

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 4, 2026

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressional Leadership:

On behalf of the Iowa Congressional Delegation, we are pleased to submit this letter for inclusion in the Semiquincentennial Congressional Time Capsule.

“Our liberties we prize, and our rights we will maintain.”

Our state motto reflects the grit and resilience spanning generations of Iowans proud to call the Hawkeye State home. Situated in America’s Heartland, Iowa’s geography and abundant natural resources have shaped our state’s heritage, culture, economy and quality of life, beckoning industrious, hardworking people to turn Iowa’s fertile soil into the nation’s breadbasket that feeds and fuels the world.

The Mighty Mississippi carves our eastern border, featuring majestic views along Iowa’s “Driftless Area” in the northeastern corner that continental glaciers bypassed tens of thousands of years earlier. The scenic bluffs, cold-water trout streams and prehistoric earthen mounds preserved in the Effigy Mounds National Monument serve up outdoor recreation and charming towns along a 114-mile scenic byway. Dubuque is among the oldest settlements west of the Mississippi River and Iowa’s oldest city, today home to 1,317 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the funicular, Fenelon Place Elevator, the world’s shortest, steepest railway. On the western side of our state, the Corps of Discovery navigated the Missouri River in 1804 following the Louisiana Purchase. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark documented Iowa’s native people, fauna and landscape, including the wind-blown silt shaping the 200-foot-tall bluffs of the Loess Hills. A legendary bur oak tree in Sioux City is known as the Council Oak, the site of meetings between Native American tribes and Lewis and Clark. The oak tree serves a pivotal role in Iowa’s ecosystem and is our official state tree.

Congress designated Iowa a territory 62 years after the Founders declared independence in 1776, on July 4, 1838. Just 12 years after statehood, Iowa pioneered a framework for free public education that paved the way a century later for a robust network of two-year community colleges offering higher education and vocational training. Public and private colleges flourished. Iowa's reputation as an education leader also benefited from the Morrill Act of 1862, which entitled states to federal land to establish a college teaching agriculture and mechanical arts. The land granted to Iowa is located in 27 northwestern counties; the land leased or sold helped fund the start of Iowa State University. In 2004, the U.S. Mint struck Iowa's coin in its 50 State Quarters program. Iowa's design is based on *Arbor Day*, a painting by Iowan Grant Wood, and features a one-room schoolhouse with the inscription, "Foundation in Education." Grant's iconic *American Gothic* memorialized the Midwestern way of life in the 20th century.

In 2026, Iowa supports three public universities to offer affordable post-secondary education to train the next generation of medical professionals, teachers, veterinarians, lawyers, engineers, and more at the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa.

At the turn of the 19th century, rivers and railroads powered mills and early industry, including lumber, mining, and meatpacking. Our agrarian heritage forged closely-knit farming communities that supported production agriculture, eventually earning Iowa's nickname as the Tall Corn State, which paved the way for our state to become the #1 corn, pork, egg, and biofuels producer in America. Multi-generational farms took advantage of Iowa's abundant feedstock to support a vibrant dairy industry, providing high-quality milk to Anderson Erickson in Des Moines and Wells Enterprises in Le Mars, the second-largest ice cream maker in the United States. In 1878, when Wilbur and Orville Wright lived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, their father brought home a toy helicopter for his two younger sons. Wilbur and Orville played with it until it broke, and then built their own. In later years, they pointed to their experience with the toy as the spark of their interest in flying.

From one generation to the next, Iowans embrace America's entrepreneurial spirit and tirelessly pursue the blessings of economic freedom to improve standards of living and opportunity for our children and grandchildren. By applying innovation, ingenuity, and investment, hardworking Iowans set new benchmarks of productivity in farming, grain milling, biofuels, manufacturing, construction, aviation communications, and aerospace innovation. Iowa astrophysicist James Van Allen, from Mount Pleasant, discovered the Van Allen radiation belts in 1958, a scientific discovery instrumental to space exploration and satellite technology. Peggy Whitson from Beaconsfield set the record for the longest time in outer space at 695 days for any American or woman in history.

