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A message from

Michael A. Mauro, Secretary of State

Dear Iowan,

It is my pleasure to present the *Iowa Citizen Civic Handbook*. As the Commissioner of Elections and State Registrar of Voters, it's my goal to establish educational programs to improve and increase voter awareness and participation. This handbook will assist all Iowans of diverse cultures in becoming more knowledgeable about the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship and serve as a useful tool for all Iowans.

Thank you for your interest and effort in learning more about our government. I believe that you will find this handbook useful today and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael A. Mauro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael A. Mauro
Iowa Secretary of State

History of the United States.

This country began when the 13 original colonies, owned by the British Empire, had a disagreement with Great Britain on how they should be governed. The conflict between the colonies and Great Britain resulted in the Revolutionary War in 1775-76. The colonists won the war and efforts soon began to form a government for the new nation - the United States of America.

On July 4, 1776, the founders of the new country signed a "Declaration of Independence" listing grievances. Thomas Jefferson and others who drafted this document stated: "All men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

To form a new nation, it was necessary to establish a system of government. In 1781, the thirteen states set up a federal government under the Articles of Confederation. The Articles established the Congress, but did not provide Congress with the means to collect taxes, regulate trade or defend the newly formed nation. In order to address these and other issues, a group of delegates, representing the 13 states, gathered in Philadelphia's Independence Hall to write a constitution. On September 17, 1787, the U.S. Constitution was drafted, replacing the Articles of Confederation. The Constitution was ratified in 1788, establishing the basic framework of the U.S. government. It created a federal system, in which political power is divided between the national government and the individual state governments.

Federal Government

The national government is called the federal government. The Constitution created 3 separate branches of government - the legislative, executive and judicial - to share the work of creating, enforcing and interpreting the laws of the nation. Congress, the president, and the Supreme Court represent the 3 branches.

The federal government is responsible for meeting the needs of the people that are not being met by the states. Through the Constitution, the federal government has the authority to represent, serve and protect the American people at home and abroad. According to the Constitution, the national government's purpose is to "establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty".

U.S. Presidents

- 1 George Washington, 1789-97
- 2 John Adams, 1797-1801
- 3 Thomas Jefferson, 1801-9
- 4 James Madison, 1809-17
- 5 James Monroe, 1817-25
- 6 John Quincy Adams, 1825-29
- 7 Andrew Jackson, 1829-37
- 8 Martin Van Buren, 1837-41
- 9 William Henry Harrison, 1841
- 10 John Tyler, 1841-45
- 11 James Knox Polk, 1845-49
- 12 Zachary Taylor, 1849-50
- 13 Millard Fillmore, 1850-53
- 14 Franklin Pierce, 1853-57
- 15 James Buchanan, 1857-61
- 16 Abraham Lincoln, 1861-65
- 17 Andrew Johnson, 1865-69
- 18 Ulysses Simpson Grant, 1869-77
- 19 Rutherford Birchard Hayes, 1877-81
- 20 James Abram Garfield, 1881
- 21 Chester Alan Arthur, 1881-85
- 22 Grover Cleveland, 1885-89
- 23 Benjamin Harrison, 1889-93
- 24 Grover Cleveland, 1893-97
- 25 William McKinley, 1897-1901
- 26 Theodore Roosevelt, 1901-9
- 27 William Howard Taft, 1909-13
- 28 Woodrow Wilson, 1913-21
- 29 Warren Gamaliel Harding, 1921-23
- 30 Calvin Coolidge, 1923-29
- 31 Herbert Clark Hoover, 1929-33
- 32 Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1933-45
- 33 Harry S. Truman, 1945-53
- 34 Dwight David Eisenhower, 1953-61
- 35 John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 1961-63
- 36 Lyndon Baines Johnson, 1963-69
- 37 Richard Milhous Nixon, 1969-74
- 38 Gerald Rudolph Ford Jr., 1974-77
- 39 James Earl Carter, 1977-81
- 40 Ronald Wilson Reagan, 1981-89
- 41 George Herbert Walker Bush, 1989-93
- 42 William Jefferson Clinton, 1993-2001
- 43 George W. Bush, 2001-present

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America,
and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God,
indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights represents the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution that were adopted shortly after it was ratified. These are rights guaranteed to all citizens.

Amendment 1

Freedom of religion, speech, and press; the right to assemble; and the right to petition the government for redress of grievances.

Amendment 2

The right to keep and bear arms.

Amendment 3

The right, in time of peace or war, to forbid soldiers to live in any house without permission from the owner.

Amendment 4

The right of people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures.

Amendment 5

The right against self-incrimination (being forced to admit to a crime).

Amendment 6

The right to a speedy and public trial, the right to face your accuser and the right to have your own lawyer when you are charged with a crime.

Amendment 7

The right to trial by an impartial jury of your fellow citizens in the state and district where the crime took place.

Amendment 8

The right against too much bail; being required to pay fines that are too large; and cruel and unusual punishment.

Amendment 9

Unlisted rights: when a right is listed in the Bill of Rights, this does not mean unlisted rights are taken away.

Amendment 10

State Sovereignty. All powers not given to the federal government in the Constitution are kept by the states, which make their own sets of laws for many things that affect Americans, including health care, education, transportation, and public safety. This system is called “federalism.”

Citizens Fight for the Right to Vote

Citizens also have the right to vote and to help in elections, but it has not always been that way. Early in the history of the United States, only white male landowners could vote. And for purposes of representation in Congress, each slave was counted as only three-fifths of a person. Following the bitter American Civil War, three Constitutional amendments were added that gave male former slaves citizenship and voting rights.

For women, the fight for voting rights was a longer one. Women “suffragists,” such as Carrie Chapman Catt from Iowa, protested and organized to ask the government for their most basic right, the right to vote. After several years, they won. In 1920, the 19th amendment to the Constitution finally guaranteed women that right.

Photo Credit: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, [LC-USZ62-49122]



Carrie Chapman Catt

Founder of the League of Women Voters.

Three Branches of Government.

The U.S. Constitution provides for three branches of government:

1. EXECUTIVE branch - headed by the president.
2. LEGISLATIVE branch - made up of the 2 houses of Congress (House and Senate).
3. JUDICIAL branch - the court system (Supreme, Appeals and District courts).

One way to make sure that the government does not become too powerful is to divide power among parts of the government. In this way, no single person or group can gain enough power to ignore the people.



**Washington Monument
in Washington D.C.**



"of the people, by the people, for the people"

Executive Branch

The executive branch carries out the laws. It is made up of the president, the vice president, and the Cabinet. Cabinet members give advice to the president and are responsible for all work for the country that has to do with their department.

The president is the chief executive of the United States. The vice president presides over the Senate and stands ready to take on the president's job in case the president cannot complete the term. If both the president and vice president are unable to carry out the duties, a chain of succession passes from the Office of President to the Speaker of the House and then to members of the president's Cabinet.

Legislative Branch

The legislative branch makes the federal laws through two bodies, the Senate and the House of Representatives. Members of the Senate and House make up the United States Congress.

The Senate is made up of 100 members (two from each of the 50 states). The House of Representatives is made up of 435 members who are elected, based on population, from congressional districts in each state. Iowa has five congressional districts.

Citizens of the state elect U.S. senators to six year terms and citizens in each of the congressional districts elect U.S. House members to two year terms.

Judicial Branch

The judicial branch interprets the laws and settles disputes among the states and, in some cases, between individuals. It also reviews laws made by Congress and the states to determine whether they are in line with the Constitution.

The judicial branch is made up of several courts, including the United States Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has nine judges who are called justices. There are 13 Courts of Appeals under the Supreme Court and currently 94 federal District Courts.

The president of the United States appoints all judges serving in the federal courts. Each appointment is a lifetime term.

The 50 States.

The 50 States

In the beginning, the United States had only 13 states. Now, the U.S. has 50 states. It includes 48 connected states and 2 other states: Hawaii and Alaska. Washington D.C., the seat of national government, has never been part of a state. Its residents cannot elect voting representatives to Congress. They are allowed to vote for the president. The U.S. also has four territories: Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico. The residents of these territories elect non-voting representatives to Congress, but they cannot vote for the U.S. president. Washington D.C. also has an elected non-voting representative in Congress.

Each of the 50 states has the right and responsibility to:

- Control trade within its borders.
- Control education within its borders.
- Create local governments.
- Set requirements for elected state officials.
- Create laws about marriage and divorce.
- Set rules for professional licenses.

State Government Structure

The states have the same structure of government as the federal government — the executive, legislative and judicial branches. In each state legislature there are two legislative bodies — the Senate and the House (sometimes called the Assembly). One state, Nebraska, has a “unicameral” legislature, with only a single body. There is no House or Senate in Nebraska — just one group of elected people.

State of Iowa.

Iowa became the 29th state on December 28, 1846. The current Iowa Constitution was adopted in 1857, giving authority to the state’s executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Similar to the federal government, in state government, the legislative branch makes the laws, the executive branch enforces the laws, and the judicial branch interprets the laws.

