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## VOTE 2008

There is a lot going on these days. Our Governor and lawmakers are working hard to get people affected by this summer's floods the help they need. Task forces are working hard to reform our health care system, picking up where last year's landmark "Health Care for All" bill left off.

And then there is the Election. **On Tuesday, November 4, Americans will go to the polls to elect a new President.** We will also pick who represents us in Washington DC, at the State Capitol, and in our county courthouses and city halls.

**The decisions you make this November 4 (including whether to vote) will impact your life.** The people you vote for will decide what to do about health care, community supports, Medicaid, public transit, gas prices, jobs, taxes, education, the war, immigration, and our economy.

This issue of *infoNET* focuses on voting – why it is important, what you need to know, and how you can get more information. ***This November 4, talk with your vote! The candidates are listening.***

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## WHY VOTE?

*By Mike Hoenig of Davenport, Iowa*

In 1992, I didn't vote in the General Election. That's not something to be proud of, especially since I was working for a Center for Independent Living at the time. Here I was, telling others why advocacy and community participation were important, and I didn't even drag myself to the polls.

Oh, I had all the excuses. My ONE vote wouldn't make a difference. I was busy. Transportation was a hassle. Being blind, I'd have to ask for help marking my ballot.

My previous voting experiences had not left me feeling empowered. In the 1984 election, a college friend marked my ballot. Since we were supporting opposite presidential candidates, I was not quite sure that he'd marked the ballot as I instructed. In 1988, I attended my party's county convention. My young idealistic mind wasn't ready for the political sparring. Taking it far too personally, I allowed it to dampen my enthusiasm. Casting my ballot became a mere formality.

Fast forward again to 1992. As friends and coworkers returned from the polls, they talked about their voting experiences and freely extolled the virtues of their candidates. Since I hadn't voted, I had nothing to do but keep my mouth shut. For someone who likes to talk as much as I do, that was a problem! I vowed never again to pass up an opportunity to vote in a presidential election.

I've kept that vow, and have broadened my horizons by participating in state and local elections, primaries and caucuses. I've met some challenges along the way.

When I showed up to vote in 1996, the pollworkers were unsure of how to assist me and commented on my choices as they marked my ballot.

When a 2002 flash flood caused a change in polling location, only the conscientiousness of a transit driver prevented me from being stranded without an opportunity to vote. And in 2006, I surprised a pollworker who clearly hadn't expected someone to request the new accessible voting machine.

Has it been worth dealing with these inconveniences *just* for the privilege of voting? YOU BET!

Will I feel that way if I run into a snafu every time I go to the polls? ABSOLUTELY! "Why?" you ask.

When I vote, I exercise my right to choose who will represent me, whether on the Davenport City Council, in Des Moines, or in Washington. Being an active voter, I have the right to express my views, whether they be positive or otherwise, about the candidates prior to the election.

Once politicians are elected, I feel at liberty to comment on their job performance. When I begin by saying to my senator, representative or member of Congress: "As a voter, ..." my credibility goes way up!

Finally, as a person with a disability, I have the unique opportunity to convince candidates and pollworkers that I am an informed voter who deserves the right to a secret ballot.

Don't feel badly if you're a little scared about voting. Lots of groups like ID Action and your local Center for Independent Living are there to help you. You might even ask a friend, like I sometimes do, to drive you to your polling place. Most importantly, DON'T feel left out like I did after the 1992 election. **GET OUT AND VOTE!!**

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## VOTE 2008 WORKSHOPS

If you are nervous about voting, ID Action has a workshop for you! Whether you are a first-time voter, or you just want to try out the new

accessible voting equipment, ID Action's free Vote 2008 Workshops can help you out!

ID Action is working with local hosts to deliver a two-hour workshop on voting. The first hour lets you know the basics of voting (who can vote, where and when you vote, and what options you have in voting). The workshops will spend some time on Iowa's new Election Day registration laws.

Local candidates are invited during the final hour for an informal "meet and greet" reception, and voting machines are available to give participants a chance to practice voting. Local county auditors and/or Secretary of State Michael Mauro have also been on hand to help answer questions.

If you would like to host a Vote 2008 workshop, contact ID Action at: [info@idaction.org](mailto:info@idaction.org) or 866/432-2846. There is no cost to local hosts, and grant funds are available for additional vote activities.

For more information on our free workshops, or to sign up for an existing workshop, go to: [www.infonetiowa.com/home/vote2008.php](http://www.infonetiowa.com/home/vote2008.php) or call 866/432-2846. Workshops are free, but space is limited in many locations, as are available dates.

### Vote 2008 Workshops

Schedule as of 9/16/2008

Oct. 10	Spencer (10 a.m. to Noon) <i>Seasons Center, 201 E. 11<sup>th</sup></i>
Oct. 10	Sheldon (2:15 – 4:00 p.m.) <i>Village Northwest Unlimited, Room TBA, 330 Village Circle</i>
Oct. 23	Clarinda (10 a.m. to Noon) <i>Peer Support Center, 115 N. 15<sup>th</sup></i>
Oct. 28	Des Moines (Noon – 2:00) <i>State Fairgrounds, Walnut Center, E. 30<sup>th</sup> &amp; University; Optional free candidate forum &amp; lunch hosted by CSA at 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.</i>

*New sites added weekly – for updates go to:*  
[www.infonetiowa.com/home/vote2008.php](http://www.infonetiowa.com/home/vote2008.php)

*Workshops have already been held in Cherokee (Sept. 8) and Council Bluffs (Sept. 18).*

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## VOTING BASICS

Voting is easier than ever before, thanks to the elected officials that worked hard to change Iowa's voting laws over the past two years.

Iowa's Governor, Secretary of State, legislators, and county auditors have all worked hard to pass laws that make voting easy and accessible to voters of all abilities.

Here are some of the basics you need to know before you vote this year.

### WHO can vote

- ☆ You must be 18 years old or older on Election Day (November 4, 2008). If you turn 18 on November 4, you can vote!
- ☆ You must be a US Citizen.
- ☆ You must live in Iowa (be an Iowa resident).

### WHO cannot vote

- ☆ You cannot vote if you have been convicted of a felony (unless the Governor has restored your right to vote).
- ☆ You cannot vote if a judge has ruled you are "not competent to vote." This is a very specific ruling and is very rarely used. It has nothing to do with whether you have a legal guardian, are living in an institution, are able to sign documents, or have given someone power of attorney.

### WHAT is expected of you

- ☆ You must register to vote.
- ☆ You can pre-register (October 25 is the deadline this year). By pre-registering, you will have your voter card by Election Day and won't have to show proof of identity or residency at the polls.
- ☆ You can also register after October 25, including at the polls on Election Day, but you must show proof of who you are (identity) and proof of where you live (residency).
- ☆ A valid Iowa driver's license with your current address is proof of both identity and residency. If you do not have this, you must show a photo ID as proof of identity AND an official document with your current address on it.

- ☆ If you do not have proof of identity and residency, you can have a registered voter in your precinct (usually a neighbor) vouch for you. The voter will need to go to the polls with you and sign forms saying s/he knows you and that you live in the precinct.
- ☆ If you do what is expected of you – either register by the pre-registration deadline or bring proof of residency and identity with you when you vote – you will be allowed to vote!

### HOW you can vote

- ☆ **You have the choice of voting on Election Day or early by mail or in person.**
  - **You can vote by going to the polls on Tuesday, November 4.** You must go to the polling site for your precinct – your county auditor can tell you where this is (and it is on your voter registration card).
  - **You can vote by mail beginning September 25.** You simply need to request an absentee ballot. Contact your county auditor for a request form (you can request one at any time, but it won't be mailed to you until after September 25).
  - **You can vote in person beginning September 25.** You can vote in your county auditor's office or at a satellite voting center near you – contact your county auditor for more information.

### **Election Day Registration Requirements**

If you register to vote after the October 25 pre-registration deadline, you must show:

**Proof of Identity:** Photo Identification like Passport, Military ID, Student ID, Employee ID, Out of State Driver's License, Non Driver ID

**AND**

**Proof of Residency:** Utility bill, residential lease, property tax statement, bank statement, paycheck, government document, or government check if your current address on it

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**Reminder!** A valid Iowa driver's license is proof of both identity & residency (if address is current)!

## WHERE to go for more information

- ☆ **Your county auditors can answer any question you might have about voting.** They can answer things like:
  - If you are registered to vote
  - How to register to vote
  - How to register on Election Day
  - What to bring with you to vote
  - Who is running for office
  - How you can get a sample ballot
  - Which precinct you live in
  - Where your polls are located
  - Accessibility concerns
  - Absentee ballot requests & questions
  - When you can vote early at the Auditor's office, and when and where satellite voting is available
- ☆ You can find the name & contact information for your county auditor's office online ([www.sos.state.ia.us](http://www.sos.state.ia.us)) or in the government pages of your phone book.
- ☆ If you have access to the Internet, everything you need to know about voting is posted on the Secretary of State's website (including an informational video on Election Day registration):  
[www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/index.html](http://www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/index.html).
- ☆ **You can also call the Secretary of State's office at 1-888-SOS-VOTE.**

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## **FLOOD ASSISTANCE TAKING SHAPE**

Many Iowa communities were devastated by the storms that hit our state this summer, causing more than a billion dollars of damage. Helping Iowans and their businesses recover from these disasters will be the top priority of the Governor and Legislature when the session starts up again on January 12, 2009.

The Governor received good news last week when FEMA (federal government) announced it would pay 90% of the state's disaster related costs. Under this cost-sharing agreement, the State and local governments would pick up the remaining

10%. But don't breathe a sigh of relief yet - 10% of a billion dollars is still \$100 million!

While the Governor and legislative leaders have not *officially* ruled out a special session, the chances of legislators coming back to Des Moines in September or October are very small. With the Federal government picking up a larger share of the cost, the Governor and legislative leaders think they can avoid the expense of a special session and have enough money to put together an aggressive assistance package that will carry the state into the next year (at which time they can do more).

"I continue to reserve the right to call a special session at any time I believe more needs to be done in the future," Governor Culver said last week. "I have repeatedly expressed my willingness to do so if needed and that remains the case."

Last week, Governor Culver announced the creation of a new "Jumpstart Iowa Initiative" that will address the immediate housing and business needs of Iowans impacted by the floods. The \$40 million initiative would use existing economic and community development funds to pay for housing in storm-impacted communities and help small businesses damaged by this year's severe weather.

"Today, I am announcing the next phase of our flood recovery efforts – the Jumpstart Iowa Recovery Initiative," announced Governor Culver. "This new housing and business assistance plan will help bridge the gap between the immediate needs of Iowans and the first installment of Community Development Block Grant funding."

The Iowa Department of Economic Development will administer the Jumpstart Small Business Assistance Program, which will provide forgivable loans to small businesses to be used to pay down their SBA loans and promote "green" rebuilding efforts. Businesses that reopen their doors within six months of receiving these funds will not have to repay the loan. For more information, go to: [www.governor.iowa.gov/news/2008/09/attachments/20080912173549630.pdf](http://www.governor.iowa.gov/news/2008/09/attachments/20080912173549630.pdf)

The Iowa Finance Authority will administer the Jumpstart Housing Assistance Program that will loan homeowners up to \$50,000 to help Iowans that lost their homes in the storms put a

downpayment on a new house, repair their current home, or continue paying mortgages while waiting a FEMA buyout. Homeowners can qualify for an additional \$10,000 loan for the purchase of energy efficient appliances. All loans given to homeowners are forgiven (do not have to be paid back) if they stay in their homes for at least ten years. For more information, go to: [www.governor.iowa.gov/news/2008/09/attachments/20080912173516635.pdf](http://www.governor.iowa.gov/news/2008/09/attachments/20080912173516635.pdf)

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### **Advocates for disability services and funding need to watch Iowa's flood recovery for a number of reasons:**

1. Iowans with disabilities and the communities they live in were affected by the floods and will be impacted by recovery efforts.
2. Public transportation, libraries, and the roads/sidewalks that make many communities accessible to persons with disabilities were damaged in many areas of the state.
3. Many counties lost large numbers of homes and businesses – which may no longer pay property taxes. MH/DD services are paid by local property taxes, and if businesses and homes are no longer there to tax, the county will lose local funds and/or have to raise taxes on everyone else to make up for the loss. This will put even more pressure on the already over-extended state share of the MH/DD system.

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### **GOVERNOR APPOINTS AUTISM COUNCIL**



On August 21, Governor Chet Culver named thirteen people to the newly created Iowa Autism Council.

“As Governor, I am committed to ensuring that all Iowans have every opportunity to succeed,” said Governor Culver. “With the creation of the Iowa Autism Council, we will make certain that the needs of those living with

autism are represented in state government. I look forward to working with the members of this council.

*(continued on next page)*

### **Grants for Assistive Technology Now Available for Flood Victims with Disabilities**

Iowa's Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council has joined with the Iowa Program for Assistive Technology and The Iowa Able Foundation to provide grants to individuals with disabilities who have limited resources and lost assistive devices during this summer's floods. Government programs and Red Cross donations often do not pay for the replacement of assistive devices and home modifications.

“It is essential that these organizations come together in the wake of recent flooding to ensure the needs of individuals with disabilities are met,” said Patti Lind, Co-Director, Relief for Iowans with Disabilities. “These grants are one piece of the puzzle in helping individuals with disabilities in the affected areas put their lives back together.”

The organizations are raising funds for grants that will cover items such as Medicare required co-pays, assistive technology, ramps and any other assistive devices or equipment that support an individual's daily needs. Qualified applicants will be individuals with disabilities living in low-income, designated disaster areas throughout Iowa.

To apply or make an online donation, go to the Iowa Able Foundation web site ([www.iowaable.org](http://www.iowaable.org)). You can also mail donations to:

Relief for Iowans with Disabilities  
C/O Iowa Able Foundation  
410 North 18<sup>th</sup> St.  
Centerville, IA 52544

For more information, call 1-888-222-8943 (extension 224) or email Iowa Able at [floodrelief@abilitiesfund.org](mailto:floodrelief@abilitiesfund.org).

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*The Iowa Able Foundation, a non-profit entity, helps Iowans with disabilities, their families and older Iowans to obtain adaptive devices, equipment, home modifications, vehicle modifications and business funding through its loan program.*

*The Iowa Program for Assistive Technology is a program of the Center for Disabilities and Development at the University of Iowa that improves access to assistive technology through a variety of programs, training and information and referral.*

*Iowa's Developmental Disabilities Council is a federally funded state agency advocating for Iowans with disabilities to receive the support and services they need to live in communities of their choice.*

Together, with their help, and the help of all Iowans, I know that we can improve the lives of those individuals and families living with the everyday challenges of autism.”

The Iowa Legislature created the Autism Council earlier this year to give Autism advocates a voice in the public policy process. The Council is to make recommendations on things that could be done to expand opportunities for people with Autism.

The Iowa Department of Public Health will staff the Council, whose members will serve for three years. Below is information on the Council and its members:

**Function:** The council will focus on addressing the unmet needs of individuals with varying severity levels of autism, submitting an annual report on December 15 of each year. The council will address the following: Early identification and appropriate intervention, integration and coordination of support systems, general and special education services, in-home services, training, enhancement of community agency responsiveness, financing options, data collection.

**Ex-Officio (Non-Voting) Members:** Six ex-officio members representing the Department of Education, Department of Public Health, Department of Human Services, Governor’s Developmental Disabilities Council, Division of Insurance, and State Board of Regents.

**Members Appointed by Governor (the legislation identified the “types” of people to be appointed – family members, persons with autism, professionals, insurance rep, etc):**

- ☆ Katherine Byers (Indianola)  
*Family Member*
- ☆ Joshua Cobbs (Sioux City)  
*Family Member*
- ☆ Joshua Kohles (Elma)  
*Person with Autism*
- ☆ Keith Gatrost (Center Point)  
*Service Provider*
- ☆ Ghada Hamdan-Allen (Bettendorf)  
*Autism Researcher*

- ☆ Pamela Parker (Urbandale)  
*Family Member*
- ☆ Steven Muller (Pella)  
*Expertise in Services*
- ☆ Mary Percival (Des Moines)  
*Mental Health Professional*
- ☆ Dr. Danielle Sharp (West Des Moines)  
*Family Member*
- ☆ Barbara Stineman (Spirit Lake)  
*Teacher, Family Member*
- ☆ Charles Wadle (West Des Moines)  
*Insurance Industry Representative*
- ☆ Patrick Westhof (Ankeny)  
*Service Provider*
- ☆ Cathy Young (Waterloo)  
*Family Member*

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## HEALTH REFORM GROUPS APPOINTED

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced Monday that it has made its initial appointments to the seven key committees created by the Iowa Legislature to help implement the sweeping health care reform legislation passed during the 2008 session.