Speaking of new frontiers, Iowans take pride in pioneering technological advances that shape our economy and way of life. For example, John Froelich invented the first internal-combustion tractor. The business he started in Waterloo was purchased by the John Deere Company in 1918. For more than a century, generations of workers at Waterloo Works have produced tractors with cutting-edge technology on its assembly line that help farmers better manage their operations and improve productivity. Three Iowa farm boys – Henry A. Wallace, Norman Borlaug, and Harry Stine – pioneered scientific breakthroughs in seed genetics, boosting crop yields with pest-, weed- and drought-resistant seeds that saved billions from starvation and enriched diets to feed a growing global population.

Borlaug is one of seven people in history who received the Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. In 1986, he founded the World Food Prize in Des Moines to honor the work of agricultural scientists in ending world hunger and improving the food supply to feed the nine billion people expected to live on Earth in 2050.

Life in Iowa looked pretty different a century ago when America celebrated its 150th birthday. Iowans relied on horses and railroad transportation. Farms and rural homes lacked electricity and indoor plumbing. Bringing electricity to homes, farms and factories transformed daily life in the mid-20th century. The *Rural Electrification Act* of 1936 empowered rural Iowans to form cooperatives that changed the course of history and delivered electricity to Iowans in all 99 counties.

Time and again, innovation continues to quench the modern economy's thirst for more affordable and resilient energy sources. Biofuels and wind energy support tens of thousands in the Hawkeye State. Today, Iowa leads the nation in wind energy, generating more than 62% of in-state electricity.

Located in the Heartland of America, Iowans take pride in civic life that encapsulates the spirit of Iowa, often referred to as "Iowa Nice." It's simply the Iowa way to check in on elderly residents, coach youth sports, serve as volunteer firefighters, bring a home-cooked meal to a family in need, and harvest crops for a fallen farmer who passed away or suffered a severe accident. The vitality of Iowa communities is enriched by neighbors helping neighbors and a robust network of service clubs and local chambers of commerce, including Rotary International, Lions Club, Kiwanis, Optimist Club and more.

Civic engagement in Iowa starts early. For more than a century, 4-H and the FFA have cultivated Iowa's commitment to leadership and achievement in the next generation. Jessie Field Shambaugh from Shenandoah, Iowa, is celebrated as the "Mother of 4-H." These civic youth organizations shape leadership, responsibility, and hands-on agricultural education, allowing members to compete in local county fairs with their livestock, horticulture, food, photography, sewing, robotics, and more. The internationally acclaimed Iowa State Fair attracts more than a million visitors every year to celebrate the best of Iowa agriculture, industry, entertainment and achievement at the historic fairgrounds for 11 days in Des Moines. The Iowa State Fair's iconic butter cow celebrated a century of sculpted glory in 2011. What's more, the 750-pound butter cow was the centerpiece of the "State Fairs: Growing American Craft" exhibition to celebrate America's 250th birthday at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

Iowans welcome friends and family throughout the year for holidays, social gatherings, card clubs, Sunday suppers, and tailgates at sporting events. We connect with neighbors for morning coffee at local cafés and at annual community celebrations such as Tulip Time in Pella and Orange City, Houby Days in Cedar Rapids, National Balloon Classic in Indianola, National Cattle Congress in Waterloo, Oktoberfest in the Amana Colonies, and more. Farm-to-fork traditions also connect Iowans with food passed down from one generation to the next, including Jell-O salads, Maid-Rites and pork tenderloins.