How to Reach Iowa Elected Officials

The Honorable Chet Culver
Governor of Iowa
State Capitol, Des Moines IA 50319
515.281.5211

•

The Honorable Michael A. Mauro
Iowa Secretary of State
State Capitol, Des Moines IA 50319
515.281.8993

•

The Honorable David Vaudt
Iowa State Auditor
State Capitol, Des Moines IA 50319
515.281.5834

•

The Honorable Michael Fitzgerald
Treasurer of the State of Iowa
State Capitol, Des Moines IA 50319
515.281.5368

•

The Honorable Bill Northey
Iowa Secretary of Agriculture
Wallace Bldg, Des Moines IA 50319
515.281.5231

•

The Honorable Tom Miller
Iowa Attorney General
Hoover Bldg, Des Moines IA 50319
515.281.5164

•

The Honorable (*first and last name*)
Iowa House of Representatives
State Capitol, Des Moines IA 50319
515.281.5381

•

The Honorable (*first and last name*)
Iowa Senate
State Capitol, Des Moines IA 50319
515.281.5307

•

The Honorable (*first and last name*)
United States Senator
Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

•

The Honorable (*first and last name*)
United States Representative
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Executive Branch

The governor is the chief executive, heading the executive branch and having the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the laws are followed.
- Supervising the business of the state and making recommendations to the General Assembly.
- Issuing a “veto” or stopping certain acts passed by the General Assembly, when thought to be necessary.
- Calling special sessions of the General Assembly.
- Appointing citizens to serve as non-elected heads of state departments.
- Appointing citizens to serve on state boards and commissions.

The Iowa Constitution also requires an Office of Lieutenant Governor. The lieutenant governor is a member of the executive branch and stands ready to succeed the governor in case the governor cannot complete the term of four years (due to death, impeachment or resignation).

Other elected officials within the executive branch are the:

- Attorney General
- State Auditor
- State Treasurer
- Secretary of State
- Secretary of Agriculture

The Legislative Branch

In the legislative branch, the General Assembly is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives. In Iowa, membership includes 50 senators and 100 representatives. The citizens elect House members to two-year terms and Senate members to four-year terms. Each Senate district contains two House districts, and the districts are divided up so that an equal number of people live in each district. The General Assembly begins its yearly business on the second Monday in January. It usually finishes work in late April or early May. The governor, in unusual circumstances, can call the General Assembly to meet in a special session after the regular session is over.

The Judicial Branch

The judicial branch of the state is made up of a Supreme Court, a court of appeals, and eight district court judicial districts. Within each district court, there are four types of judicial officers: district judges, district associate judges, associate juvenile judges, and magistrates. The governor appoints all judges with advice from judicial nominating commissions. In order to retain his or her position, a sitting judge is subject to a vote of the people in general elections. The County Magistrate Appointing Commission appoints county magistrates; these are not elected positions.

Benefits and Responsibilities of Citizenship

The Principles of our Government

The People Rule:

Through a “one person – one vote” election system. Americans elect people to represent them.

Limited Government:

Basic freedoms are guaranteed to all citizens of the United States.

Separation of Powers:

Each of the three branches of government acts independently from the others and may not interfere with the workings of another branch.

Responsibilities of Citizenship

Obedying the laws of the country, including state and local laws.

Educating yourself about issues that are of concern or interest to you.

Educating yourself about political parties and candidates.

Voting in every election.

Respecting the rights of others.

Benefits of Citizenship

The right to be protected against violence, against discrimination, and against unfair financial practices.

The right to be treated fairly: to have the same rights and privileges as any other citizen.

The right to own property, to speak and write freely, to worship, and to gather in groups without government interference.

The right to vote.

The right to be represented at every level of government.

The right to be able to use the courts and to have a lawyer represent you.

Citizens' Involvement in the Election Process

Every year there are many elections in the United States. The most crucial election is the one held every four years for president/vice president. Involved in elections are:

- candidates
- campaigns
- political parties
- fundraising
- voter registration
- opinion polls
- media
- Electoral College (in presidential elections)

Participation in the Process

Every U.S. citizen has the right and opportunity to participate in the entire election process. Elections include federal, state, and local processes. The presidential process begins more than a year prior to the actual election. There are currently two major political parties in our country: the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. The parties nominate candidates to run for president in one of two ways: the caucus system and the primary system. Iowa is one of only a few states using the caucus system.

Voter Registration Drives

Voter registration drives are organized and carried out by various groups, including:

- political parties
- groups of educators/students/union members
- governmental agencies
- other business/professional/advocacy organizations

All completed voter registration forms are immediately delivered to the county auditor where the information is entered into the county's voter registration system. The voter, if necessary, can change information later by completing a new registration form.

