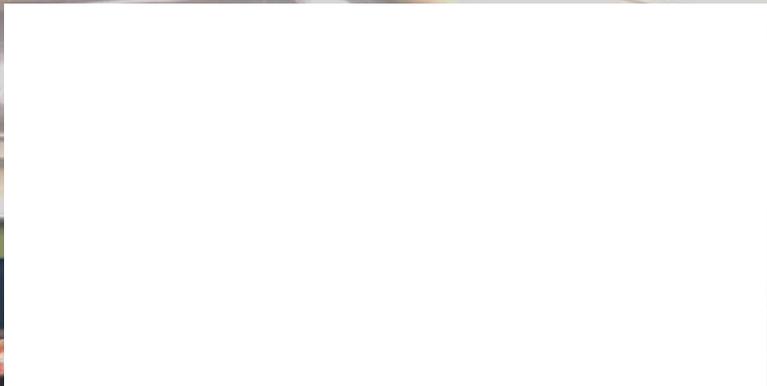


# The Iowa County



January 2020  
Leadership



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# The Iowa County

January 2020 \* Volume 49, Number 1

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#### ISAC's Mission:

To promote effective and responsible county government for the people of Iowa.

#### ISAC's Vision:

To be the principal, authoritative source of representation, information and services for and about county government in Iowa.

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# Feature - Leadership

## In preparation for the next decade – the value of ongoing education!

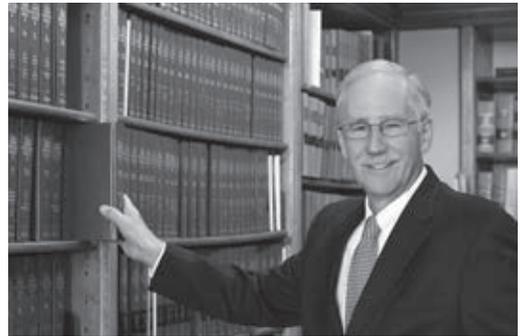
Annually, I am given an opportunity to share some of my thoughts on various topics with ISAC membership. Well maybe, it isn't so much of an opportunity as an expectation by the editor of *The Iowa County magazine*. For some reason, she assumes I have an endless reservoir of ideas that are worth sharing with you. I do try, but sometimes I come up empty or my research into a topic leads me down a black hole and I end up being distracted by too much information. Want an example?

I came up with the title for my article. Shortly after choosing the title, I began to have doubts about it. Can I really say that we are ready to start the next decade? So, I turned to my favorite research associate, Google, and asked her the simple question of when the next decades starts. It seems there is quite a controversy brewing over whether January 1, 2020 is the start of the new decade or whether it is January 1, 2021. You may not believe this, but there are hundreds of experts on both sides of this controversy. Unfortunately, I only have so many words for this article – so I can't waste them giving you a rundown of the arguments on each side – you will have to do your own research. I've decided to resolve the issue this way. If you are a believer in January 1, 2020, you can consider my article very timely. If you are a believer in January 1, 2021, just consider me a futuristic thinker. Either of your choices is fine with me.

I need to get back to the purpose of the article. As you know, we will be hosting ISAC University in January 2020. This program is a follow-up to the New County Officers School – which is held in January after each general election. In January 2019, I shared with you my three resolutions for the New Year. They were: 1) Talk less, listen more; 2) Education is important; and 3) Reflect on your legacy. I mention this now so you know my views on continuing education are consistent.

Shortly before our Annual Conference in August 2019, a newly elected supervisor that took office in January contacted ISAC about criticism that he had received for participating in a meeting hosted by the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs in Washington, D.C. It should be noted that well over 2,000 county officials nationwide have attended similar meeting and been briefed by key federal officials on issues of regional importance. I was asked to share my thoughts on the value of such meetings and ongoing education in general. The letter that follows captures those thoughts. I am sharing it with his permission in its entirety on the next page.

Finally, I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you and the great support you give to members of the ISAC staff and me. We appreciate and admire all that you do for your county and the citizens you represent. You have difficult jobs, and we want to support you and help you be the best you can be. We hope that our efforts to provide and encourage educational opportunities helps you do that. So, whether you are celebrating the last year of a decade or starting off a new one, we wish you the very best in 2020.



**William R. Peterson**  
Executive Director  
[bpeterson@iowacounties.org](mailto:bpeterson@iowacounties.org)

**ISAC University 2020**

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# Feature - Leadership

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Dear Kyle:

I want to thank you for your participation in activities conducted by the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) and our affiliated associations. Since the start of your term in office, you have participated in ISAC's 2019 New County Officers School, 2019 Iowa State Association of County Supervisors (ISACS) Statewide Winter Meeting, the 2019 County Day at the Capital, and the 2019 ISAC Spring Conference. I hope you will continue to find our programs useful while you serve as a member of the Board of Supervisors in Kossuth County. Rachel Bennett, ISAC's Member Relations Manager, asked that I share with you some of my thoughts regarding the value of participating in educational programs and other types of appropriate activities for both elected and appointed officials.