Since before statehood, Iowa has been a free state. When the institution of slavery divided the North and the South, Iowans answered the call to take up arms for freedom, sending the highest per capita number of soldiers in the Civil War. Nearly 80,000 freedom-loving Iowans enlisted in the Union Army, with 13,000 fatalities. Iowa's earliest settlers participated in the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes to help enslaved people escape to freedom. Iowa's only Supreme Court Justice, Samuel F. Miller, moved from Kentucky in 1850 because of his anti-slavery views. He was appointed by President Abraham Lincoln and served on the high court for 28 years. He is buried in his adopted hometown in Keokuk.

Throughout our state's history, Iowans have led the way for freedom, equality, and justice, from the abolitionist movement to desegregation and women's suffrage. Carrie Chapman Catt from Charles City devoted three decades to securing the 19th Amendment. Patriotism runs deeply through our communities and a robust grassroots network of veterans service organizations supports Iowans who have answered the call to serve in our Armed Forces, providing employment, housing and social services support to nearly 177,000 veterans who call Iowa home.

Iowa is also home to the nation's 31st president, Herbert Hoover, who was born in West Branch. The nation's 33rd vice president, Henry A. Wallace, served during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's third term from 1941 to 1945. Iowans Lou Henry Hoover, born in Waterloo, and Mamie Eisenhower, born in Boone, served as First Ladies in the White House.

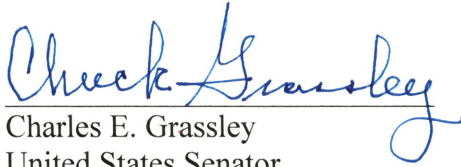
We are honored to represent Iowans in Congress. As Iowa's elected officeholders, we work to strengthen our system of self-government by holding ourselves accountable to the people who placed their trust in us at the ballot box. The dean of the Iowa delegation, Chuck Grassley, started a tradition in 1981 that others have followed to meet with Iowans in each of our 99 counties every year. Dialogue is the essence of representative government. Iowans take citizenship seriously, including our role in the quadrennial presidential nominating contest. Starting in 1972, Iowa's first-in-the-nation caucuses give Iowans an influential opportunity to test the mettle of presidential candidates with retail politics.

One of the countless reasons we love Iowa is the gift of four seasons, and nothing beats summertime in the Hawkeye State. Iowans from all walks of life soak up blooming wild roses in the countryside, the annual bike ride across Iowa (RAGBRAI), chin-dripping goodness of Iowa sweet corn, hearing the crack of the baseball bat at the ball field, boating and kayaking on our lakes and rivers, small town parades celebrating the red, white and blue and watching the sun dip below the horizon, as it kisses a verdant corn field good night.

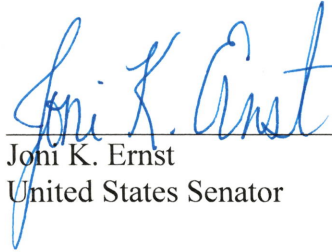
Our hope is Iowans will gather on Independence Day in 2276 to celebrate the promise of freedom, just as we're doing on our nation's 250th birthday. Join family, friends and neighbors to enjoy a Fourth of July spread of grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, potato salad, baked beans, watermelon and ice cream. After a day spent socializing at backyard barbecues, the pool, lake, or community parade, attend a local fireworks display to celebrate our cherished blessings of liberty. Let freedom ring!

May God bless America.

Sincerely,



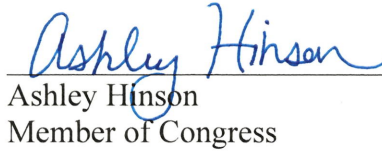
Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



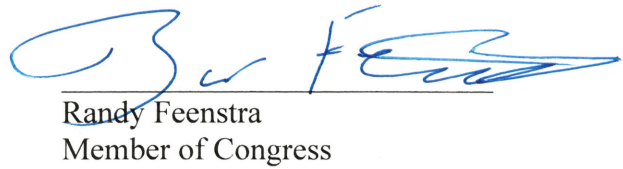
Mariannette J. Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress



Zach Nunn
Member of Congress



Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress