



# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Rod Sullivan, Chairperson  
Pat Heiden, Vice Chairperson

Lisa Green-Douglass  
Royceann Porter  
Janelle Rettig

## 2020 State Legislative Priorities and Issues

As elected officials of Johnson County, the Board of Supervisors believes that we are best able to represent the interests of our constituents regarding matters of local concern. We urge legislators to honor Iowa's long history of "home rule" and keep decision making at the local level whenever possible. In addition, the Board of Supervisors wants legislators to know that cuts to State funding and programming that assists our most vulnerable residents ultimately strains local budgets and results in higher property taxes.

### Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)

Johnson County supports the following legislative changes.

- A moratorium on any new CAFOs until loopholes are closed.
- Modify the Master Matrix to allow county boards of supervisors to have an equal say in approval or denial of construction permits related to animal feeding operations.
- Reduce the 1,000 animal-unit threshold for permitted facilities.
- Clarify what is required for facilities to be considered separate; increase the minimum separation distance required for all structures (not just separate operations).

### County home rule, spending, and local governance

*Unfunded mandates.* The State sets many requirements without a means of compensation. We encourage the legislature to review these requirements and determine if they should be taken over by the State rather than funded by local property taxpayers. Two examples include: Publishing costs and housing state offices at local property taxpayer expense.

*Underfunded mandates.* The fee structure for many user-based services and the issuance of licenses and permits on behalf of the State do not cover the cost of providing the service. As a result, these fees have been subsidized by property taxes for many years. For example: The actual cost to counties to provide a marriage license is more than \$13. Currently, \$4 of the \$35 fee is retained by counties and the remainder is returned to the State.

### Fully fund backfill of commercial and residential cuts

Johnson County has deep concerns about the impact of commercial property tax reform adopted in 2013. A growing percentage of the cost of government has shifted to residential property tax payers. This trend will continue and will be compounded if the State fails to honor its commitments. **We expect the State to honor their promise to maintain the backfill schedule to which they had agreed. We ask the legislature to do no more harm to local government.**

## **Funding for courthouse security, maintenance, and improvements**

The State requires counties to furnish and maintain a facility that serves the justice system and provides a workplace for State employees who work for the courts. Under current law, bonds issued for public buildings are authorized as “essential county purpose” bonds if the cost of the building project does not exceed dollar amounts specified in the Code of Iowa. **Johnson County urges legislators to raise the cap on essential county purpose bonds to at least \$5 million. We would like the legislature to classify courthouse maintenance and upgrades as an essential county purpose. The State should adequately fund court services.**

## **Funding for crisis intervention facilities and operations**

More than 90% of our local law enforcement personnel have been trained in crisis intervention techniques. We are also building a facility to help people with mental illness and substance abuse issues to obtain treatment and avoid spending time in jail or in a hospital emergency room. These efforts require initial resources to develop facilities and programs. **We ask the legislature to define crisis intervention facilities and operations as an essential county purpose, thereby allowing counties to use the debt levy for capital needs and the supplemental levy for operational expenses.**

## **Increase the minimum wage and create a plan to adjust to a livable wage**

Iowa’s minimum wage has not been increased since 2008. In 2015, Johnson County enacted a minimum wage ordinance. At least 10,000 low-wage workers in Johnson County benefitted from the minimum wage increase. In 2017, the legislature took away local control on this issue, which resulted in a wage cut for many of these workers. **Johnson County urges legislators to raise the state-wide minimum wage to \$10.40, index it to inflation, and restore local control to local governments.**

## **Independent boards operating under county authority**

There are three independent boards that operate under the auspices of county government: the Conservation Board, Board of Health, and the Veterans Affairs Commission. The Board of Supervisors approves these budgets and appoints the citizen representatives to these boards. These board members are unelected and therefore not directly accountable to taxpayers. Due to issues of liability and accountability, **Johnson County asks the legislature to appoint an interim committee to examine the governance structure of these independent boards and the related risks to county government of their activities.**

## **Mental health funding and children’s mental health programs**

Mental health regions are working, but their success is predicated on an Iowa Medicaid program that works. The many problems with Iowa Medicaid must be addressed, or the county-funded system will fail as well. The State must end Medicaid privatization. **We strongly oppose any transfer of additional responsibilities from the State to regions without the commitment to provide additional resources.** Without this commitment, the State would be placing an additional burden on local property taxes. **The State must provide the necessary number of psychiatric beds to address acute care needs. The State must address the severe lack of mental health professionals in Iowa, especially those professionals who accept Medicaid.**

## **Johnson County also supports:**

Adjusting the County Attorney salary cap  
Collective bargaining rights  
Decategorization program funding stabilization  
Disclosure of sale prices of real estate included in the sale of LLCs  
Early Childhood Iowa  
Election modernization  
Emergency medical services (EMS) as an essential county service  
Gender balance and gender identity for board and commission appointments  
Improving legal protections for residents of manufactured housing communities  
Increased funding for recreation and conservation  
Increases to the Local Public Health Services Grant  
Increasing the fee for cremation permits  
Increasing the State tobacco tax  
Maintaining jurisdiction of children in juvenile court  
Marijuana reform  
Preserving the Iowa Public Employees Retirement System  
Project labor agreements  
Renewable energy  
Retroactive Medicaid  
Updates to the State Noxious Weed Law

## Johnson County Departments and Offices

Ambulance, 319-356-6013  
Fiona Johnson, Director  
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Assessor—County, 319-356-6078  
Tom Van Buer, County Assessor  
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Assessor—Iowa City, 319-356-6066  
Brad Comer, City Assessor  
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Attorney, 319-339-6100  
Janet Lyness, County Attorney  
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Auditor/Elections, 319-356-6004  
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Board of Supervisors, 319-356-6000  
Mike Hensch, Executive Director  
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Conservation, 319-645-2315  
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Homeland Security and Emergency Management  
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Finance, 319-688-8095  
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Mental Health and Disability Services  
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SEATS, 319-339-6128  
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Secondary Roads, 319-356-6046  
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