



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 and registration fee is being sponsored by the **Alliance for a Better Iowa**

The publication of the *Values to Votes Guide for Grassroots Champions* is sponsored by **Pam & Harry Bookey**

Across Iowa, neighbors are stepping up to protect democracy and care for their communities. More than 100 local grassroots groups have been formed in big and small towns, led by people who believe Iowa is stronger when we work together. The **Grassroots Iowa Network's 2026 Annual Big Table Meetup** brings these organizers into one room to learn from one another, share what's working, and build a stronger statewide network. This is a day of listening, learning, and creating real change together.

Most of all, the Big Table Meetup is about connection. You'll meet people who care about the same things you do, face similar challenges, and are ready to help. You'll leave with new skills, fresh energy, and a wider circle of allies across Iowa. Pull up a chair —there's room for you at the table.

8:00 – 9:00 **Registration and Networking**

9:00 – 9:15 **Welcome & Opening Remarks**

Former State Senator Jack Hatch will provide context for the Big Table Meet-up of grassroots organizations and the relevance to election results.

9:15 – 10:15 **Listening to the Grassroots: *How We Actually Win in Iowa***

A panel discussion featuring local Iowa activist **Jan Norris** (*Montgomery Co.*), Minnesota activist **Darcy McKenzie**, **Emily Silliman** (*Southeast Iowa Voter Protection*), 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. **Anne Kinzel** (*GIN*) will moderate.

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*, and he 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*. The training will provide a high-level overview of relational organizing, why it matters as a tactic in today's high-level and different ways the tactic can be used across various communities to build power for the coming years. The session will conclude with an overview of the Empower tool in supporting grassroots work AND help create ongoing grassroots capacity.

Noon – 1:00 **Lunch & Guest Panelists: *Grassroots Organizing for Change in Iowa 2026: We're Here to Help***

No state has more key Congressional races than Iowa, and national and Iowa organizations are targeting resources and eager to work with grassroots organizations in electoral education and advocacy. **John Hedgecoth** (*GIN*) and **Jeani Murray** (*Alliance for a Better Iowa*) will provide an

overview of these efforts and moderate a discussion with grassroots activists and those leading such state and national efforts on how

1:00 – 1:45

Breakout Sessions

Session 1. Know Your Rights

Led by Policy Director **Pete McRoberts** representing the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa, 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

Session 2. Become an Influencer

Pat Rynard (*Iowa Starting Line*) and **Liz Fleming** (*Liz from Iowa*) from *Iowa Creator Corps* will discuss how to use relational social media messaging strategies to engage and influence peers and colleagues.

2:00 – 3:15

Breakout Sessions

Session 1 - Convening and Dialogue in Rural Communities

Iowa's political future hinges on rural and small-town voters. This requires grassroots engagement in those communities around rural values. Panelists **Matt Russell** (Iowa Farmers Union), **Kathryn Karl-Goodman** (Rural Restoration Project), and **Nicole Loew** (nurse and former Iowa senate candidate) will share insights from their own grassroots work in rural organizing and dialogue and explore how to further engage, dialogue with, and persuade voters in rural Iowa. **Tim Winter** (*GIN* and former Iowa Congressional candidate) will moderate this session.

Session 2 - Advancing Student and Young Adult Leadership

When looked at over a lifetime of voting, young voters are key to advancing progressive policies in the 21st century. **Lexi Farber** and **Keena Clark** (*Next Century Forum*) and **Zac Komanapalli** (*Future We Demand*) are leading efforts in Iowa to engage and organize students and younger voters in ways that maximize participation and leadership opportunities. They will present the strategies to reach and connect with younger voters.

3:15 – 3:30

Call to Action & Reception

Former Iowa Senator Pam Jochum will summarize the day's insights and provide a call to further action.

Reception - 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. GIN is not affiliated with the Iowa Democratic Party.

GIN Planning Committee: Charlie Bruner, Kathy Focht, Jack Hatch, John Hedgecoth, Joe Henry, Anne Kinzel, Jeani Murray, Mary Weaver and Tim Winter.