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# THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE

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*a newsletter for Iowa's Democratic Left*

*Fall 2021*

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## Inevitable revelations

The state of Iowa has a long and shameful history of ignoring neglect and abuse at its Resource Centers (formerly known as Hospital-Schools) located in Glenwood and Woodward.

Every few years a scandal erupts. The Governor's office expresses alarm. The US Department of Justice investigates. The Iowa Department of Human Services promises to do better. Nothing changes. A few years later, inevitably, we read again in the Des Moines Register of newly exposed untimely deaths, inadequate staff training, or illegal experimentation on residents.

A recent example was the revelation that the Superintendent of Glenwood Resource Center conducted experiments involving

the sexual arousal of residents. He did so without the informed consent of those experimented on. Fortunately, he's now gone from Iowa. The Department of Justice is investigating, among other things, who else in state government knew—and at least tacitly approved of—his experiments.

An earlier example was documented by *The Prairie Progressive* nearly two decades ago, when the state refused a request from Iowa Protection and Advocacy Services to turn over records about a suspicious death at Woodward Resource Center. P&A is federally mandated to investigate treatment of people with mental disabilities. It successfully sued for the records and court costs, thanks to a decision by US District Judge Robert Pratt. Pratt ruled

that the state could not “cloak discussion about potential abuse at will by simply declaring such discussions off the record.”

Both P&A and Judge Pratt's wisdom were applauded in Prairie Dog's Honor Roll for 2002. Nineteen years later, Pratt has earned our applause again. In September he ruled in favor of parents who said that the state violated the civil rights of children with disabilities by banning mask mandates in schools. Pratt said that the ban signed by the Governor “substantially increases” the risk to children with conditions such as Down Syndrome or cerebral palsy of contracting COVID-19. Governor Reynolds vowed immediately to appeal the ruling. Pratt has since extended it.

Iowa's children—indeed, all Iowans—deserve a governor who shares Judge Pratt's concern for their health, their safety, and their rights.

—*Prairie Dog*



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# This was not an accident

University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics is a world class healthcare provider employing some of the best and brightest in the state of Iowa. Hard work is demanded and provided by nurses, other healthcare professionals, and blue-collar employees. Why would this premier state institution intentionally delay paychecks to healthcare workers?

For as long as anyone can remember, UIHC paid its employees one check, once a month. This check included base pay, overtime pay, extra pay for picking up extra shifts, extra pay for shifts that ran long, and premiums like extra pay for working undesirable hours. All of it was lumped together.

The thing is that all the overtime, extra pay, and pay premiums were paid late, really late. UIHC used to put on their website that they do pay overtime and shift differentials to blue collar workers, but they will always be paid one month in arrears. Overtime worked in September would not be paid in October, but in November. For nurses and other healthcare workers it was a little more complicated, but roughly speaking, extra work performed in the second half of a month would not appear in your next month's paycheck; you would wait an extra month to get paid for the extra work, or for working nights or weekends.

Turns out, that violates Iowa law. It has violated Iowa law for a very long time, possibly since before I was born in 1979. Every paycheck says the first day of a pay period is the first day of the month and the last day of the pay period is the last day of the month. Iowa Code 91A.3 states, "a regular payday

shall not be more than 12 days, excluding Sundays and legal holidays, after the end of the period in which the wages were earned." So, if I worked a weekend shift on September 19th, it violates the law to wait until November 1 to pay me. If I worked 50 hours from September 6 through September 10, it violates the law to wait until November 1 to pay me time and a half for those last ten hours.

By sitting on employee wages, UIHC has received a zero-interest loan for one month on a significant percentage of total wages paid to employees. Every month, for every employee, for as long as anyone can remember. This was not an accident. The payroll system worked as designed. These systematic violations of Iowa law have been intentional.

To their credit, Service Employees International Union Local 199 complained in November of 2018. SEIU pointed out their members were getting paid a month or more late in violation of Iowa law. They asked for it to stop. UIHC responded. UIHC stated, it "is making all payments of wages owed...in compliance with Iowa Code Chapter 91A.3...Payments for adjustments (e.g., premiums, overtime, shift differentials, etc.) for all University of Iowa employees are always paid one month in arrears." This explanation makes no sense whatsoever other than the part where UIHC said this is how we "always" have done it.