The seven advisory groups created in House File 2539 (Health Care Reform Bill) were:

- ✓ Clinicians Advisory Panel
- ✓ Direct Care Worker Advisory Council
- ✓ Electronic Health Information Advisory Council and Executive Committee
- ✓ Health and Long-term Care Access Advisory Council
- ✓ Medical Home System Advisory Council
- ✓ Patient Autonomy in Health Care Decisions Pilot Project Advisory Council
- ✓ Prevention and Chronic Care Management Advisory Council

“The Iowa Legislature and Governor Culver have entrusted IDPH with significant responsibilities related to the landmark health care reform legislation passed

this year,” said IDPH Director Tom Newton. “As we move forward, we will rely on a number of partners to develop policy recommendations and plans for implementing the initiatives identified in this legislation. Each of these appointees is aware of how much work lies ahead and is up to the challenge.”

Seventy-one Iowans from across the state have been appointed to serve on these advisory bodies. Other appointments are pending. All appointees bring to the table a wide variety of knowledge and experience to review, analyze, and make recommendations to the Legislature regarding the affordability of health care for Iowans. To learn more about the committees to which IDPH recently appointed members, including the names of the members themselves, visit [www.idph.state.ia.us/hcr\\_committees](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hcr_committees).

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## **BACK TO SCHOOL SPECIAL: Policy Changes & Students with Disabilities**

School has started across the state, and with the new school year comes a new policy change that may impact the learning experience of students with disabilities.

Iowa has now joined a nationwide push to reduce the use of physical force and seclusion in schools to discipline “out of control” children, or those perceived to be a threat to themselves or others.

On September 11, the Iowa Board of Education approved new limits on the use of “timeout” rooms to punish disruptive children, many of whom have physical, cognitive, or behavioral disabilities. These changes to Iowa’s “corporal punishment” law are the first since 1991.

The new rules, which go into effect January 21, 2009, are the product of a four-month study and review by state education regulators. The new rules:

- ✓ Limits the use of “timeout” rooms
- ✓ Requires teachers to get permission from school administrators before confining children in timeout rooms for more than one hour
- ✓ Requires continuous supervision of children being held in timeout rooms
- ✓ Permits timeout rooms to be locked only if they are held manually, or the lock releases automatically if power goes out or alarms go off

- ✓ Requires timeout rooms be safe/suitable for children of varying sizes, ages, and conditions
- ✓ No longer allows timeout rooms to be used for minor infractions
- ✓ Bans some forms of restraint entirely (holding a student facedown, chokeholds, or any use of force that restricts a child’s ability to breathe)
- ✓ Requires school officials contact parents every time such “timeouts” are used
- ✓ Requires school officials document each time restraints are used and reasons for the use

Advocates for students with disabilities and the parents of students with disabilities became increasingly concerned about the overuse of timeout rooms, and began to express this concern to state officials.

Teachers will now be trained on the use of “positive” alternatives to restraints and seclusion, such as talking through disputes with children when possible. Timeout rooms would then become a temporary last resort.

To review the changes, click on the following link (Administrative Law Bulletin) and go to page 1787: [www.legis.state.ia.us/Rules/Current/Bulletin/IAB080618.pdf](http://www.legis.state.ia.us/Rules/Current/Bulletin/IAB080618.pdf).

Future issues of *infoNET* will explore this rule change in more detail, as well as highlight other ongoing educational policy discussions that may affect the learning environments of students with disabilities.

## Reminder!

The names of your *State Senator* and *State Representative* are printed on your mailing label.

These are the people that represent you at the State Capitol in Des Moines, and are the people you should call for help in changing Iowa's laws and policies.

We are not able to identify the names of your legislators if you use a PO Box. If you would like us to include the names of your legislators, please send us your street address.

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If you would like to change your address, receive *infoNET* by e-mail, have a friend receive it, or leave us a comment/suggestion, contact us at:

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