



**IOWA  
ASSOCIATION  
OF BUSINESS  
AND INDUSTRY**

# BUSINESS

OCTOBER 2025 MONTHLY

# Iowa Business Leaders Redefine Retirement: From Full Stop to Gradual Transition



STORY ON PAGE 12

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**2025**  
**OCTOBER 14**  
Iowa Manufacturing  
Conference  
ALTOONA

**NOVEMBER 4**  
Webinar: Workers'  
Compensation Webinar  
– Session Four  
VIRTUAL

**NOVEMBER 6**  
Connecting Statewide  
Leaders  
FORT DODGE

**2026**  
**JANUARY 14**  
Legislative Briefing  
and Reception  
DES MOINES

**MARCH 12**  
Business Day in Des  
Moines  
DES MOINES

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tab for details on  
upcoming events.

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**FROM THE CHAIR:**

# Building a Legacy that Lasts

This month's Business Monthly focuses on a topic that touches every leader, every organization, and every community: legacy. What does it mean to look toward retirement or the next phase of life, and how do we ensure that what we've built continues to make an impact?

For many ABI members, legacy is measured not just in years of service, but in the lives touched, the careers built, and the communities strengthened along the way. It's about more than business results—it's about leaving behind

something lasting and meaningful.

As I reflect on this theme, I'm reminded that legacy is not created in one grand gesture. It's built through consistent leadership, mentoring the next generation, and making choices that prioritize long-term success over short-term gain. ABI members do this every day — whether it's family-owned businesses preparing the next generation of leaders, executives mentoring young professionals, or organizations investing in innovation that will benefit Iowa for decades to come.

At ABI, we are proud to celebrate those who have dedicated their careers to strengthening Iowa's business community. Their stories inspire us to think beyond today's challenges and focus on building for tomorrow.

I encourage you to read this month's features, which highlight the journeys of leaders reflecting on what's next and the legacies they leave behind. My hope is that they encourage each of us to think about our own legacy — and how we can continue to shape Iowa's future together. **ABI**



**Kellan Longenecker**  
ABI Chair  
General Mills

**EXPERT ADVICE:**

# Unlocking Generational Wealth: Estate Planning After the Big Beautiful Bill

With the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act ("OBBBA"), estate planning has entered a new era, particularly for business owners. Beginning in 2026, the federal estate, gift, and generation-skipping transfer tax exemption will increase to \$15 million per individual (or \$30 million per married couple). This is more than double what the exemption would have been if the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provisions expired as originally scheduled. Although the exemption no longer appears to be at risk of declining, business owners should still consider the benefit of enacting an estate plan sooner rather than later. The increased exemption allows families to transfer more wealth to the next generation without triggering estate tax, creating a unique opportunity for owners to be-

gin or accelerate succession planning with far less tax exposure.

One of the most effective strategies of transferring wealth involves gifting minority interests in a business. Minority ownership interests are typically valued at a discount due to their lack of ability to control company decisions and the absence of a readily available market. These discounts allow business owners to transfer ownership at a lower appraised value than a proportional share of the company's overall worth. Recapitalizing a business to create and gift non-voting shares enables an owner to transfer a larger percentage of the company's value, while still qualifying for the same discounts. This allows more wealth to be shifted out of an estate without requiring the owner to relinquish control.

However, estate planning is not just about tax minimization; succession planning is essential to ensure the long-term continuity of a business. A thoughtful estate plan aligns tax-effective wealth transfer, ownership transition, and management continuity. These three components reduce future disruption of business operations, preserve the business's value, and ultimately can align the business owner's personal and business goals to secure the legacy of their business.

With changes resulting from the OBBBA, now is the time to review your estate and succession plans. By working with trusted advisors, business owners can take advantage of OBBBA to maximize financial outcomes and ensure business continuity, while cementing a lasting legacy. **ABI**



**Trevor Yuska**  
Financial Analyst  
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**WHAT'S TRENDING:**

# Built to last: Focusing on What Matters

## EMC's Roots in Manufacturing and Contracting

**BY JOSH AUGUST**  
VP – Industry Segments

In 1911, members of the Iowa Manufacturers Association (the predecessor of ABI) championed the state's first workers' compensation laws. They understood the risks their employees faced on the job and the importance of affordable protection for both workers

and employers.