About the Iowa Presidential Caucuses

CAU • CUS [kaw-kuhs]

a process in which political party members gather to make policy decisions, select candidates and elect convention delegates.

Some form of caucus has existed in Iowa since the early 1800's, even before obtaining statehood 1846. The pioneers of the Iowa Constitution chose caucuses rather than a primary to nominate candidates. Today, any voter who is a registered Republican or Democrat, and can prove residency in Iowa, can participate in the presidential caucus of their party.

At a presidential caucus, party members get together to:

- vote on public policy issues to be included in their party's platform;
- select committee people to conduct the business of the local party;
- nominate candidates for county and state offices;
- elect delegates to represent their wishes at county conventions in support of particular presidential candidates.

At the county convention, some of the delegates are elected to move on to district and state. At those conventions a few delegates are elected to attend the national convention. The purpose of each party's national convention is to affirm the final choice of their party's nominees for president and vice president. The national delegates also adopt the party's public policy agenda (the national platform).

Most states use the presidential primary system, in which individual voters vote directly at the polls for people who will go to the national conventions in support of particular presidential candidates. Although Iowa doesn't use the primary system for selecting presidential choices, primaries are held for other elections.

To learn more about the Iowa Caucuses, contact the Iowa Democratic Party or the Republican Party of Iowa.

Voting in Iowa.

Why Vote?

Voting is a right that is granted to all American citizens through the U.S. Constitution. Whether you are voting for a candidate to represent you or on an issue, you are making your wishes known. Voting is a great way to choose citizens to represent you. Voting also gives you a chance to voice your opinions about your quality of life to elected officials.

Who Can Vote?

To vote in Iowa, you must be registered. To register to vote in Iowa you must:

- be a citizen of the United States.
- be a resident of Iowa.
- be at least 17 1/2 years old (you must be 18 by the date of the election).
- not have been convicted of a felony (or you must have had your voting rights restored).
- not currently be judged “incompetent” to vote by a court.
- give up your right to vote in any other place.

If you do not meet all these qualifications, you should not register to vote.

Am I Registered to Vote?

If you are unsure if you are registered to vote in Iowa, use the “Am I Registered to Vote?” search option on the Secretary of State’s website at www.sos.state.ia.us or contact your county auditor for help.

“I encourage all eligible Iowans to exercise their right to vote.”

- Michael A. Mauro, Secretary of State

Voting in Iowa.

When Should I Register?

Voter Pre-Registration Deadline

The voter registration deadline is 10 days before a general and primary election and 11 days before all other elections.



Election Day Registration

As of January 1, 2008, you may register to vote on Election Day at the polling place for the precinct you currently live in. If you register to vote on Election Day you will be required to show proof of residency and identity.

How Can I Register to Vote?

You can fill out your own voter registration form or you may ask someone else to do it for you. You must sign the form yourself. You have the right to fill out the form privately. You may get a voter registration form at:

- the Iowa Secretary of State's website (www.sos.state.ia.us)
- your local county auditor's office
- public assistance agencies
- public libraries
- political party offices

OR

You can register in person or by mail. You may register in person at:

- the Iowa Secretary of State's Office
- your county auditor's office
- driver's license stations
- public assistance agencies
- state offices serving people with disabilities

NOTE: To register by mail, you may contact your county auditor's office or the Iowa Secretary of State's office in Des Moines for a form. When you register to vote, you must put your Iowa driver's license number on the application form. If you don't have a driver's license, you may substitute an Iowa non-driver ID form number. If you don't have either one of these, you must include the last four numbers of your Social Security number. The number you give will be checked, so be sure to put your name on the registration form in the same way it appears on the ID document you use.

In about 14 days you will receive a voter registration card in the mail. This card will tell you what precinct you live in and where you will vote in your neighborhood. Neighborhood voting can take place in churches, schools, or community centers. When you change your name, address, or other information, you will need to update your registration by completing a new registration form.

Ways to Vote

There are three ways to vote in the State of Iowa:

- In person on Election Day
- In person, before Election Day, at the county auditor's office or at a satellite voting station
- Absentee, by mail

Where to Vote

Your polling place could be a church, school, fire station, or a community center. If you are unsure where to vote, you may find your polling place by performing a search on the Secretary of State's web site at www.sos.state.ia.us or by contacting your county auditor.

Go to the polls when they are open. Depending on where you live, poll times may change. Also for some types of elections, polls may have different opening and closing times. If you are unsure about the times, you may call the county auditor's office for information.

What to expect at your polling place:

1. You check in with precinct election officials. These officials will:

- Ask you for your name; you may be asked to show identification.
- Check for your name on their list of registered voters.
- Ask you to sign your name on their list.
- Hand you a ballot.