I filed a class action lawsuit in 2019. A federal judge has certified the class action on behalf of 11,000 current and former UIHC employees. Iowa law says, "when it has been shown that an employer has intentionally failed to pay an employee wages...pursuant to section 91A.3," the employer shall be liable for liquidated damages. Suffice to say, that is a bone of contention.

We are still fighting this out in federal court.

However, we have accomplished change already. Starting in November 2020, UIHC began paying biweekly paychecks for overtime and pay premiums on top of the normal monthly paycheck. In other words, UIHC now appears to be trying to follow the law. In a 2020 power point presentation explaining the changes, UIHC stated it was making the changes so their pay practices would be "aligned with Iowa Code" due to "requirements of pending litigation." I cannot remember ever feeling better about being "pending litigation."

Here is the thing, though. You should not have to file a class action lawsuit to get an employer to follow the law and pay you on time. To make sure that an employer follows the law and pays you on time, there really must be a penalty when they intentionally pay you unlawfully late. If an employer can sit on your wages, break the law, and wait to see if you complain without any penalty so long as they do eventually pay you, that creates a perverse incentive. I am hard-pressed to conceive of a more perverse incentive.

11,000 Iowans are no longer being compelled to cashflow UIHC on a monthly basis; that is good. What remains to be seen is how a court will interpret UIHC's liability for systematically breaking this law over decades. God help us all if we are wrong.

*— Nate Willems is a labor and workers' comp lawyer who has slowly learned people in positions of authority do not necessarily know what they are doing.*

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# How do we view sexual acts?

Perhaps Bill Clinton's greatest contribution to our collective American consciousness at the end of the last century was to elevate fellatio to a national debate. The 1000-page Starr report that explicitly documented for impeachment purposes every indiscrete act between POTUS and his young, worshipping intern, Monica Lewinsky, brought home in livid color a profound sense of betrayal for many progressive Democrats.

After the Reagan debacle followed by George H.W., the Clinton presidency held out hope to liberals and progressives that the Dark Ages were coming to a close; dawn might find an America gradually more willing to evolve into tolerance and acceptance of difference. On the first day of his reign, Clinton ended the ban on abortions for U.S. servicewomen, but later supported the abhorrent "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy slamming the closet door on LGBT folks in the military. He balanced the budget but was behind cutting welfare benefits to recipients, largely women with children. He was a voice for cultural pluralism and against racism, yet helped institute tough-on-crime policies that saw minimum sentencing laws adversely affecting people and families of color.

Then came Monica, but before we get to that series of sordid tales, let's step back to the end of the eighties, when Anita Hill testified in front of a Congressional committee considering the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Her story of what had yet been named as "sexual harassment" in the office where Thomas was Hill's

boss were callously dismissed by many, including the present POTUS. Her testimony about his joking that there were pubic hairs on the coke bottle and other swaggering sexual innuendos that created an intimidating atmosphere was not taken seriously. She was dismissed and demeaned, and Thomas sits on the Supreme Court. Clinton's indiscretions with the intern rounded out another decade of depravity at high levels, documented in excruciating detail by the eventual Starr report (semen stains on Lewinsky's dress comes to mind) that led to his impeachment for lying about the affair, not so much for the sex itself.

Clinton denied "having sex with that woman." Did he really believe that a blow job is not "real" sex? Do you suppose that, if one of my young female students at the university where I taught treated me to cunnilingus, I could claim that we never really had sex? Just how do we view sexual acts?

Soon after the Starr report was made public, I had the occasion to have dinner with progressive friends on the prairie where the Starr report was a focus of ribald hilarious discussion; mock shock helped dismiss the Starr facts smeared on the faces of our Great White Hope and the genuflecting intern, but was Clinton going to be out of a job? In the end, like us at that table, the vox populi exhaled a collective sigh and shrugged. The understanding of sexual behavior as a potential weapon of the powerful wasn't clearly defined in our literature or in the media yet. Now, after the #MeToo movement has knee-capped the creeps in positions of power, the Harvey Weinstens, the Cuomos, et al, where are we? I'm not sure.

I recommend *A Promising Young Woman*, last year's film that won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. In that movie, the main character spends her evenings acting drunk then turn threatening when the men who pick her up are about to have sex with her, even though she supposedly is practically comatose. She is getting revenge on such men for the male med students who gang-raped her roommate when she was a med student as well, the roommate later committing suicide. She eventually reconnects with a seemingly wonderful, gentle man from that med school class who is now a doctor. She finds herself falling in love, but then a tape surfaces of that night of the rape. Guess who was filming the gang bang? Spoiler alert: how she exacts the final revenge on that pack of wonderful professionals so successful and respected in their communities brought me some satisfaction.

