Board of Directors for the Tegan and Sara Foundation, and on the Board of Trustees for Muslims for Progressive Values.

Her work centers women and girls, global Black communities, and the LGBTQ+ community. As an educator and influencer, semi-retired organizer, and public speaker, Blair Imani is dedicated to making the world a better place and amplifying the voices and work of those fighting the good fight. Learn more about Blair Imani by visiting blairimani.com and joining her on social media @blairimani.

Tickets are free, but you must register online.

Future Speakers



November 1:

John & Terri Hale

The Hale Group | Advocates Working for Better Lives for Iowans

December 6:

Kennetha Bingham-Tsai

Iowa UMC Conference Bishop

February 7:

Mike & Sally Merritt

Fraud Fighters: Avoiding Scams

March 7:

Susan Woody

Director, Des Moines Public Library

outlate with david

true stories of coming out later in life

www.outlatewithdavid.com

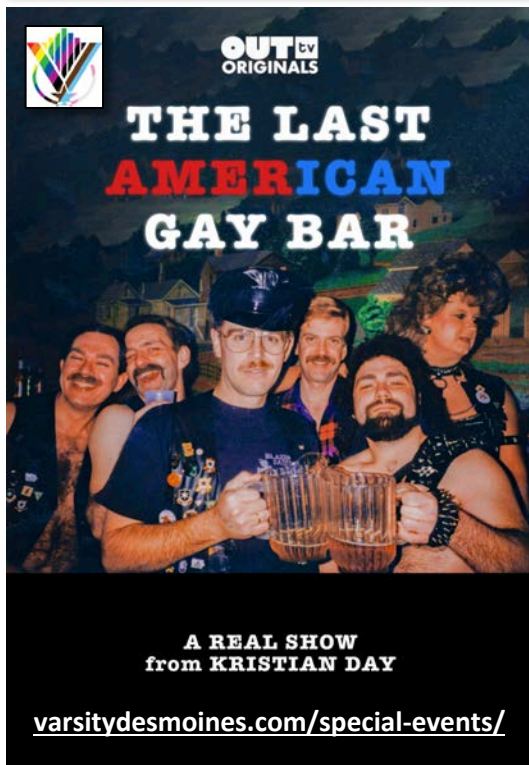


October Speakers

Panel: Coming Out



Our “speakers” will be a panel about Coming Out, moderated by David Cotton, FFBC Vice President. Since 1988, October 11th of each year has been recognized as **National Coming Out Day**, marking the anniversary of the second major National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which took place in 1987. The panel will explore the diverse and common experiences in their coming out journeys. We hope the stories and insights shared will not only empower those in the LGBTQ+ community but also encourage allies to stand alongside them in solidarity. **Our scheduled speakers include:** Kevin Chorniak, Aria Huizenga, Jennifer Kathryn King, and Chelsea Lepley.



Join us at the **Varsity Cinema** on **Wednesday, October 23** at 7 pm for the **last three episodes** of the OUTtv.com series on the legendary Iowa gay bar, the Blazing Saddle! Stick around after the show for a discussion with some of the people from the Blazing Saddle who are featured in the series, such as Ryan “Ima” Dennis, Bryan “Stinky” Smith, Brian “Beasley” Ohrberg and Eligh Cade.

TRICK OR TREAT?

PRIDE SPORTS LEAGUE OF CENTRAL IOWA

INDOOR VOLLEYBALL

- SUNDAY EVENINGS
- INDIAN HILLS
- OCT. 6 - NOV. 10
- 4:30PM - 9:00PM

Free agents and teams welcome. Sign up at pridesportsleague.org

Mayor Boesen, 1st Female DSM Mayor, Addresses FFBC

by Gary Moore



September
Speaker

For September, over 50 attendees to the First Friday Breakfast Club had the pleasure of having Des Moines' first female **Mayor Connie Boesen** give an overview of major projects the city has and is undertaking to improve and move the city forward for the future. The Mayor mentioned Des Moines has challenges but preferred to emphasize the opportunities. The priorities she talked about during her campaign are the ones she has for the city. Her key priorities when she first got elected were economic development, youth support, and addressing the mental health crises that we see in Des Moines.