As I am sure you have discovered during your brief time in office, the responsibilities of being a county supervisor are many and varied. Over my years with the association, I have had many newly elected supervisors tell me they had no idea the breadth of issues they would encounter when they decided to seek election. And, as with any new job, it takes some time to learn what it takes to do the job effectively. There are several ways this learning can be accomplished but it is a primary reason that organizations like ISAC, ISACS and the National Association of Counties (NACo) exist. Their main goal is to provide education and information to their members so they can more effectively do their jobs. And, just as important, provide a venue for members to share their experiences and challenges. While much learning goes on during formal educational programming, for many individuals the opportunity to meet others, and talk about common problems and various solutions provides an even richer learning experience.

Another fact you have probably discovered is that there are both positive and negative views about whether participating in educational programs offered by groups such as ISAC, ISACS and NACo are a worthwhile expenditure of public dollars. I am sure you have and will encounter both citizens and other elected officials who are on both sides of this question. While I suppose I am biased because I work for such an organization, I can't imagine how I would have learned to do my job without having participated in such organizations myself. So, I believe it is not only an appropriate use of public dollars to participate, it is the responsibility of every elected official to be prepared and competent to make decisions on behalf of their citizens. And, I don't know how that happens without training and education about the responsibilities of their jobs.

As you may know, the Iowa State Association of County Supervisors have been working for over two years to develop a continuing education program for their members. They want to establish a program to help develop certified county supervisors. Why would they pursue such an effort? When they looked around at other elected and appointed officials in the county, they realized that most other groups had a continuing education program. Some of these programs have been voluntarily established by affiliate groups and some are required by state law and professional licensing standards. To name a few, auditors have established certification in election administration, treasurers and recorders professional excellence and leadership, sheriffs have various certifications, county attorneys have annual continuing education requirements, assessors have various required certifications, community services employees and social workers have continuing education for licensing purposes, public health nurses and administrators, county engineers are required to be a certified public engineer and have continuing education requirements, information technology directors require various certifications, etc. This is isn't just a public sector requirement, there is an endless list of private sector professions and occupations that have certification and educational requirements.

Is there a cost for all this training, education and skill development? Yes, there is a cost and it can seem expensive. But it has been proven that organizations that provide training, education and employee development opportunities get a return on their investment in increased productivity and quality of service. There are many statistics and articles addressing this fact available online if you do a Google search. While I am a strong proponent of education and training, I also believe we need to be diligent when making decisions on which programs to attend. Paying attention to the topics and presenters on the training agenda will help make sure you leave feeling that you have gotten value out of your experience.

I hope you find these thoughts helpful as you consider what educational activities to pursue. I know that the leaders of ISACS are very cognizant of the fact that programming they provide during ISAC and ISACS conferences needs to be timely and useful to their members.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can provide further assistance.

Sincerely,  
William R. Peterson  
Executive Director

# Feature - Leadership

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## **Build and Maintain High Performing Organizations Through Inclusivity**

Unconscious bias may be part of human nature, but it doesn't have to be a part of your workplace. Understanding and addressing the significant (and common) problem of unconscious bias at your county, school, business, or other organization takes dedicated time, attention, and resources. Actionable solutions exist to help you mitigate bias. Tackling unconscious bias at all levels of your organization can help you achieve a culture of inclusivity and equity – a key component of building and maintaining highly innovative and productive organizations.

## **Understand What Unconscious Bias Looks Like**

Unconscious bias happens automatically, outside of a person's control. Most people are unaware that they even have unconscious biases. The brain triggers these biases when making quick associations and judgments, influenced by our backgrounds and personal experiences, about others. Almost every organization that has not openly explored this issue and implemented strategies to curtail it will have some form of unconscious bias undermining operations.

You can't fix a problem you don't recognize. The first step in mitigating unconscious bias is determining if it negatively impacts your workplace to begin with. Look for potential indicators of unconscious bias such as frequently passing up extremely qualified women for promotions, racist undertones in hiring decisions, and cultural misunderstandings in day-to-day interactions. The moment you recognize such unconscious biases at your organization, broach the subject with other leaders and decide next steps.



**Claudia Schabel**  
President, Schabel Solutions  
[schabel@schabelsolutions.com](mailto:schabel@schabelsolutions.com)

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## **Mitigate Biases Through Proactive Strategies**

Unconscious biases will never entirely go away. They are part of human nature. However, your organization should and can mitigate unconscious bias by facing it head on and implementing proven strategies. The first steps are to raise awareness through training and to then continue to openly discuss the topic of unconscious bias with your employees and leadership teams. Get the issue out in the open and encourage conversations. Your goal should be to get the whole team talking about what is and what is not working in the workplace for people of all backgrounds. Training your employees about unconscious bias is only the first step. You must be intentional and vigilant to successfully manage its negative impact on your workplace as you move toward creating and maintaining an inclusive workforce.

Start strategizing a proactive plan together. Consciously addressing unconscious bias in the workplace with your entire team can prevent underlying tensions from coming to a head in a way that hurts your organization's ability to attract and retain talent, productivity, brand, and employees. Once you've exposed the issue, you can work through the details with your group and come up with a plan that works for your organization. (We'll discuss additional strategies in January during my presentation.)

## **Attracting Top Talent**

To win the competition for top talent, organizations must understand existing global demographic changes and become better equipped to attract, build, and retain a diverse workforce. According to the Pew Research Center, by 2055, the U.S. will not have a single racial or ethnic majority. Beyond our growing racially and ethnically diverse population, gender and gender identity, veteran status, socio-economic status, generational status, and all the other ways we are diverse will also continue to impact the makeup of our ever-changing talent pool. Organizations wanting to attract and retain top talent in this dynamic environment must take steps to identify and address any existing barriers preventing top talent from joining and staying at their organizations.

# Feature - Leadership

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## **Why Is It Important For Organizations To Do So?**

The commitment to building an inclusive work culture positively impacts brand and reputation. Diverse organizations are also more innovative, engaged, and productive - they create sustainable operational models and outperform the competition.

According to Catalyst, companies with the highest representation of women on their boards of directors had a higher return on equity by at least 53%, were superior in sales by at least 42%, and had a 66% higher ROI than those companies with the lowest representation of women on their boards. McKinsey, in *Delivery Through Diversity*, reported that companies with more diverse top teams were also top financial performers. It also reported that the top 25% most gender-inclusive executive teams were 21% more likely to outperform the 25% least gender-inclusive executive teams. Furthermore, the top 25% most culturally and racially diverse executive teams outperformed the bottom 25% by a margin of 33% in profitability. Deloitte reported that companies with more diverse workforces had 2.3 times higher cash flow per employee than less diverse companies over a three-year period.

The demographics of the U.S. workforce is in constant flux, and more business leaders are recognizing the value of diversity and inclusion in their practices. While diversity initiatives and more inclusive workspaces create more inviting atmospheres for clients, partners, and employees of all backgrounds, diversity and inclusion also has a real impact on any organization's productivity.

## **Diversity Improves Decision-Making Processes**

Major decisions can run into challenges with too much homogenous input and group think. Inclusive companies have access to a wider range of experiences, perspectives, and innovation. Employees from diverse backgrounds will approach problems differently with varying techniques and observations, creating more comprehensive overviews of any situation. More inclusive organizations also attract more diverse talent, further strengthening the internal network of experiences that improve decision-making processes.

## **Diversity Prepares Organizations for the Future**

Leaders need to avoid approaching diversity and inclusion as checking off compliance boxes during the hiring process and start considering diversity as a critical factor in the organization's success. Diversity management should be a strategic business issue for all organizations.

Embracing diversity and inclusion in your organization now will help you take advantage of the rapidly evolving U.S. population and market. Organizations need to prepare for a much more diverse consumer market that will expect representation and inclusion in their workforces. Making diversity and inclusion a priority in your organization will help you attract and retain talent from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, help you position your organization as competitive, and make it more profitable into the future. Prioritizing diversity and inclusive practices into decisions at every level of your organization creates a more equitable – and profitable – organization.

## **Be Intentional About Inclusivity**

More organizations should devote time and resources to building and maintaining highly innovative and productive organizations by understanding and mitigating unconscious bias. Schabel Solutions specializes in building inclusive workplaces. Contact us at [schabel@schabelsolutions.com](mailto:schabel@schabelsolutions.com) or 515.423.0793 to discuss strategies and training options for your organization. For additional strategies and resources go to [www.schabelsolutions.com](http://www.schabelsolutions.com)

*About the author: Claudia Schabel, president of Schabel Solutions, an internationally recognized diversity and inclusion consulting and training firm, has delivered high-impact strategic planning, consulting, training, and keynote addresses to leaders and teams of Fortune 500 companies, small businesses, non-profits, government agencies, and higher education institutions for over 15 years. Originally from Brazil, Claudia leverages her multi-cultural background to enlighten and engage audiences on diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competency.*

# Feature - Leadership

## Personality Tests Should NOT be Book of The Month Club Exercises

I've seen the eye rolls in so many workshops I've led, I can't count them all. Trust me, our work colleagues are quickly tiring of two things, 1) our HR folks chasing the next shiny new personality test, and 2) their never doing anything with the data once it's collected, not to mention the dollars spent in the process.

There are literally thousands of workplace tests to assess personality-types, predict behaviors, or help identify traits. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, or MBTI as we refer to it today, has been around since 1944. Today, the Enneagram is the hottest new personality instrument. I'm guessing we've all taken Gallup's StrengthsFinder since its inception in 2001, done Hartman's Color Code, or the DiSC Behavioral Inventory (Some of us MULTIPLE times!). Emotional Intelligence 2.0 is still popular and will be even more so as Gen Z rolls further into the workforce. I even know some employers who have tried the "Which Disney Princess Are You?" quiz just to mix things up a bit. By the way, I'm "Vanellope Von Schweetz" in case you're curious.



**Dr. Bill Withers**  
Speaker  
bill.withers@hopewdm.org

What is the point of these assessments, and is there anything you should know before you take up your team's valuable time and resources? In the words of Simon Sinek, "start with 'why.'"

Good personality assessments do provide insight into the human psyche. In that regard, they can be a portion of your screening personnel, whether you're using the instrument to winnow down a list of job finalists, or as part of growing workplace culture. If a job requires a certain set of skills, there is likely a test to assess the traits of the preferred candidate. For example, if you're hiring for someone in sales, I've used the Predictive Index Talent Optimization test, or "PI" as it's referred to. If I'm being asked to help an organization with workplace culture and engagement, and "teams" are a key element, Gallup's StrengthsFinder helps identify an individual's traits as they might contribute to team dynamics. You get the idea.

However, "flavor of the month" efforts, those assessments you use because it's all the buzz around the water cooler, or because a best-selling book was just pitched at a conference, tend to be a waste of time, resources, and more importantly, your team's trust. And I personally loath the organization who does a test once, then never returns to the data. That's where trust is betrayed in staff development meetings. "So, what ever happened to those MBTI results - are we ever going to do anything with that stuff?"



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# Feature - Leadership

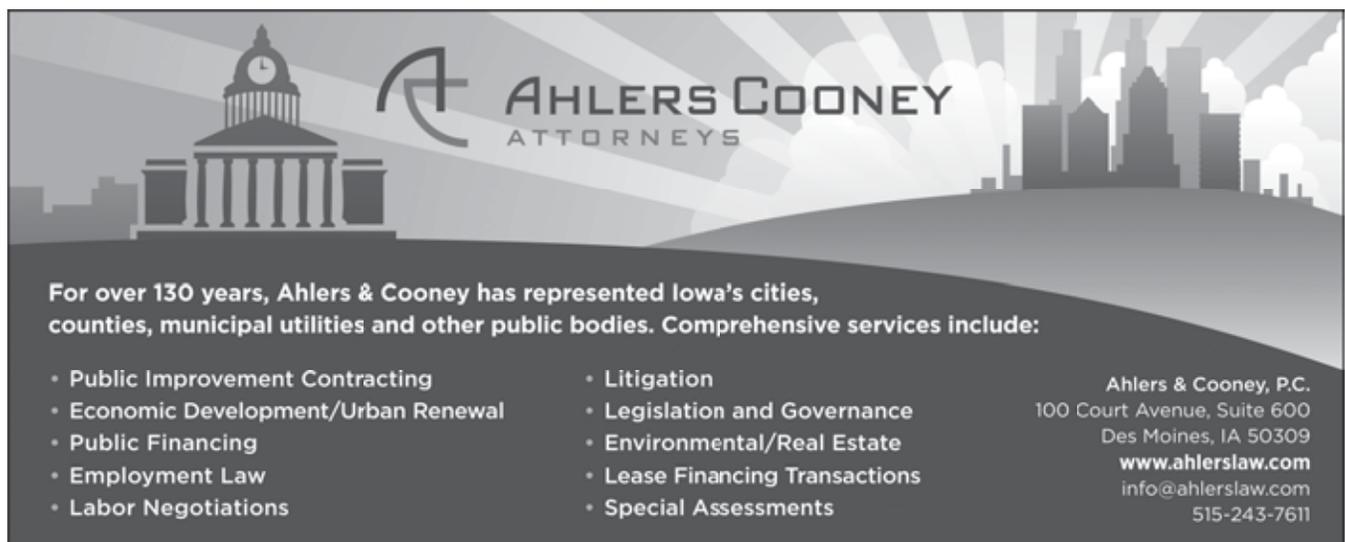
If you do decide to move forward, also consider cost. The more reliable and trusted assessments have fees associated (MBTI, StrengthsFinder, PI), though a handful do not. And even those that appear free might be knock-offs, rip-offs, or steal data from you as part of your signing-up online. Do your homework and research your options beforehand. Start with 'why.'

If you're all-in, know that there are many personal benefits to these instruments. Some assessments are excellent at informing your career choice, or what you might study in school. Everyone I know has their blind spots, and the Enneagram I mentioned earlier helps identify your strengths, but also your weaknesses. What organization wouldn't benefit from such knowledge as part of staff development and performance appraisal? I've personally gained from learning more about my own self and how to maximize social interactions, especially since I tend toward being an introvert at times. I can personally assure you such knowledge can also help a marriage and/or family dynamic. My wife and I have discussed her StrengthsFinder "WOO" juxtaposed to my INTJ-introversion (Myers-Briggs) on many occasions, and it's been incredibly helpful as part of our 36 years together. And yes, both our kids have taken these instruments. As we often remind each other though, "Your profile's an explanation, NOT an excuse; you still need to work on math."

So, if you and your organization are fully informed, did your homework, have the budget, and know what you wish to do with the data you gather – and more importantly, how you'll use it moving forward BEYOND the initial screening, go for it. Just don't go "the book of the month club" route. Your team will thank you for it.

