

2017 Bipartisan Legislative Accomplishments

Because legislative Democrats stood up for hard-working Iowans, for students, for workers, for safe communities and good government, the Legislature had some bipartisan accomplishments during the 2017 session. Here are some examples:

Education & worker training

Helping schools use limited resources effectively by allowing them to spend various categories of school funding on a broader range of expenses (HF 564).

Allowing some unused school funding to go into a “Flexibility Account” to be used in a broader fashion to achieve the intended goals (HF 565).

Expanding the ways Iowans can earn a high school equivalency diploma (HSED) when they meet minimum standards in reading, language arts, literacy, math, science and social studies. (HF 473).

Jobs & economy

Promoting and increasing opportunities for local small businesses that make and sell Iowa beer, wine and distilled spirits (HF 607).

Helping thousands of Iowans become homeowners and boosting our economy by providing a state income tax exemption for First-time Homebuyer Savings Accounts (SF 505).

Apprenticeship training program for in state Iowa residents only (HF 231).

Health & health care

More timely, appropriate help for kids with autism spectrum disorders (SF 515, HF 215).

Limiting the harmful effects of congenital Cytomegalovirus (CMV), which can cause long-term health problems, including hearing or vision loss, lack of coordination and seizures (SF 51).

Reducing breast cancer deaths by requiring mammography reports sent to patients to include information on breast density, if the patient has dense breast tissue (SF 250).

Improving mental health services in rural areas by addressing inequities in funding for mental health and developmental disability services (SF 504).

Ensuring appropriate treatment for sick and disabled Iowans by allowing a physician to override an insurance company’s step therapy protocol in certain cases (HF 233).

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Safe communities

Expanding the criminal offense of “sexual exploitation by a school employee” to include full-time, part-time and employees, as well as others who have significant contact with students (SF 238).

Allowing survivors of sexual assault to get a sexual abuse civil protective order to keep abusers away from them, their home and their place of work (SF 401).

Enhancing public safety by including law enforcement communications systems in the Iowa Communications Network (HF 467).

Saving lives by making texting while driving a primary offense. That means law enforcement can pull over a driver and ticket them if they see the driver texting (SF 234).

Stopping deceitful and damaging adoption practices that harm Iowa’s families by toughening penalties for scamming prospective adoptive parents (SF 433).

Charging a motorist with reckless driving (a Class “C” felony) when texting while driving causes an accident that seriously injures or kills another (SF 444).

Protecting kids by updating the definitions of “child in need of assistance” and “child abuse” to apply in additional cases of cocaine and other dangerous substances in the home (HF 543).

Cracking down on stalking and domestic violence, and enhancing monitoring and penalties for violations (HF 263).

Expanding the definition of “criminal stalking” to include repeated use of an electronic device to track a person’s whereabouts with no legitimate purpose (HF 263).

Reducing drunken driving fatalities and other drug and alcohol-related crimes by establishing 24/7 Sobriety program in counties that want to try this accountability-based program (SF 444).

Requiring temporary staffing agencies to conduct background checks on employees for nursing homes and assisted living centers (HF 576).

Prohibiting the use of monitoring devices in public libraries and other government buildings where a person expects privacy, such as in a toilet or locker room (SF 499).

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Quality of life

Protecting homebuyers by ensuring construction lien disclosures before the sale of a house (HF 541).

Keeping traffic moving efficiently by updating traffic laws for turns on red. On a red light, a driver may turn right from all lanes designated for right turns, and left from all lanes designated for left turns on a one-way street (HF 372).

Protecting kids by providing consistency in child custody laws for married and unmarried couples, including completing a court-approved Children in the Middle course (HF 253).

Reducing harassment and invasion of privacy by making it illegal to share images of another person in the nude or engaged in a sex act without their consent (HF 526).

Good government

Saving taxpayer money by giving County Auditors the flexibility to combine staff and polling locations when low voter turnout is expected in primary and general elections (HF 471).

Protecting the rights of lowans by setting higher standards for law enforcement to seize property — especially money and cars — that may be related to a crime (SF 446).

Saving taxpayer dollars by ensuring private parties cover more of the costs of civil services that county sheriffs must provide, such as bills of sale and certificates or deeds for land sold (SF 501).

Expanding ways for indigent lowans to obtain legal counsel when they're charged with a crime carries the possibility of jail or prison time (SF 374).