

# HOUSE DEMOCRATS 2015 AGENDA

## *BUILDING A STRONG MIDDLE CLASS*

House Democrats have a plan to strengthen Iowa's middle class and grow our economy. We need to provide more economic security to working families and create more opportunities for people by growing the economy from the bottom up. We will work together to build an economy that works for all Iowa families, not special interests.

### *Boosting the Middle Class*

The foundation of our economy is rooted in the strength of the middle class. The last decade has been especially tough for the middle class with stagnant wages that have not kept pace with rising costs. We need to grow our economy, create new jobs, and make sure young people aren't forced to leave Iowa to pay off student debt or find a good job.

- Make child care more affordable for working families
- Raise the minimum wage and make sure women earn equal pay for equal work
- Make sure Iowa companies get first crack at state contracts to create jobs here, not overseas
- Target state incentives and encourage more investment in small businesses, start-ups and entrepreneurs -- including those run by minorities and women in our urban core -- so they can grow to create good paying jobs
- Provide tax incentives so more young Iowans can save money for a down payment on their first home
- Crack down on corporations that fail to pay workers while protecting small businesses from unfair competition

### *Re-Vitalizing Rural Iowa*

Over the last 50 years, many rural communities have experienced a significant decline in population. We all must work together to re-populate rural Iowa and capitalize on the strengths of rural communities to create good jobs and improve the quality of life.

- Expand access to broadband and WI-FI for homes, schools, and businesses in under-served and un-served areas, especially in rural Iowa
- Partner with small communities to improve the quality of life, create new ownership opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs, and rebuild main streets and rural schools
- Guarantee rural Iowa has access to quality health care, including quick response times in emergencies
- Ensure 1<sup>st</sup> time farmers have the resources and support to be successful
- Make sure rural communities under 20,000 get their share of state resources and have access to education and job training so every child has the opportunity to learn
- Repair Iowa's crumbling infrastructure, including roads and bridges
- Encourage more production and consumption of locally grown foods

### Workforce & Education

A strong middle class requires a highly skilled Iowa workforce that can compete with workers from around the globe. Iowa can prosper in the global economy as long as we invest in education and job training to build our skilled workforce and create new opportunities.

- Freeze tuition at state universities and expand grants to students attending private college to keep higher education affordable and accessible to all Iowans
- Expand tuition grants and job training opportunities at Iowa community colleges so workers can develop the skills needed to land good jobs
- Expand early education opportunities through initiatives like Iowa's statewide voluntary preschool program to make sure children enter kindergarten ready to learn
- Close Iowa's achievement gap by expanding before-school, after-school, and summer school
- Create new partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and local businesses to create hands-on learning opportunities to better prepare students for future jobs and keep young people in Iowa
- Maintain a balanced state budget and continue to explore efficiencies in state government

### Land, Water & Clean Energy

Iowa's precious natural resources and agriculture have been the foundation of our economy since our state was created. Every Iowan, especially our children, benefits from a healthy environment and enjoys our lakes, rivers, streams, clean air, wildlife, and natural lands. We need to work together to protect our natural resources, clean up our impaired waterways, improve our air quality, and prepare our state for the impacts of severe weather by addressing climate change.

- Encourage more production and use of renewable energy, like biofuels, wind and solar
- Bolster our commitment to energy efficiency to save money and protect our environment
- Enhance and improve land stewardship for conservation, outdoor recreation and hunting
- Expand Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy to improve water quality

### Protecting Seniors, Vulnerable Iowans & Children

Our parents and grandparents deserve to live out their lives with dignity and respect. Iowans with disabilities, mental health needs, or chronic health conditions also deserve access to quality, affordable care regardless of where they live in Iowa.

- Guarantee every Iowa child has access to quality, affordable health care
- Protect seniors from fraud and financial exploitation
- Crack down on neglect and abuse of Iowa seniors
- Complete redesign of Iowa's mental health system to improve access and affordability
- Make sure seniors and disabled Iowans can access services in their home instead of being sent to a more expensive care facility