2. You go into a small private booth and mark your ballot with your choices.

Things to keep in mind:

- You can ask for help from a pollworker/election official. (They cannot give you advice about your choices, only how to mark the ballot or use the voting equipment.)
- If you are disabled or cannot read the ballot, you can take a friend or relative into the booth with you to help.
- Pollworkers are allowed to read your ballot for you in the booth if you cannot read it.
- You can take your notes with you.
- You don't have to vote on everything.
- If you make a mistake, just ask for another ballot. You have three times to correct your ballot.

Elections in Iowa are held on Tuesdays.

GENERAL ELECTION:

held in November, in even-numbered years.

What to expect on the ballot:

Candidates for federal, state, county, and local offices

Judges

Constitutional amendments (sometimes)

Public measures (sometimes)

CITY ELECTION:

held in November, in odd-numbered years.

What to expect on the ballot:

Candidates for city offices (city council & mayor)

Public measures (sometimes)

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION:

held in September, in odd-numbered years.*

What to expect on the ballot:

Candidates for local school board

Candidates for community college board

PRIMARY ELECTION:

(Only candidates from your chosen party will be on your ballot.)

held in June, in even-numbered years.

What to expect on the ballot:

Candidates for federal, state, and county offices.

You must choose a political party to vote in the primary.

SPECIAL ELECTION:

held on specific days throughout the year.

What to expect on the ballot:

Can be for offices or for public measures.

* effective 2009

Voter Responsibilities

As an Iowa voter, you have the responsibility to:

1. Register to vote.

Register 10 days before a partisan election or 11 days prior to all other elections.

Effective January 1, 2008, you may register to vote at the polls on Election Day with proper identification.

2. Learn about the candidates and issues on the ballot before going to vote.

3. Vote at the polling place in the precinct where you live.

4. Respect the privacy and voting rights of others.

5. Be courteous and respectful to election workers and other voters.

6. Take a form of identification with you when you go to the polls.

7. Read and follow instructions.

8. Ask for help if you need it.

9. Follow all federal and state voting laws.

10. Review your ballot before casting it to make sure it is complete and correct.

History of ELECTIONS

1870 *15th amendment to the U.S. Constitution ratified giving citizens the right to vote regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude

1892 Iowa adopted the Australian ballot

1900 Presidential electors removed from the ballot

1906 Biennial general elections became effective

1907 Direct primary adopted and commission form of government authorized

1911 County surveyor removed from ballot

1913 *Direct elections of U.S. Senators

1915 County superintendent of schools removed from the ballot

1919 *One vote for President and Vice President – they appear on the ballot as a team

1920 *On August 26, the U.S. ratified the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving women the right to vote

1947 Township and city assessors removed from the ballot

1951 City administrative officers removed from the ballot, except mayor

1959 State commerce commissioners and county coroner removed from the ballot; Legislature authorized combining county offices

1963 Direct election of judges replaced by nominating commissions and “retention in office” votes

1965 *The enactment of U.S. Voting Rights Act suspended all literacy and voter test

1972 Four-year terms for state and county officers; county auditors became responsible for elections and voter registration

1973 Township justices of the peace, constables and city courts abolished; directors of regional library boards added to ballot

1974 Party precinct committee persons selected by precinct caucuses; term of township clerk changed from two to four years

1975 Statewide voter registration begins, located in Comptrollers Data Processing Office; soil district commissioners added to ballot

1976 Statewide computerized voter registration begins

1983 Clerk of the district court removed from the ballot

1987 Voter registration begins at selected state agencies

1988 Voter registration extended to all state agencies

1989 * “Motor Voter” registration program begins; voter registration forms appear in income tax booklets and telephone directories

1995 *Law implementing “National Voter Registration Act of 1993” becomes effective in Iowa

1998 Voter registration becomes a function of the Iowa Secretary of State’s Office

2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) passed by Congress; Iowa begins the implementation of election reforms related to HAVA

2007 Landmark legislation passed allowing election day registration and requiring a paper trail on all voting equipment

(denotes federal law; all others are Iowa law)*

For More Information

For more information about voting, contact your county auditor or the Secretary of State's Office.

Iowa Secretary of State
First Floor, Lucas Building
321 E. 12th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

Elections Division: 515-281-0145
Voter Registration: 515-281-8849
Toll Free: 1-888-SOS-VOTE

www.sos.state.ia.us

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page featuring a dark blue background with several white, five-pointed stars of varying sizes. The stars are arranged in a pattern that suggests a stylized American flag, with the stars appearing to float above a dark blue field. The stars are positioned in the lower half of the page, with some near the top and others further down. The overall effect is patriotic and clean.