Perhaps the image of Clinton sitting on the edge of his desk in the Oval Office with Lewinsky on her knees blowing him while he was on the phone to a Senator should be made into a statue. A white heterosexual male enjoying his cock getting sucked by his intern as he leads the "free" world would be a monument to our hypocrisy, and for a time, teachers could take their students to see the erected statue. Then, someday, when we truly arrive at #MeToo, we can pull it down off its pedestal and move on.

—*Barbara Summerhawk Yates is an Iowa native who now splits her time between Oregon and Japan.*

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# In pursuit of justice

I am a business leader, a social activist, a Black woman, a mom, and a candidate for Mayor of Cedar Rapids. I appreciate the opportunity to tell Prairie Progressive readers, especially those living in what we call the Corridor, why I'm running and what I hope to bring to city government in my community.

My husband and I put down roots in Cedar Rapids because we saw an opportunity to raise our kids in a place with great family values. On first arriving from Illinois, we noticed the beauty of the city, the rolling hills, and the TREES! When asked by people in Los Angeles what it's like living here, I would always say, "There's no traffic!" It didn't take long to identify other things to love: the people, the neighborhoods, the trails, and FIVE museums. It was quickly clear that the many people who've come for jobs in industry, create a beautiful mosaic to rival any large city: African refugees, Czechs, African Americans, South Asians, to name a few. Having lived in cities across the country, large and small, we recognized and valued the quieter pace in a still thriving, vibrant place to live. Cedar Rapids is the best of all possible worlds. We love it here.

It's only when you love something that you'd take the time and put forth the effort to contribute in ways that enhance and improve it. In that regard I have been active on several non-profit Boards of Directors. I am very proud of the work accomplished by the Advocates for Social Justice (ASJ) even during COVID. It is through our research, conversations with representatives from Civilian Oversight Boards, the National Association for Civilian Oversight

of Law Enforcement, and meetings (often contentious) with Mayor Hart and some City Council members, that the Mayor can tout the fact that Cedar Rapids now has a Citizens Review Board.

Policy issues affecting Cedar Rapidians are also key to the health of surrounding cities. Case in point: Cargill/Rompot. While community members weighed in at City Council meetings, they were not at the decision-making table. Destruction of the Prairie Pollinator Zone was something to which they were strongly opposed. It not only effects the value of their property – many having moved there understanding the City was committed to the preservation of that land – but more importantly, it eliminates the natural flood plain buffer. Bulldozers currently are literally scraping the zone of all flora, destroying fauna habitats. One need only look back at pre-Katrina infrastructure policy decisions of New Orleans lawmakers, and remember the ensuing disaster, to understand these policies have deep, far-reaching implications. It's as if CR city leaders learned nothing from the devastating flooding of 2008.

Homelessness is a huge concern in cities across the country. Derecho displaced numbers of families increasing the need for shelters in Cedar Rapids. Plunging winter temperatures create an urgency for emergency shelter. Several local and statewide non-profits and social action organizations, among them ASJ, are urging city leaders to allocate American Recovery Act funds to create at least 250 new shelter units. Local governments need to partner with non-profits, neighborhood associations, and community leaders already on

the ground, deeply involved with affected communities. It doesn't work for governments to create policies and develop strategies affecting these communities in silos, unilaterally presenting their solutions to the communities which may have better solutions or other concerns.

Tactical skills are needed to actualize any goal. But without the heart investment, without a commitment to morally and ethically driven solutions, a key component goes missing. Deciding without community input results in contentiousness, leading to a closed-mindedness antithetical to successful alliances. We must be better listeners so we can be better doers.

Compelled to run for Mayor, I'm courageous in pursuit of justice, a committed advocate for vulnerable communities whose voices are mere whispers to others. I understand where compromises can be made while maintaining the integrity of the mission and leaving the goal intact, and I have the requisite credentials.

Service to the wide community cannot be accomplished without deep listening skills, sensitivity, and compassion. Government must be open, accessible, and genuinely interested in bringing residents to the table, voices not only to be heard, but welcomed. That will be my promise to the people of Cedar Rapids.