Mayor Boesen gave an overview of major projects the city has and is undertaking to improve and move the city forward for the future. Projects ranged from major street reconstruction that included not just the street but the support structure of sewer, water, and other dated services below. She reviewed various construction of major housing projects around the city and the need and inclusion of lower-income units.



Mayor Connie Boesen

"It's the change that really drives the growth of our community."

"We've got to make sure that every piece of property in this city has value." To that end, the city has, through its development office, assigned staff to help usher small businesses through various processes that need to be completed. "Because I always said, a day you're not open is a day you're not doing business."

Besides major large-scale housing projects such as Tempo and a number of other significant large-scale construction or transformation from offices to living units, the city is also encouraging individual home owners to invest in their property and neighborhoods.

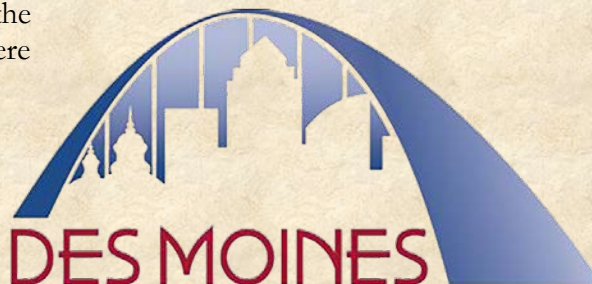
A couple of major projects that will drive business and investment are the new Des Moines Airport Terminal and the Southeast Connector. Both will have a significant impact on the growth of Des Moines as well as the region.

Another major interest of the new mayor is education, particularly preschool. "So when you talk about making an academic difference for every dollar invested in preschool, it is has saved \$17 down the road and remediation and all the different things that come with not having the proper things to get started." "Strong schools make strong communities." Hand in hand with this are programs for youth. "We also have for sports, we lowered the entry fee to \$5. They went from, like, a couple hundred kids in football to 700." "And then the Parks Foundation gives a ball to every child, whether it be a soccer ball, baseball, football, it's in part of the program."

"When I first got on, it was, how do we advance the mental health?" The city has been trying to develop interagency and inter-personnel relationships to meet mental health goals more effectively. This includes mental alignment of health experts in conjunction with the police department and 911 services to interagency coordination between county and city agencies. "And that's really what it's all about. How do we make this community the best it can be? Yes, we need the economic development, but we need to take care of people, too."

During the question and answer period, two major issues brought up were what would be happening with City Hall, the Armory, and Police Station once the city completed its move to the retrofitted new city building. The mayor noted her personal preference would be to see the Arts community emphasized but it is too early for any concrete plans to be announced. The second topic centered around the council's recent action on the homeless encampments. "We're not here to criminalize anyone. That is not the makeup of this council."

Mayor Boesen demonstrated her wide understanding of the many complex issues involved in the amelioration of the homeless issue. One that will take time, resources, and the patience of many disciplines.



September Meeting Photo Gallery



FFBC Board Secretary, Joe Raetz, Introduced Mayor Boesen



September Meeting Photo Gallery



Beetlejuice Beetlejuice

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

Welcome back to spooky season! 1988's "Beetlejuice," directed by Tim Burton, established its own niche in horror with its unique take on a campy afterlife, featuring bizarrely bonkers scares, a fantastical but heartfelt narrative, and goth girl eyerolls aplenty. Just over 35 years later, its sequel, "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice," returns with its original director and most of its original cast, expanding upon its characters and its underworldly setting. But does its ghostly, silly magic go "great beyond" the charm of its predecessor?

Thirty-six years after bawdy trickster demon Betelgeuse (Michael Keaton) plagued her family and tried to marry her, seemingly successful paranormal TV show host Lydia Deetz (Wynona Ryder) is still haunted: by the frequently obnoxious spirits of the deceased she sees and talks to plainly, and her own life choices, including her ambivalent feelings for her insufferable arthouse boyfriend Rory (a delightfully despicable Justin Theroux) and her estrangement from her conservationist, skeptical daughter Astrid (Jenna Ortega). Part of Astrid's rift with Lydia is the latter's fame and notoriety eclipsing their relationship, but also her mother's inability to see her father's (Lydia's ex-husband's) ghost when other spirits commune easily with Lydia otherwise.

