

Composition of the Assembly

Every session of the Iowa General Assembly resembles previous sessions in one respect — its composition. From the beginning farmers and lawyers have had much more to say in formulating and adopting laws than those in other walks of life.

The 1952 election brought no change. An analysis of the composition of the 55th General Assembly showed it to be almost a carbon copy of the previous session. The number of farmers was 53, the same as in 1951; the number of lawyers was 28, compared with 27 in 1951. Nor was this the whole story, for at least 25 other members earned livelihoods through a combination of farming and some other business, or were retired farmers. Of the 158 members, most were either farmers, lawyers, or some related combination. The following shows the occupations of 121 members:

<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Major Business Groups</i>		<i>Lawyers</i>		
Farmers	53	Publisher-Editors	7	Lawyers	28
Retired farmers	4	Merchants	6	Lawyer-farmer	2
Farmer-stockmen	3	Insurance men	3	Lawyer-farmer- businessman	1
Farmer-livestock	3	Hardware dealers	3		
Farm managers	2	Hatchery-produce	3		
		Manufacturers	3		
	—		—		—
Solely Agriculture	65		25		31

The remaining 37 legislators fell into a variety of occupational categories. Two were merchant-farmers, two retired farmer-businessmen, two active farmer-businessmen, and two insurance men-realtors. Others included a banker-farmer, relief director, oilman, soil conservation agent, retired county auditor, insurance man-farm manager, businessman, drainage engineer, wholesale fuel dealer, farmer-radio commentator, broker-farm manager, housewife, restaurant owner, labor organization business representative, lumberman-banker, druggist, farmer-implement dealer, grocer, food store proprietor, realtor, banker, dentist, and a banker-insurance man. Among the members who had retired from active business life were a former educator, store manager, businessman, publisher-printer, and railroad yardmaster. One simply listed himself as "semi-retired."

All 53 of the farmer members were Republicans — 40 in the House and 13 in the Senate. Likewise, all 16 of the House lawyers and 9 of the Senate's 12 lawyers were Republicans.

Occupations pegged, statisticians looked for other interesting facts about the legislators. They found only one woman, Mrs. Gladys S. Nelson of Newton, compared with three women in 1951. They found that the combined experience of the members, as listed below, showed a turnover of slightly more than 27 per cent of the membership since the 1951 session:

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<i>Sessions</i>	<i>House</i>	<i>Senate</i>	<i>Total</i>
First	31	12	43
Second	32	5	37
Third	19	8	27
Fourth	13	5	18
Fifth	5	4	9
Sixth	4	3	7
Seventh	1	5	6
Eighth	0	3	3
Ninth	1	3	4
Tenth	1	1	2
Thirteenth	0	1	1
Fourteenth	1	0	1

The statisticians also found the average age of legislators to be 53 years, the same as in 1951. Ages ranged from 25-year-old Representative John M. Peters, a Fort Dodge lawyer, to 76-year-old Representative A. S. Bloedel, a Tabor hardware merchant, both Republicans. The youngest Democrat was 31-year-old Representative Andrew G. Frommelt, while the oldest was Arnold Utzig, both of Dubuque.

The age-range table follows.

<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Number of Legislators</i>	<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Number of Legislators</i>
21-25	1	51-55	22
26-30	4	56-60	36
31-35	8	61-65	28
36-40	10	66-70	11
41-45	7	71-75	6
46-50	24	76-80	1

Republican Representative Arch W. McFarlane of Waterloo again took honors for having the longest service record, although he was only sixty-seven years of age. A wholesale fuel dealer, first elected to the 36th General Assembly that met in 1915, McFarlane had served in thirteen regular and six extra sessions up to the 55th, which made his fourteenth. Except for six sessions he had served continuously. Twice — in 1919 and 1921 — he served as Speaker of the House. During two of the sessions when he was not a member of the General Assembly — 1929 and 1931 — he was Iowa's lieutenant governor and presided over the Senate.

Dean of the 1953 Senate and second to McFarlane in length of service was Senator Frank C. Byers, sixty-nine, a Republican lawyer of Cedar Rapids. Not including the 55th General Assembly, which marked his thirteenth regular session, Byers had served in twelve regular and four extra sessions since his first election in 1928. His service began in the 43rd General Assembly on the House side, and he has been a member of the legislature ever since, giving him a continuous service record outranking McFarlane's. Following the spring recess, the 55th General Assembly honored McFarlane and Byers at a memorable joint convention in the House chamber.

Among House Democrats the longest service record up to the 55th belonged to Representative

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Robert C. Reilly, a Dubuque merchant, whose time in both House and Senate totaled six regular and two extra sessions. On the Senate side, Senator Utzig, who also had served in both houses, had the longest service record with five regular and two extra sessions up to the 55th.

The educational background of the General Assembly, as submitted by the legislators, follows:

	<i>College</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Grade School</i>
Senate	40	8	2
House	77	22	9
	—	—	—
	117	30	11

Broken down politically:

Republican	112	29	10
Democrat	5	1	1

Let us consider the two chambers separately.

The Senate

Iowa's Senators total 50 in number, and each is elected to a four-year term unless he is filling a vacancy. Terms are staggered so that if there are no vacancies there will be alternately 29 holdovers at one session and 21 at the next. The 1953 Senate was composed of 46 Republicans and 4 Democrats, all men. The honor of being the youngest Republican Senator went to 32-year-old Ted D. Clark of Mystic, who was 45 days younger than a fellow Republican, W. C. Stuart of Chariton.

Oldest Republican Senator was 75-year-old William Linnevold of Decorah. Thomas J. Dailey of Burlington was the youngest Democrat (38), while Arnold Utzig (59) was the oldest. Up to now no vacancies have occurred in Senate ranks.

The House

Iowa's 108 House members are elected for a two-year term. The people named 105 Republicans and 3 Democrats to the 55th General Assembly, including one Republican woman. As has been pointed out, A. S. Bloedel (76) and John M. Peters (25) were the oldest and youngest House Republicans. Oldest House Democrat was L. A. Falvey of Albia (51) and the youngest was Andrew G. Frommelt (31).

No vacancies occurred by death or any other reason during the session, but there were five after adjournment up to the time THE PALIMPSEST went to press. Earl C. Ryan of Des Moines died shortly after the session ended. Dwight W. Meyer of Odebolt resigned to accept an appointment as Iowa director of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Office, while Max M. Soeth of Estherville resigned to go with the same office. Carroll L. Brown of Oskaloosa resigned to accept a position as weight inspector for the Iowa Highway Commission. Clifford M. Strawman of Anamosa resigned to accept an appointment to the Board of Education.

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