Among them was John A. Gunn, a valve manufacturer from Kellogg, who — along with four fellow board members — took action. That same year, they founded the Employers Mutual Casualty Association, now EMC Insurance. Their vision: Create an insurer that delivered dependable service at fair rates, tailored to the needs of manufacturers and contractors.

Insurance has always been about more than policies and premiums — it's about people, progress, and protecting what

matters most. That belief is at the heart of EMC Insurance. Their vision still drives EMC today.

### A legacy was made

From its beginnings in workers' compensation, EMC has grown into a trusted partner for businesses countrywide. As manufacturers and contractors face new challenges — supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, and rapid advancements like AI and automation—EMC continues to deliver insurance solutions that help businesses stay re-

silient and thrive.

The story of EMC is more than corporate history; it's a reminder of how foresight and collaboration can leave a lasting legacy. Just as those early leaders built protections that shaped an industry, today EMC works alongside ABI members to safeguard businesses, support growth, and strengthen communities.

More than 110 years later, the legacy lives on — rooted in manufacturing, carried forward by innovation, and dedicated to protecting what's ahead. **ABI**

**ELEVATE IOWA:**

# Iowa Manufacturing Leaders Named 2025 Legends in Manufacturing

Four manufacturing leaders from across Iowa have been named 2025 Legends in Manufacturing by the ABI and its Elevate Iowa Manufacturing initiative.

The Legends in Manufacturing Awards recognize individuals whose leadership, innovation, and commitment to workforce and community development have left a lasting mark on Iowa's manufacturing industry. This year's honorees represent companies of all sizes — from small businesses to global enterprises — reflecting the diversity and strength of Iowa manufacturing.



**Kelsey O'Connor**  
ABI  
koconnor@iowaabi.org

- **Under 100 Employees:** Bill Bywater, Economy Advertising Company (Iowa City)
- **100-300 Employees:** Joe Carter, The MARSHALLTOWN Company (Marshalltown)
- **300+ Employees:** R.W. and Mary Nelson, Kemin Industries (Des Moines)
- **Manufacturing Champion:** David Ottavianelli, John Deere (Ret.) (Quad Cities)

Manufacturing remains Iowa's single

largest industry, contributing more than \$43 billion annually to the state's economy. According to ABI President Nicole Crain, honoring these individuals reflects ABI's history and mission: "The founders and leaders of amazing Iowa companies have shaped our state's economy for decades. These honorees embody that legacy and inspire the next generation."

The 2025 Legends in Manufacturing join a distinguished group of past recipients whose contributions have elevated Iowa's reputation as a manufacturing powerhouse. ABI



## CONGRATULATIONS! 2025 IOWA VENTURE AWARD HONOREE

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Iowa Area Development Group established the Iowa Venture Award in 1988 to honor entrepreneurial achievement, innovation, and leadership. The organization and its member-owned electric cooperative, municipal utility and independent telecommunication company members take great pride in presenting the 2025 Iowa Venture Awards. Each recipient has made a significant contribution to their community, our state, and the economy of Iowa.

Visit [www.IADG.com](http://www.IADG.com) to view the **297 honorees** in the **Iowa Venture Award Hall of Fame**.



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COVER STORY FROM PAGE 9

# Iowa Business Leaders Redefine Retirement: From Full Stop to Gradual Transition



BY CHELSEA KEENAN PRIEST

Every day, 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 — according to the Georgetown University Center for Retirement Initiatives — but retirement isn't what it used to be. Instead of immediate gold watches and farewell parties, many are choosing gradual transitions, part-time roles, or encore careers. Two Eastern Iowa business leaders exemplify this shift, trading corner offices not for golf courses, but for travel adventures and selective consulting work.

More people are now choosing to stay in the workforce past the age of 65

— 11.5 million, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A 2023 survey by the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies found:

- More than four in 10 of age 50+ workers (44%) envision transitioning into retirement by reducing work hours with more leisure time to enjoy life (28%) or by working in a different capacity that is less demanding and/or brings greater personal satisfaction (16%).
- Fewer than one in four (23%) plan to immediately stop working when they reach a certain age (16%).

- Eight percent of age 50+ workers have unretired by retiring then coming out of retirement and re-entering the workforce.



KIM AUGSPURGER

For Kim Augspurger, the former owner of Des Moines-based commercial interiors company Saxton, retirement came upon her faster than she anticipated.