*Dr. Bill Withers is a featured speaker at the 2020 ISAC University on January 15 in Des Moines. He has decades of management and leadership experience in business, as well as higher education, training and development. He currently serves as one of Lutheran Church of Hope's Executive Ministers after retiring from over two decades of service to Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa.*

*Bill grew up in northeast Iowa, attending Winona State University in Minnesota, Iowa State University, and Drake University. He is available to organizations via the Midwest Speakers Bureau at [www.speakernow.com/bill-withers/#](http://www.speakernow.com/bill-withers/#), or through private email at [Bill.Withers@HopeWDM.org](mailto:Bill.Withers@HopeWDM.org).*



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# Feature - Leadership

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## Comedy and Leadership

On January 15, 2020, Comedian Muffy, aka Laura J. Steele-Liebman, will be the after-dinner keynote speaker as part of the 2020 ISAC University Conference. Muffy will be exploring grit as defined by Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth in her 2013 TED talk, "Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance." Also, Muffy will be focusing on 2019 organizational research on grit and its uses for building organizational improvements and offer tangible tools for self-improvement via humor. It will be fun, entertaining, and light while being useful.

Muffy is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) from the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. She grew up in Colorado, then Minnesota, and now lives in New Jersey. She earned a master's degree from New York University in Health and a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota, Duluth in Communication and Psychology.

She has over 20 years of professional work experience in the public sector, working in Public Health and healthcare. Her expertise is in: behavioral health; HIV/AIDS services; grants management; finance; alcohol and drug addiction services; and quality assurance.

Her private sector work includes over six years of experience in executive recruiting in information systems, accounting, and finance.

In 2017 Muffy began her formal comedy training. She was trained in comedy writing at The Gotham Comedy Writing Studio in New York City (NYC), NY. Her debut stage appearance was at The Broadway Comedy Club, NYC, NY on June 21, 2017, after this she performed at the famous Comic Strip and Dangerfield's Comedy Club both in NYC, NY.

However, she is the proudest of her Inspirational Comedy performances on December 27, 2018, at the Iowa Correctional Institute for Women in Mitchellville, Iowa, for 600 incarcerated women and staff. Her website <https://comedianmuffy.com> has clips of her performance and video testimonial from Warden Cheryl Dahm.

On July 11, 2019, Muffy again performed Inspirational Comedy at The Coleman Federal Correctional Complex outside Orlando, Florida, for 143 incarcerated individuals and staff.

Muffy grew up in and around Corrections, her parents, Drs. William and Nancy Steele, Clinical Psychologists, worked for prisons in Colorado, Ohio, and Minnesota. As a child, Muffy grew up on the grounds of a prison in Canon City, Colorado. As a child, her Dad played comedy records for her, thus beginning her love of comedy.



## Comedian Muffy

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# Feature - Leadership

Before comedy Muffy published two books (for sale on Amazon). A children's book, Mommy Do Dinosaurs Have Belly Buttons, was published November 4, 2014 and based on recent paleontology discoveries from paleontologist, Dr. Robert R. Reisz on dinosaur embryos. Dr. Reisz read her book and said to Muffy, "I did enjoy your book, and I read it together with my precocious five years old grandson. Thank you, Robert."

Her second book, 26 Life Lessons Advice for Today's Youth and Adults was published on October 27, 2018. Muffy wrote this book following the survival of a terrorist bombing in New York City on December 11, 2017 at the Port Authority. She gives it to each inmate she performs for in prisons and jails and uses it as a teaching tool during her performances. Both books are available on Amazon.

In addition to professional speaking and performing inspirational comedy in prisons and jails, Muffy now writes and produces short educational videos for incarcerated individuals. These videos can be purchased and used as instructional content on prison tablets. Some titles are: Muffy's Moment on Mental Health Education and Wellness – An Overview of Anxiety; Muffy's Moment – How to Write a Joke; Muffy's Moment – How to Quit Smoking; Muffy's Moment – How to Have a Successful Visit with Friends and Family During Your Incarceration; Muffy' Moment – Re-entry Interview with playwright, Rich Roy; and future videos will offer job-seeking skills. All of her educational videos are for sale but can be previewed at <https://vimeo.com/user67050176> or <https://comedianmuffy.com>.

Muffy is married and lives in Hoboken, New Jersey. Her husband, Jon Liebman, composes the music for her educational videos and works in the automotive industry. She has one son, Alexander Clapp, who is a sophomore at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania studying Computer Science. Two stepchildren, a step-daughter, Julie Ann Liebman–Rooney, who is a professional wedding photographer and her stepson, Mark Liebman, who works in the automotive industry. Muffy's would like to dedicate this article and her after-dinner speech to her husband and her in-laws Peter and Cynthia Liebman, whose love and support are so appreciated.

Right: Comedian Muffy's performance at the Iowa Correctional Institution, December 27, 2018, on December 27, 2018, at the Iowa Correctional Institute for Women in Mitchellville, Iowa.



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# Take Your Leadership Skills to the Next Level Through the NACo High Performance Leadership Academy

The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy is an online 12-week program that empowers frontline county government professionals with the most fundamental leadership skills to deliver results for counties and communities.

NACo launched this program last year in partnership with the team from the Professional Development Academy, including General Colin Powell, Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, and many other executives from both private industry and government agencies.

More than 450 counties have enrolled emerging and existing leaders since the launch of the program last year, with incredible feedback and results. In fact, the positive feedback and demand for this NACo program has been truly unprecedented.