*—Amara Andrews is the only progressive candidate on the ballot for Mayor of Cedar Rapids on November 2nd. She can be reached at <https://amara4cr.com> or [info@amara4cr.com](mailto:info@amara4cr.com).*

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# What Democrats do wrong

Democrats either don't know how or haven't the will to make Governor Kim Reynolds pay a political price for outrageous and sometimes false statements she makes. As a recent Selzer poll illustrated, Reynolds' approval rate continues to improve. Democrats sit back and watch the numbers move up while wringing their hands. We can do better than that.

By 'pay a political price' I mean hitting her where she lives among her Iowa political constituencies. I don't mean posting a mean tweet or writing a blog post for limited circulation. Complaining about the Governor's latest outrage to friends may make us feel better but does little to impact her popularity. We tend to believe no one could support this governor. The fact is many do, enough to re-elect her.

Reynolds does not write her own talking points. She recycles frequently updated Republican political buzzwords. Reynolds now beats the word "inflation" like a drum.

"We have a crisis at the border, a disaster in Afghanistan, and inflation is soaring," Reynolds said in an Aug. 19 press release. "President Biden is failing on each of these issues...I have had enough, and I know Iowans have, too."

She name-checks the president, associating "inflation" with the Biden administration, along with two other talking points. Inflation! Disaster! Crisis! She wasn't the first to do this. The Koch-backed Heritage Foundation rolled out the "inflation" attack seven days earlier in an opinion piece in the Washington Examiner.

"Diminishing the paychecks of the average person with inflation and weak growth will only advance the Chinese narrative that they are

outpacing the U.S. free enterprise system," wrote Jessica Anderson and The Heritage Foundation's Vice President James Carafano.

Not so fast!

It is not credible to say there is inflation when personal experience doesn't reflect it. My weekly expenses for groceries and sundries remain unchanged in 2021 compared to 2020. Yes, fuel prices are higher, but for Pete's sake, there were two recent hurricanes in the Louisiana-Texas oil patch on the Gulf Coast. Of course, this disrupted petroleum product supply, and prices spiked. Meat prices are up, yet is that market manipulation among the small number of meat packers? Congress believes so and is investigating. Are these things inflation? No, they are not.

The last paragraph is a perfect example of what Democrats do wrong. We use logic in a culture war. We also set ourselves up to lose.

**"The first thing we must do is accept reality."**

How do we make Governor Reynolds pay a political price for crying "inflation" along with other right-wing inspired parroting of Heritage Foundation's current framing? Like most Democrats, I don't know what will work. I do know it is time to figure it out.

Our response cannot be that there is no inflation, no crisis at the border, or no disaster in Afghanistan. When we do this, the effect is to reinforce Reynolds' framing of the issues and help her gain popularity. We're not supposed to be helping her!

The first thing we must do is accept reality. Three headlines appeared in the *Iowa City Press Citizen* on Sept. 23:

"Grassley has big lead in possible matchup."

"Sen. Ernst's job approval ticks upward slightly."

"How much longer can we keep doing this?"

The first two refer to politics and the third to employee burnout at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics during the coronavirus pandemic. These reflect realities many Democrats seek to dismiss. We must embrace them and work to change the underlying reality.

We can't use Republican framing to try to advance our causes. A hot topic in Iowa today is mask mandates in schools. Reynolds' familiar refrain on wearing face masks can be found in a Sept. 13 press release, "...parents' ability to decide what's best for their child."

Don't get me started. Not because I can't logically explain the ways this statement is wrong, but because I can. In a culture war we need a different approach from logic because it serves Reynolds more than Democrats.

I hope Democrats will find their way to make Reynolds pay for the misrepresentations and outright lies. If we don't have the will, we may as well kick back and take it easy while Republicans dominate the state's politics.

—Paul Deaton is the *Prairie Progressive's Senior Solon Correspondent*.

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# Somebody's anything, but not **SOMEBODY**

**A**MEND: The story of the 14th Amendment (Netflix) bursts with history about the workplace, the voting booth, the bedroom, and a violent rejection of the foregoing by our very own homegrown Taliban. Filled with colorful animation sequences, this infotainment reprises old battles over 'rights,' arriving at today's reprieve of Jim Crow.

The author-showrunners, Robe Imbriano and Tom Yellin, are writers, producers, and directors in long careers of documentary-making. Will Smith, America's Fresh Prince, is the affable narrator of 'AMEND' and executive producer, along with Larry Wilmore. Their primer belongs in your repertoire.