She sold her company to competitor Pigott at the end of 2021. The move was spurred by national furniture manufacturer Herman Miller acquiring Knoll — Saxton was aligned with Knoll while Pigott was aligned with Herman Miller, according to Ms. Augspurger.

"I needed an exit strategy and didn't have a great one in place," Ms. Augspurger said. "We had a few options, but none were super far along. It was very important to me that the company wound up in good hands."

When the MillerKnoll acquisition happened, Ms. Augspurger reached out to the owner of Pigott. At the time, Pig-

ott was larger, with more locations and employees. But after Pigott's owner promised Ms. Augspurger he'd find a place for all of her employees at a combined company, she felt comfortable stepping down.

"It's never easy putting two companies together, but both companies had good cultures, good people so our teams fit together pretty easily," she said. "That was important to me. I didn't want to step away and leave some big mess for our clients or my staff."

After the sale, Ms. Augspurger stayed on as a contract employee for about a year and a half to help guide the transition. But as the merger became more settled, her role began to diminish.

"By the time I was done I wasn't super involved," she said. "The first few months were really strange, but I tried to be very gracious. I wasn't in charge any more – my role was to help make the transition, to fold my company into Pigott. But it's different because you're not in charge or making decisions."

Today, Ms. Augspurger is still involved on various boards, including the Iowa Association of Business and Industry.

"It's a nice way to stay involved without having to deal with payroll," she said.

After working at Hubbell Realty Company since 1984 and serving as president and CEO since 2004, Rick Tollakson will be retiring in March 2026. The Des Moines-based company



**RICK TOLLAKSON**

spent 41 years at Hubbell."

As the company continued to grow, new opportunities kept presenting themselves to Mr. Tollakson, which kept him at Hubbell Realty. When Mr. Tollakson started in the mid-1980s, the company had between 60 and 70 associates, he said. Today there's more than 900.

"When I was 50 years old, I told myself I'd retire at 55," Mr. Tollakson said. "But (former President) Jim Hubbell came to me and said 'We've got a problem, because I'm going to retire and you're not.' Of all the goals I've set for myself, I did not accomplish that one. I will be 72 this year."

While at the helm of Hubbell Realty, Mr. Tollakson is most proud of the "extreme builds" his company accomplished. These homes, development centers and other buildings for Iowa nonprofits were built on incredibly expedited timelines, with all labor and supplies donated to those benefiting.

provides commercial construction, development services, property management and home building throughout Iowa and Nebraska.

"I planned to be here for a few years to build a high rise," he said. "Well I've

"Hubbell has a long legacy of substantial growth," Mr. Tollakson said. "I hope that continues, and that I can help." After he retires, Mr. Tollakson will continue to serve on Hubbell's board.

Even with retirement on the horizon, Mr. Tollakson isn't slowing down. His book, "Think Bigger, Lead Better: Eight to Great Principles for Organizational Success" comes out in November.

Both Ms. Augspurger and Mr. Tollakson have used this next phase of their lives to travel with their partners. A Transamerica Institute for Research study found that travel and activities associated with travel encourage healthy aging through encouraging physical activity, social engagement and cognitive stimulation. Regular travel has been shown to reduce mortality risk by 36.6% and lower Alzheimer's risk by up to 47%.

Mr. Tollakson recently traveled to South Africa for a three-week trip, which included two different safaris.

"There's things I want to do and see," he said. "As people age, they start slowing down and can't travel as much."

Ms. Augspurger and her husband have been all over Europe, Canada, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand.

"I told myself I would travel while I had my health," she said. "One person keeps trying to get me to do some consulting, but I can't commit to the schedule." **ABI**

## Esteemed Recognition

Fredrikson is pleased to introduce its newest shareholders in Iowa:

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## FROM THE FOUNDATION:

# Forty Iowans Selected for 2025-26 Leadership Iowa Class

Forty leaders from across Iowa have been selected to participate in the 2025-26 Leadership Iowa program, the state's premier issues-awareness initiative presented by the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) Foundation.

Since its start in 1982, more than 1,500 Iowans have completed the program, representing communities from every corner of the state and a wide variety of industries,

companies, and backgrounds. Leadership Iowa's mission is to educate, inspire, and connect a network of informed leaders while encouraging continued engagement at both local and statewide levels.

The 2025-26 class will take part in monthly two-day sessions held across Iowa, beginning in October and concluding in June. Each session is designed to explore a key issue facing the state

through discussions with subject-matter experts, interactive activities, industry tours, and community experiences.