722+ County Participants



745+ Counties



869k In Scholarship Savings

The program has proven relevant and practical for the leaders and is convenient and non-disruptive to busy schedules. The 12 weeks of content are expertly facilitated online and it takes about 4-5 hours per week for participants to fully engage in the program.

The first person enrolled from each NACo member county receives a \$1,500 scholarship! This means the first person from each county costs only \$495 and everyone enrolled thereafter will receive a \$300 scholarship making their cost only \$1,695!

To enroll visit the NACo High Performance Leadership Academy webpage at [naco.org/skills](http://naco.org/skills).

For questions and assistance in enrolling please contact Kevin Darrow at [kevind@pdaleadership.com](mailto:kevind@pdaleadership.com). Professional Development Academy/NACo Leadership Academy.



"This is a transformational leadership program that has proven to be the most scalable, cost effective, and efficient way to make your leaders better."

- General Colin Powell

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# 2020 ISAC Legislative Priorities

## ISAC Legislative Tracking Tool

The 2020 legislative session is upon us, and staff will be using the ISAC Legislative Tracking Tool to keep members informed on the status of legislation that is important to counties. The tracking tool has been rebuilt in the interim to make it compatible with newer software and to offer some new features.

The tracking tool is located on our website, [www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org), both under the Legislative tab and under the New and Noteworthy section on the homepage. You can also type in the address <http://bills.iowacounties.org>. Don't forget to bookmark this site if you plan to use it often.

The first change you will notice is that the tool requires a login for access. Because of some new features, the tool will be a members-only benefit. Please use the same username and password that you use to register for ISAC meetings. If you can't remember your username and password you can send a request to [support@iowacounties.org](mailto:support@iowacounties.org).



## Rachel Bennett

ISAC Member Relations Manager  
[rbennett@iowacounties.org](mailto:rbennett@iowacounties.org)

After logging in you will notice that the tracking tool looks very similar. It remains a spreadsheet-type format and lists much of the same basic information about each piece of legislation: bill number, title, description, etc., but I will highlight some of the new functions and features. I suggest pulling it up and trying it out as you read.

## Filter Records Button

A pop-up screen will appear when you click on the blue Filter Records button. It will enable you to see only the bills that you wish to based on a number of different criteria. For instance, if you check the ENG and For boxes and click Search, you will see only the 11 bills for which ISAC is registered in favor of that affect the county engineers.

## Search Records Bar

Another great new feature is a robust Search Records bar. As you type the tool will begin searching all bills. This tool is great if you know the topic, title, or legislator you are looking for. Quickly pull up all bills related to property tax or for your local legislator.

## Bill Details

The last item that I will highlight is the new Details column. By clicking on the blue eyeball icon you can visit the bill details page for certain bills. These pages and further details will be reserved for bills that are of great interest to the members many of which will also be highlighted in the ISAC Update (our weekly member email that is sent out on Friday's during the legislative session). It will be a place to come to see the latest information and also to send your feedback to ISAC staff. This can be done by clicking on the orange Comment button. A form will ask for your contact information and items related to the bill. ISAC staff will then receive this information via email. Feedback that we receive from you is extremely helpful during the legislative session.

## Other Notes

Bills are color coded based on registration: green = for; red = against; and white = FYI, undecided, or track.

The tool still offers the opportunity to be directed to the full version of the bill on the General Assembly's website. Click on the blue number under in the Bill Number column to achieve this task.

Please reach out if you have any questions about the tool. We hope that it will provide benefit to our members.

# 2020 ISAC Legislative Priorities

## Mental Health and Disability Services

Addressing long-term, sustainable funding has been a priority for Iowa counties since Iowa moved to a regional based mental health and disability services (MH/DS) delivery system. When the current MH/DS property tax levy caps were established, they were based on the core services mandated to MH/DS Regions at the time. Over the last two legislative sessions, new services for addressing complex mental health needs and services for children have been mandated on the regions without any financial support from the state or giving the counties/regions the necessary ability to fund these services on their own. To address this, ISAC is asking that the 2020 Legislature renew the partnership with the regions and provide the needed state funding to counties/regions to ensure stability in the MH/DS system due to the increased demand for additional services. Second, if no essential revenue is provided from the state, counties should be allowed to exceed their current maximum per capita levy up to \$47.28 to fund new services. Lastly, if the previous remedies are not advanced, an increase in the sales tax should be considered to fund MH/DS. This must be constitutionally protected based on a distribution formula that is equitable for all counties in Iowa. This time is now to fund mental health services in Iowa.



**Jamie Cashman**  
ISAC Government Relations  
Manager  
jcashman@iowacounties.org

## Water Quality and Quantity Management, Natural Resources, and Outdoor Recreation

There continues to be a need to provide adequate, sustainable, and dedicated state financial resources to address the state-wide concerns related to Iowa's water quality management issues. There also remain on-going water quantity management challenges that must be addressed in efforts to minimize future losses caused by flooding through effective flood mitigation programs. ISAC is calling for final passage of a state-wide sales tax increase of at least 3/8s of one cent in support of the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, or I-WILL, to which it is commonly referred. The Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreational Trust Fund has not been appropriated any funding since its inception in 2010 and is the best-known mechanism to address water concerns and also to enhance public health and quality of life by ensuring significant opportunities for outdoor recreation. ISAC supports the maintenance of the distribution formula found in Iowa Code Chapter 461, outlined by the Iowa Legislature in support of the 2010 vote by Iowans on the Constitutional Amendment.