Much of our litigation involves the 14th, yet we barely know it, says Smith; 'when I learned about it, I had to tell you.' Free speech and gun rights amendments are served up, but it's the 14th that suffuses our daily life. If you were born in the US, you are a 'citizen' with certain freedoms—in theory. We presume that 'freedom' is embedded in the Constitution, but it isn't; only the idea of freedom is there—freedom for white men. It was abolitionists who politicked for all to be named 'citizen'—to publicly insist on it because of the rights that attend to the appellation 'citizen.'

AMEND begins the lesson with Mahershala Ali speaking for Frederick Douglass, the slave whose campaign led Lincoln to the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th amendment ending slavery. Lincoln's prompt assassination brought Andrew Johnson to the presidency, a racist whose Jim Crow laws imposed virtual slavery on the freed black population.

Enter white Ohio Congressman John Bingham, a man of prolific credentials and character: "...those who set their feet upon the necks of defenseless fellow men...these man stealers, though their skins be as white as the driven snow, are the real n\*\*\*\*\*." Bingham fathered the 14th in 1868, giving citizenship to every person born or naturalized in America, moving us from 'white male' to melting pot.

As soon as it was passed, the 14th was attacked in the streets, courts, and press, and was followed by the 15th—the right to vote. In retaliation, the Supremes delivered Plessey v Ferguson, enshrining 'separate but equal.' It ripped the guts from the two new amendments; the South gave us 50 years of Jim Crow, with lynching as its arch-weapon. Samuel L. Jackson voices Martin Luther King: "Only the negro can understand the social leprosy that segregation inflicts....," a cage that has prevented Blacks from building wealth.

Women used the civil rights struggle to lobby for the 14th to apply to them: 'You can be somebody's wife, somebody's mother, somebody's lover, somebody's anything, but not **SOMEBODY**.' Women didn't own their bodies, labor, or property until they got the vote in 1920, followed by birth control and abortion.

Marriage and the 14th struggle in the 21st. In 2015, Obergefell v Hodges arrived from the most gay-mean city in America—Cincinnati. Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the 2015 decision on gay marriage: "...two people...ask for equal dignity...the Constitution grants them that right." Said Jim Obergefell, "it was the first time as a gay man...that I felt like an equal American."

In sum, we move through generations of to-ing and fro-ing, thrilled and disgusted as we re-litigate the rights of citizen. We are on the precipice, we hope, of passing the John Lewis Voting rights act to salvage one person-one vote from an apartheid-minded minority. Our job is to shoulder the boulder uphill as our Taliban connives to rule an emerging rainbow majority.

As a companion piece to AMEND, the film MARSHALL (Netflix) drips with 1940's jazz and Jim Crow, in which cocky Thurgood Marshall strides across 'State of CT vs Joseph Spell' into one's heart. Chadwick Boseman as young Thurgood lands in Bridgeport nattily dressed and brazen, sent by the NAACP to defend Spell, a black chauffeur, because Westchester matrons are firing their servants following a lurid news headline: Greenwich matron (Kate Hudson) accuses help (Stirling K Brown) of rape and attempted murder. The judge sees no need for a (colored) outsider in his courtroom; he ropes Sam Friedman (Josh Gad) into the case, a local lawyer who defends insurance companies from claims. Marshall can attend but not speak. Wow—'arrogant, Yankee prick' Loren Willis (Dan Stevens), being groomed for the US Senate, will duel at the bar against a short, portly Hebrew and a shut-upped negro before a bigoted judge. The stage is set for a major tell about racism in the north—a true tale about our first Black justice that is too witty, too juicy to miss.

—Lee Liberman is Senior Film and History Correspondent for the *Prairie Progressive*.

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# How many is many?

In a media release several weeks ago, Senator Chuck Grassley said, “it appears that the standard of care and quality controls at many state veterans homes falls well short of those required by other government supported nursing homes.” The statement referred to the number of COVID deaths and infections in veterans homes across the country.

How many is many? Grassley’s source for this information is media reports. From the information provided by Grassley in footnotes, a handful of media reports were listed. Although some media reports cite statistics provided by the government, the statistics used by Grassley are flawed. The largest nursing home in most states are the states’ veterans homes. For example, a veterans home such as Iowa’s, located in Marshalltown, serves four hundred patients. What nursing home comes close to serving that many patients? The government-supported nursing homes referred to by Grassley include a vast number of homes with fewer than fifty patients.