Host communities for the year include Indianola, Fort Dodge, Cedar Valley, Des Moines, Muscatine, Decatur County and Perry. The session topics this year include an Opening Retreat, Agriculture & Renewable Resources, Workforce & Economic Development,

Government, Manufacturing, Education and Rural Vitality.

The program will conclude with a graduation ceremony during ABI's annual conference next June in Iowa City/Coralville.

Leadership Iowa is made possible through the support of its sponsors. The Presenting Sponsors of the 2025-26 program are EMC Insurance and John Deere. **ABI**

## Leadership Iowa Class of 2025-26 (Communities listed denote work city | home city)

**Colette Atkins**

Kirkwood Community College  
Cedar Rapids | Iowa City

**Clarissa Atwell**

Iowa National Guard  
Johnston | Urbandale

**Amy Bartachek**

Univ. of Iowa, Tippie College of  
Business  
Iowa City | North Liberty

**Christina Bateman**

Vision Atlantic Inc.  
Atlantic | Atlantic

**Gina Bell**

City of Dubuque  
Dubuque | Dubuque

**Jenny Butcher**

Iowa Department of Transportation  
Ames | Ames

**Kristopher Byam**

Great Oaks High School  
Des Moines | Johnston

**Brittney Carstens**

Junior Achievement of the Heartland  
Moline | Long Grove

**Daren Dieleman**

Interstates  
Sioux Center | Sioux Center

**Brian Doyle**

Gallagher  
Cedar Rapids | Mount Vernon

**Kim Failor**

Phelps Uniform Specialists  
Muscatine | Muscatine

**Jennifer Fletcher**

CyncHealth Iowa  
La Vista | Underwood

**Sydney Gangestad**

Dentons Davis Brown  
Des Moines | Johnston

**Joy Greer**

Peel Business Design  
Urbandale | Urbandale

**Ben Hagen**

EMC Insurance  
Des Moines | Pleasant Hill

**Kelli Harms**

Winnebago  
Forest City | Forest City

**Lee Henderson**

BrownWinick Law Firm  
Des Moines | Des Moines

**Megan Holland**

intelligents  
Pella | Ankeny

**Abena Sankofa Imhotep**

Sankofa Literary & Empowerment  
Group  
Des Moines | Des Moines

**Tyler Kamerman**

Many Hands  
Clive | Clive

**Emily Kamish**

Mom's Meals  
Ankeny | Ankeny

**Rachelle Keck**

Grand View University  
Des Moines | Urbandale

**Paul Larsen**

Bankers Trust  
Des Moines | Ankeny

**John Marshall**

MHCS, PC  
West Des Moines | Urbandale

**Kristen McMains**

Musco Lighting  
Oskaloosa | Oskaloosa

**Lucas Meier**

County Bank  
Sigourney | Sigourney

**Todd Milburn**

Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company  
Grinnell | Newton

**Michael Muhlenbruch**

McClure  
Coralville | Iowa City

**Tim Neubauer**

Northwest Bank  
Ames | Gilbert

**Shelley Oltmans**

North Iowa Corridor Economic Dev.  
Corp.  
Mason City | Mason City

**Stacie Osako**

Informatics Inc.  
Cedar Rapids | Cedar Rapids

**Brooke Parziale**

Iowa Finance Authority  
Des Moines | Des Moines

**Greg Piklapp**

Ames Regional Economic Alliance  
Ames | Boone

**David Schenk**

Dordt University  
Sioux Center | Sioux Center

**Zach Schmit**

Covenant Workplace Solutions  
Cedar Rapids | Marion

**Sandi Sommerfelt**

Grow Cedar Valley  
Waterloo | Waterloo

**Mindy Stalker**

Union County Development  
Association  
Creston | Creston

**Kristin Tentinger**

TenCorp Inc.  
Des Moines | Grimes

**Cory Westphal**

Dexter Laundry  
Fairfield | Mount Pleasant

**Margaret Young**

Kemin Industries  
Des Moines | Urbandale

**CLASS CO-CHAIRS**

**Sarah Hruska** (Prestage Foods of Iowa; Fort Dodge) & **Jon Sukup** (Sukup Manufacturing Co.; Sheffield)  
Learn more at [www.Leadershiplowa.com](http://www.Leadershiplowa.com).