Finally, to meet the ever increasing water quantity demands in Iowa, ISAC is calling for passage of legislation that would support and encourage public sector entities, such as counties, to be directly involved in water mitigation projects that would involve county conservation boards, engineers, and supervisors.

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# 2020 ISAC Legislative Priorities

## Commercial and Industrial Property Tax Backfill

The backfill returns as a top legislative priority in 2020. In 2013, the legislature enacted SF 295 which provided significant reductions in the taxable valuations of certain property classifications. One component was a 10% reduction in the taxable valuation of the commercial and industrial property classifications. To make up for the resulting loss in future property tax revenue to local jurisdictions, the legislature put in place a funding stream to backfill those lost property tax funds. For the first three years the loss was completely replaced, and then the total dollar amount was frozen at the FY 17 appropriation. As property values rise, the frozen appropriation does not cover the actual lost revenue due to the legislatively imposed rollback. During the 2018 legislative session there were multiple pieces of legislation introduced and debated that would have completely phased-out or significantly reduced the standing, limited appropriation to replace the lost property tax dollars. In 2013, the legislature agreed to fund the backfill while local jurisdictions absorbed the multi-residential and railroad rollbacks, the telecommunications property exemption, and the reduction in the growth limitation from 4% to 3% on residential and agricultural property. It is clear that a phase-out or significant reduction of the backfill funding will result in a property tax increase or a reduction in services that the people of Iowa enjoy and rely on, or both. It should also be noted that over 70% of the taxable valuation in our state is residential or agricultural property, so not fully funding the backfill would effectively be a tax burden shift from commercial and industrial to homeowners and farmers. In the 2020 legislative session we are calling for the full funding of the commercial and industrial property tax backfill.



**Lucas Beenken**  
ISAC Public Policy Specialist  
[lbeenken@iowacounties.org](mailto:lbeenken@iowacounties.org)

## Weight Limits on Secondary Roads

Moving up from a legislative objective last year to a top priority this year is the issue of weight limits on secondary roads. While several pieces of legislation increasing weight limits on secondary roads have been enacted over the last couple years, one is in desperate need of being corrected. HF 2502, passed in 2018, made changes to Iowa Code §321.463(9) that allow vehicles transporting materials or equipment to or from a construction project or commercial plant site to operate on secondary roads under the limits of the maximum gross weight table for primary highways. Our secondary road system, and especially our bridges, are not designed to accommodate the weights that the primary road system can. The county engineers have estimated that over 3,500 bridges statewide will need to be posted with weight restrictions. This unfunded mandate will likely cost taxpayers between \$3 and \$4 million for the inspections and postings. Additionally, it will likely impact our agricultural industries as they may now be restricted from passing certain bridges due to the weight limitations when previously their axle weight would have been low enough to allow travel. In the 2020 legislative session we are calling for the repeal of the changes made to Iowa Code §321.463(9) in HF 2502, or short of that, allowing the additional weight allowance only on the hard surface secondary roads.

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# Summary of ISAC Board Minutes

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ISAC Board of Directors Meeting - Wednesday, November 20

ISAC President Burlin Matthews called the meeting to order and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance. Minutes of the September 19-20 ISAC Board of Directors, November 20, 2019 ISAC Articles/Bylaws/Membership Committee, and November 20, 2019 ISAC Scholarship Planning Committee were approved. The meeting minutes of the September 19, 2019 ICTS Board of Directors were reviewed for informational purposes.

Wendy Moran and Jose Garcia, McGowen Hurst Clark and Smith, P.C., presented the ISAC Audit Report. A clean opinion was offered for the entire engagement. The governance letter was included in the report which was unanimously accepted.

The ISAC Board recessed and was reconvened following adjournment of the Iowa Counties Technology Services (ICTS) Board.

Carla Becker, ISAC Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) Chair, reported that the LPC had a productive and successful year. Rachel Bennett reviewed the online voting results including the recommended top priorities from the LPC, member vote, and ISAC staff. Jamie Cashman and Lucas Beenken reviewed all legislative objectives in detail. The Board unanimously set the 2020 ISAC Legislative Top Priorities as: Mental Health and Disability Services; Commercial and Industrial Property Tax Backfill; Water Quality and Quantity, Natural Resources, and Outdoor Recreation; and Weight Limits on Secondary Roads. The legislative objectives and policy statements were also unanimously approved.

Jamie Cashman presented and the Board unanimously accepted the Report Relating to the Payment of Required Medical Aid Provided to Prisoners of County Jails that was prepared by the Iowa State Sheriffs' and Deputies' Association, ISAC, and the Iowa Hospital Association and will be submitted to the legislature before December 15.