Also, other ‘government supported nursing homes’ means those nursing homes, most of them privately owned, receiving federal Medicare and Medicaid supplements.

The Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown is not one of those facilities that falls short of requirements or expectations mentioned in Grassley’s letter to Denis R. McDonough, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Prior to the Pandemic, I visited the IVH monthly to see a childhood friend who resides there. The care, treatment, and respect he receives from the employees at that facility is exceptional.

The IVH is clean, sanitary, and well-managed by the supervisors and union employees I am in contact with on every visit. I have no concerns about the facility. I have no concerns about my friend and fellow veterans. However, at this time, visits are limited, non-contact, restricted, and brief due to the IVH’s attempts to keep COVID out of the buildings.

Yet, the message Senator Grassley wants you to hear is that state-operated nursing homes for veterans are not as good as civilian nursing homes. Nor is the oversight and reporting to the federal Government Accounting Office as forthcoming. This comes from a Republican official who has complained about the government overreaching into businesses and private lives. His message now screams for new regulations and government oversight.

I am skeptical. Personal experience with Senator Grassley has often led to showing that he has alternative motives for some of his concerns. I am not very convinced that his statement is out of concern for veterans. My belief is that he would like to see state-run veteran homes close or turn the facilities over to private corporations to operate. The result, of course, would be breaking unions, and padding the pockets of corporate-run nursing homes.

One of the media reports Grassley referred to in his letter was followed up by the same reporter writing about a nursing home in Iowa which was cited for violating ten federal regulations and eight state violations. A resident had to call 911; staff were seen by a state inspector sleeping on the job; toxic mold was discovered in 80% of the

building, including residents’ rooms; bedsores were left untreated; the facility had no building maintenance for almost a year; and a “woman’s breathing apparatus was found to be ‘plugged with hard, caked secretions’ from not being cleaned.” State fines were proposed, but not imposed. This could be the exemplar of what could come for veterans if state veteran homes are privatized.

Senator Grassley may have a sincere desire to be concerned about the care veterans receive. However, that sense of feeling that he has a subliminal thought to break unions is what causes me to doubt his sincerity. He’ll proudly show you his union card, but that’s a little like me showing you my Farm Bureau card from back when I was a member to obtain cheap health insurance.

“Though these facilities have implemented some Government Accountability Office recommendations,” Grassley writes, “recent media reports highlight additional oversight gaps that may have fueled the death toll among facility residents during the pandemic.” He wrote this in his letter after the VA had implemented three of the four recommendations of the GOA. The fourth recommendation is in the process of implementation.

Senator Grassley believes that our “veterans deserve the best possible care after giving so much for our country.” I agree. I only want to make clear that when Senator Grassley seeks to improve oversight of veterans nursing homes in America, Iowa is the model, and he should take time to visit. Basing decisions on hand-selected numbers and media marketing can be dangerous and damaging

—*Marty Ryan has been a constituent of Chuck Grassley for far too many years.*

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# A boiling madness

It is not enough to have had the back forty of our yard shorn to little more than a ham-fisted haircut in dirt and leaves. It is not enough that Round 2 of the pandemic is setting fire to our ERs and ICUs, jacking the death toll daily. Anti-maskers, driven mad by rational attempts to stay a step ahead of a clever, busy, and self-perpetuating virus, assault school board members, expressing displeasure in new and appalling ways. It's not enough that Donald Trump is bumbling around the margins of our culture, casting his obliterating shadow and sending his political party, which once housed at least a few scraps of sanity, into a boiling madness that beggars belief.

No, none of that satisfies whatever capricious sprites have been left to oversee our times. It seems we had to lose our hummingbirds three weeks early as well. They've just vanished, early and without a trace. Gone. With them has gone, we realize, the nourishment they bring.

We actually plan vacation around their activities as we can and had targeted the first two weeks of October to relax, prep the yard for winter, and soak up the action just prior to departure. We usually see them until mid-October, at least the females. They left before September did, and we are left reeling. It isn't that they're so lovely, or fast, or the way they defy gravity. They animate what they inhabit. We've seen them bring formerly shabby plants back into energetic bloom by their daily presence. We feel it in ourselves, the life they bring. And we feel, as a blow, the loss of that life as the light of summer mellows into fall.

Now, I sit in one of our lawn chairs, positioned for the best viewing of

back or front feeder, with the hollow feeling born of the knowledge that we will at best see fleeting visits from migrators. We'll be grateful, but it's a shock to lose our population, which has babies now each year here on site. Thelantana still awaits them, nobly casting bright blooms into the chilly air. Our mandevilla carries on chin-up as well, pink flowers bright against shining green leaves.

