

# CURRENT WORKING AGENDA – MAY 13, 2026



## “Listening, Learning and Creating Change Together” Grassroots Iowa Network’s 2026 Annual Big Table Meetup Saturday, June 6, 2026

Historic Hotel Maytag - 120 1st St N, Newton, IA 50208

Cost: No cost. The lunch is being sponsored by Alliance for a Better Iowa

### 8:00–9:00 AM — Registration and Coffee

Attendees check in, pick up materials—including the **Values to Votes Guide for Grassroots Champions**—and meet fellow participants.

### 9:00 – 9:15 AM — Welcome & Opening Remarks

**Jack Hatch**, originator of the Grassroots Iowa Network, will welcome participants and GIN will kick off the summit with stories of grassroots wins across Iowa in 2025, framing the day around power-building, listening, and statewide collaboration, including an introduction and overview of the contents and utility of the **Values to Votes Guide for Grassroots Champions**.

9:15 – 10:15

### Listening to the Grassroots: *How We Actually Win in Iowa*

As attacks on our basic rights to speak, protest, and vote increase, how can small activist groups in cities and towns stand up to these challenges? Well-prepared and organized citizens have strong tools when it comes to fighting against authoritarianism that’s slowly creeping into our lives, but getting and staying organized can be tough. This session will give you the information you need to make the most of your role as a defender of democracy, including a quick look at the latest insights from GIN’s “Listening and Learning Posts,” **Mary Weaver, Kathy Focht, and Ann Kinzel**.

- A panel discussion featuring local Iowa activist **Peg Bauman** (Carroll Co.), Minnesota activist **Darcy McKenzie, Emily Silliman** (Activate Iowa), and Story County Auditor **Lucy Martin**, will share their experiences and thoughts on how local groups can effectively fight against autocracy, including possible voter suppression strategies.

You’ll learn how local Iowa organizations and individuals can become powerful leaders in the fight to protect democracy

10:15 – 10:30

### Network Break

10:30 – 11:30

### Putting Value to Votes (VtV) into Action: Strong Families...Strong Iowa

Former Iowa legislator and lifelong advocate for the well-being of Iowa’s children, **Charlie Bruner**, will provide an overview of the Values to Votes Guide for Grassroots Champions, followed by an Iowa panel on how to engage persuadable voters around the core value of supporting working families (with a special focus upon parents and grandparents and their parenting values). Charlie will be joined by **Anne Discher**, Common Good Iowa, and **Paige Chickering**, Save the Children Action Network.

11:30 – 12:00

### **Empowering Communities**

We will be joined by leaders of Empower Project, a leader in Relational Organizing to help train people on how to leverage the power of personal connections and build strong networks in communities to build lasting change, including use of the Empower application for recording contacts.

Noon – 1:00

### **Lunch & Guest Panelists: *Grassroots Organizing for Change in Iowa 2026: We're Here to Help***

In 2026, no state has more key Congressional races than Iowa. National electoral advocacy organizations and PACs directed to grassroots advocacy are investing in and eager to work with grassroots organizations and leaders in Iowa. This panel will describe what those national groups are doing, how grassroots organizations can make use of their resources, and also feature key Iowa organization leaders coordinating with them. It will offer grassroots leaders the opportunity to dialogue on what they most need and want.

**John Hedgecoth – moderator**

**Alfred Eze**, Battleground Alliance and Movement Voter Project

**Lanon Baccam**, Bigger Tent Initiative and Good Nation Action (invited)

Progress Iowa representative (invited)

Indivisible Iowa representative (invited)

**Jeani Murray**, Iowa Voter Project, Alliance for a Better Iowa

1:00 – 1:45

### **Breakout**

#### **Session 1 – Know Your Rights**

This session is practical, high-impact training designed to equip grassroots activists with the knowledge and confidence to safely and effectively exercise their First Amendment freedoms in today's evolving political environment. Led by Policy Director **Pete McRoberts** representing the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa, this session draws on widely used ACLU guidance and recent real-world experiences from demonstrations across the country in 2025 and 2026. Participants will learn what the Constitution protects—and what it doesn't—when it comes to public protest, including rules around permits, interactions with law enforcement, recording police activity, and protecting personal privacy. The training will also cover how to respond if stopped, questioned, or detained, as well as strategies for de-escalation and staying safe in large crowds. Grounded in both legal expertise and on-the-ground organizing realities, this module ensures that activists leave not just informed, but prepared to assert their rights, support one another, and participate in civic action with clarity and confidence.

**Session 2 - Become an Influencer – Pat Rynard and Liz Fleming** from Iowa Creator Corps will discuss relational social media messaging strategies to engage and influence peers and colleagues.

2:00 – 3:15

### **Breakout**

#### **Session 1 - Convening and Dialogue in Rural Communities.**

Rural and small-town voters represent a key constituency for Iowa's political future. Reaching them around rural values of economic sustainability and rural quality of life requires concerted, grassroots attention and dialogue. The Rural Restoration Project, the Iowa Farmers Union, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, and the Harkin Institute

have demonstrated the effectiveness of fostering rural community dialogue. This panel will share the experiences of these efforts and explore next steps in engaging rural and small town voters around rural economic sustainability and stewardship.

### **Session 2 - Advancing Student and Young Adult Leadership**

When looked at over a lifetime of voting, young voters are absolutely key to advancing progressive policies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. **Lexi Farber** and **Keena Clark** (Next Century Forum) and **Zac Komanapalli** (Future We Demand) are leading efforts in Iowa not only to engage students and younger voters but to organize in ways that maximize participation and leadership. They will share their successes and offer key approaches to reaching and learning from young adults in developing overall grassroots electoral strategies.

**3:15 – 3:30**

### **Call to Action**

**Former Iowa Senator Pam Jochum** will summarize the day of key insights and a call to action.

Reception follows - Light appetizers and beverages. Space to mingle with speakers, leaders, and partner organizations. Exhibition tables remain open with information and interaction for attendees.

*Attendance policy: Registered attendees may include elected officials, political candidates and staff members of political organizations including campaigns, provided disclosure of organizational affiliation is made and the individual attendee is aware there will not be an opportunity to speak or present on behalf of any political entity during the event.*

#