Robin Harlow gave a presentation about his bicycle trip across the United States.

Willene White and Terry Axman, County Risk Management Services (CRMS), Inc. representing ICAP and IMWCA, gave an update on CRMS and discussed the benefits of pooling.

The Board recessed and reconvened the next morning.

Changes to the bylaws concerning practices for filling vacancies on the ISAC Executive Committee were unanimously approved. Joan McCalmant agreed to continue to serve in 2020 as one of the three immediate past presidents due to a vacancy.

Katie Cook reported that the ISAC Scholarship Planning Committee has recommended decreasing the overall amount of money that is given out in 2020, but also reducing the number of scholarships so that each scholarship is a higher amount. The Committee recommended and the Board unanimously adopted awarding a total of \$17,500 in scholarships which includes: one top scholarship in the amount of \$5,000; five district scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 each; and one past president's scholarship in the amount of \$2,500.

Bill Peterson gave an overview of the process, research, and data that is required for the preparation of the presentation and ISAC Group Health Program recommendations. Lacy Litton, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa, gave an overview of health and pharmacy reporting for the ISAC Group Health Program. Bill gave financial

# Summary of ISAC Board Minutes

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highlights, and Brad Holtan reviewed the wellness program and recommended changes. Tim Johnston, Kingston Life and Health, gave an overview of their activities and progress during over the past year.

Bill reviewed and the Board unanimously approved the 2020 ISAC Group Health Program recommendations.

- Effective July 1, 2020
  - Approve recommended base rates with income increase of 6.13% at \$150,000 stop-loss. Plan rate increases range for 1.43 to 9.64%. This averages 5.65%. Authorize movement to \$175,000 stop-loss after further analysis by staff if appropriate.
  - Approve experience, wellness, and large claim adjustment plan.
  - Approve one-time reserve balance adjustment of 6%.
  - Adopt discount proposal with loss of discount limited to 5% per year.
  - Adopt proposal to pay PCORI through FY 2021.
  - Approve 2020 Wellness Program and funding – including ability to offer wellness services to counties not in ISAC Group Health Program.

Brad reviewed the financial statements including all program funds. ISAC will be issuing an RFP for broker services for the ISAC Group Health Program and will hope to bring a recommendation in January. The ISAC Unemployment Fund was being administered by Employer's Edge, but they were bought out by Equifax. The financial and the quarterly investment reports dated October 31, 2019 were unanimously accepted.

Rachel Bennett gave an overview of and on update on the items that were discussed during the ISAC Board Retreat in September.

Kristi Harshbarger reported that the Board needs to decide how it would like to proceed with the sales tax exemption request. Options were given that included timeframe and cost. The board unanimously agreed to move forward with the protest for ISAC to be exempt from paying sales tax.

Katie Cook gave an update on the ISAC office lease including the addition of space and a redesign of office spaces at our current location.

Kelsey Sebern reviewed the 2020 ISAC Board of Directors meeting schedule, gave an overview ISAC University, and reviewed the 2020 ISAC Spring conference agenda which was unanimously approved.

Rachel reported that ISAC will host the 2020 Midwest State Association Staff Retreat in Des Moines in June.

Kelsey reported that ISAC plans to hold a casino night as its conference wide event during the ISAC Annual Conference in August. This event will also serve as a fundraiser for the ISAC Education Foundation.

The meeting was adjourned following reports and inquiries from board members.

# 2020 calendar

## January 2020

- 15-16 ISAC University  
(Sheraton West Des Moines)
- 17 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)
- 30 Statewide Supervisors Meeting  
(Embassy Suites Downtown Des Moines)

## February 2020

- 12 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)
- 29-3 NACo Legislative Conference  
(Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C.)

## March 2020

- 12-13 ISAC Spring Conference  
(Veterans Memorial Community Choice  
Credit Union Convention Center, Des Moines)

## April 2020

- 19-22 ISSDA Civil School  
(Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)
- 29 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)

## May 2020

- 6-8 Treasurers Conference  
(Cedar Rapids)

## June 2020

- 24 ISAC Scholarship Golf Fundraiser  
(Toad Valley Golf Course, Pleasant Hill)

## July 2020

- 8 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)
- 17-20 NACo Annual Conference  
(Orange County, Florida)

## August 2020

- 26-28 ISAC Annual Conference  
(Veterans Memorial Community Choice Credit  
Union Convention Center, Des Moines)

## September 2020

- 13-16 ISSDA Jail School  
(Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)
- 30-2 ISAC Board of Directors Retreat  
(Clay County)

## November 2020

- 18-19 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)

## December 2020

- 6-9 ISSDA Winter School  
(Holiday Inn Des Moines Airport)

If you have any questions about the meetings listed above or would like to add an affiliate meeting to the ISAC calendar, please contact Kelsey Sebern at [ksebern@iowacounties.org](mailto:ksebern@iowacounties.org).

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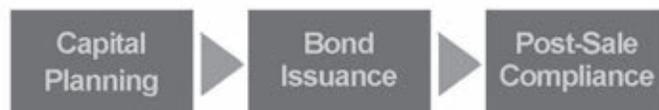


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