I hardly need to announce this, but I'm bitter. Let's face it: there's so much reason for it right now. In addition to all else, Iowa is hounded and haunted by its own politicians. Chuck Grassley, hell-bent on forging his chains link by link until he becomes the cautionary Jacob Marley of the GOP, is opting in for another Senate race.

Our Governor is no less of a disappointment. Kim Reynolds has held to every Trump-inspired and required GOP position. She encourages the welcoming of Afghan refugees one day, and howls about the "crisis at our border" the next. She rips away local control in matters of public health, saying we should opt instead to "do what's right" of our own volition as Iowans. She cites freedom, the rights of parents, even (ridiculously) the well-being of children. She has a raft of reasons for taking a weak position against the virus. She defends every position except the only one that could make a difference: we need to do it to control this virus and stop the overwhelming of our hospitals with sick and dying people. She somehow can't get that far. Businesses in Iowa aren't hurting because of governmental response to COVID—they're hurting because it wasn't fast or strong enough. She left the door open to the virus to declare open season on our state, and now it has.

Reynolds' minion in undermining public health policymaking and reporting, ever willing to adhere to the evisceration of established public health methodology and practice, was the up-talking Dr. Caitlin Pedati. She is leaving state government just when things are heating up again. The good doctor will be "pursuing other career opportunities." She certainly pursued opportunity here in Iowa—to the tune of a 45% pay raise. Pedati's devotion to assisting in the transition to new leadership means, according to the state's announcement, she "does not have availability for an interview."

Things could have been different. Reynolds, Pedati, and Senators Grassley and Ernst could have differentiated themselves from Republican doctrine and held favor in this state. Instead, they bobbed along on the current of an anger they've helped manufacture. Our state drifts along with them, to who knows what end.

This is what you get when you throw your lot in with a dead thing, a politics without animating forces of nature, a husk of doctrine and emotion. As its power grows, as autumn arrives, as the light is leaving the yard, the light is also extinguished in our state's politics.

—*Johnson County Recorder Kim Painter is not looking forward to winter.*



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# A scrapbook of the times

Nineteen years ago, PP subscribers were shocked to learn that subscription rates would increase from \$10 to \$12 a year. Nevertheless, loyal and generous readers didn't hesitate to renew.

In the years since then, the PP has continued to deliver to your door an array of opinions, memoirs, and rants from all over the world, with an emphasis on Iowa and the greater Midwest. A glance at past issues at [www.theprairieprogressive.com](http://www.theprairieprogressive.com) provides snapshots of history, seen through the prism of the democratic left. Thirty-five years of publication has created a scrapbook of the times.

We welcome articles by activists and organizers, insiders and outsiders, winners and losers, elected officials and candidates, university staff and students, teenagers and seniors, and unaffiliated gadflies. We hope that a modest subscription increase will allow us to continue to deliver our reader-funded newsletter to your mailbox and computer. The PP is not beholden to corporate sponsors (although we're open to proposals).

Short on cash? Renew now and beat the price increase that begins with our next issue. Until then, thank you for your support!

[www.theprairieprogressive.com](http://www.theprairieprogressive.com)

Problems aren't solved by government, if by government you mean bureaucrats. But neither do problems get solved by eliminating government and leaving people to the avarice of the powerful.

—*Jim Hightower*

It is too revolting to consider how much we profess and how little we perform.

—*Dorothy Day*

Get into politics as if your life depends on it. It does.

—*Justin Dart, national disability rights leader, 1996*



**Oct 7, 1931**

Desmond Tutu born

**Oct 7, 2001**

War in Afghanistan began

**Oct 13**

Early in-person voting begins

**Nov 2**

Election Day

Polls close at 8 PM

**Nov. 5, 1996**

Clinton re-elected President

**Nov. 15, 1995**

Clinton-Lewinsky affair began

**Nov 21, 1966**

National Organization for Women founded

**Dec 1**

World AIDS Day

**Dec 10**

UN Human Rights Day

**Dec 15, 1791**

US Bill of Rights ratified

**Dec 15**

Bill of Rights Day

**Dec 20, 1956**

Montgomery bus boycott ended

**Dec 20, 1976**

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley died

**Dec 25**

Federal Holiday

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