When an accident "re-assembles" Betelgeuse's soul-sucking, marriage-seeking ex Dolores (a vampy

Monica Bellucci), leaving behind a trail of "deflated" ghosts in her wake, afterlife detective and former B-movie action star Wolf Jackson (Willem Dafoe) pursues her, and by extension, Betelgeuse. Shortly after Lydia begins seeing startling visions of Betelgeuse, a family tragedy reunites her with her stepmother Delia (Catherine O'Hara) in Winter River, Connecticut, the setting of the first film. Once a whirlwind romance blooms for Astrid with teenage Winter River resident Jeremy (Arthur Conti), a conniving Betelgeuse sees his opportunity to re-insert himself into Lydia's life and deal with his deadly ex-girlfriend Dolores at the same time.

Ryder's portrayal of adult Lydia is sometimes heartbreaking to watch when we last left the character in such an iconic cinematic moment of teenage joy and affirmation. As a former goth kid, it's painful to see a teenage hero's edginess replaced with depressive passivity and a "weight of the world" quality that makes her buckle under pressure instead of throw a middle finger at it like her teenage self would. There's something inherently adult about finding superficial success while feeling like you're letting your dreams down, with limited agency or time to save them. Yet her maternal chemistry with Ortega and their family's story arc provides the heart to the spooky skeleton of Betelgeuse's colorful and vibrant world. The set design and costuming are intricate and fantastically



goth-camp. But there are also a lot of fast-moving subplots that seem to resolve too neatly with comedy but low consequence, and other, bigger subplots that could be beefier (such as a criminally underutilized Monica Bellucci). Is the tone from the first film sustained? Thanks to a lot of its original mojo, yes. But Bellucci and Dafoe certainly make us want more substance.

Burton's body of work, including this film, showcase his strength at worldbuilding and transfixing practical effects with digital touch-ups, but Burton also steers away from leaning too heavily on CGI, instead preferring a variety of animation styles like Claymation, stop-motion, and practical models to illustrate the story. It's a clever choice that makes a plot-packed film move quickly.

See "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice," especially if you're a fan of the first or enjoy a kooky, spooky adventure, but as a standalone film, it's more of a fun and campy frolic than rising above its predecessor's headstone.

Board of Directors

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Jonathan Wilson (Emeritus)

Contact Us At: info@ffbciaowa.org

The Destruction of Iowa's Area Education Agencies



by Supervisor Matt McCoy
Polk County, 1st District



Iowa's changes to the nine Area Education Agencies (AEAs) which provide support for public and private schools will take effect fully next year. These changes mandate that the funding stream that used to support the AEAs will be directed towards individual school districts which then must procure the services that the AEAs have provided either through the AEAs or other private providers. Some of the services that AEAs provide are related to special education, speech therapy, hearing specialists, learning disability specialists, autism behavioral health specialists, and all the mental health needs to children who experience childhood trauma or what we call ACES -- Adverse Childhood Experiences. This proposal will create inequity, because larger school districts will have enough critical mass to hire specialists within their system to support these students while small, rural school districts will struggle to get the support or find qualified specialists in their area. AEAs provided a geographical approach to equity to ensure all Iowa schools and Iowa's students were treated fairly. Between the voucher program and the AEAs, Republicans have clearly declared war on rural Iowa and the decline of rural Iowa will be accelerated due to these changes. AEAs have done good in our state since they were implemented in 1974 as a way to ensure all of Iowa's students had equal opportunities in their classroom and learning experience.

The governor has stated that her problems with the AEAs is that Iowa was spending too much on special education. Iowa does in fact spend on average \$5,300 more per pupil for special education students than the national average. For example, students with a special need will receive the regular \$7,800 every student gets per pupil plus the \$5,300 on average. That used to be something we were all proud to proclaim, because students were getting the support they need. Instead, with this new budget implementation, we can assure that Iowa's most vulnerable and needy special education students will be left behind and will struggle more over their lives as the result of this flawed education policy.

Now we are going to force rural school districts to choose between spending their special education money on vulnerable students or backfilling their deficits created by the voucher system to keep the doors open and fund their schools.

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Publication



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Iowa Area Education Agencies