# Navigating Uncertainty: A Q&A on Building Business Resilience in a Complex World

BY ZAKK TRAINOR  
Senior Manager

*A version of this article first appeared on EideBailly.com.*

Today's environment is more unpredictable than just a few years ago. The three biggest forces at play are tariff uncertainty, evolving tax legislation, and rapid advances in technology. These factors are changing how companies need to plan, operate, and grow.

Disruption is no longer a surprise — it's a constant. And while we can't control economic cycles, we can choose how ready we are to respond.

## Streamlining Your Operations

**Q: Why do so many change initiatives fail?**

**A:** Research shows that more than two-thirds of planned change projects fall short. The most common culprits? Poor data quality, manual processes, and siloed systems. These inefficiencies prevent leaders from seeing the full picture and reacting with confidence.

**Q: What should businesses focus on to regain control and build operational strength?**

**A:** Focus on what can be controlled. Three key areas are:

- **Cash Flow Clarity:** Understand your true liquidity position. Analyze payables, receivables, and conversion cycles to uncover opportunities to improve working capital. This gives you the agility to respond quickly to disruption.
- **Process Efficiency:** Invest in automation, better reporting, and data integration. Reducing delays and freeing up employee time allows your business to run leaner and smarter.
- **Supply Chain Adaptability:** With shifting tariffs and global instability, you need a supply chain that's built for flexibility. That includes multiple sourcing options and responsive logistics systems.

**Q: Can you give an example of this in action?**

**A:** One construction client needed to modernize their time entry process but didn't want to incur additional software licensing costs. The solution? A custom time entry interface built within their existing Salesforce environment. This gave them real-time visibility into labor costs — without ballooning their budget.

It's a small change with a big impact. Why? Because 93% of business leaders agree: the right data is critical to making the right decisions.

## Building Strong Defenses

**Q: What risks are businesses facing today beyond financial ones?**

**A:** Today's risks go well beyond the balance sheet. In fact, 64% of customers believe companies are reckless with their information. That means data protection and cybersecurity aren't optional — they're part of your brand promise.

**Q: How should companies rethink their approach to risk management?**

**A:** Think of risk management as a continuous state of readiness, not just a once-a-year checklist. That includes:

- **Regular risk assessments:** Understand your exposure across financial, operational, and cybersecurity domains. Run scenario modeling to prepare for potential downturns.
- **Compliance agility:** Stay current with changing tax regulations and reporting standards, which can significantly affect costs and operations.
- **System modernization:** Still running on outdated software? You're not alone. But here's a wake-up call: 60% of businesses spend more than \$2 million annually maintaining legacy systems.

**Q: Where can I find more guidance on this?**

**A:** Take a deeper dive into how to protect your business while positioning for the future here.

**Q: Tax laws are changing constantly. What's the best way to stay ahead?**

**A:** The key is to plan proactively, not reactively. Waiting until legislation is passed can leave you scrambling. Instead, model your decisions based on proposed changes and work closely with tax advisors to understand the implications early.

## Positioning for Sustainable Growth

**Q: What does sustainable growth look like in today's environment?**

**A:** It's not just about expanding — it's about growing intelligently and securely. That starts with:

- **Strategic investments:** Look for acquisitions, technology enhancements, or new market opportunities that will position you ahead of your competitors.
- **Revenue diversification:** Explore new products, services, or customer segments to create multiple revenue streams.
- **Future-focused finance:** Your finance team should be leading, not just reporting. Give them the tools and influence they need to guide your business forward.

**Q: How are finance leaders adapting to these new expectations?**

**A:** Consider this:

- 82% of CFOs are taking on expanded roles, such as overseeing M&A activity
- 50% say forecasting and budgeting improvements are critical to navigating change
- Finance leaders are now three times more likely to drive their company's digital strategy than ever before

That's why it's vital to reassess operational blind spots, stress-test your business model, and make targeted investments in tech and talent that support agility and innovation.

**Q: Where can I learn more about how different industries are tackling these issues?**

**A:** Check out these deep dives:

- **Healthcare:** Strategy Is Patient Care: Connecting Decisions in Healthcare Operations
- **Manufacturing:** Building Agility and Resilience: Essential Strategies for Construction Leaders
- **Construction:** How Manufacturers Can Expand in the Changing Marketplace

## The Future is Here

**Q: What's the bottom line for businesses trying to stay competitive in this complex world?**

**A:** The pace of change isn't slowing. Tariffs, taxes, and technology will continue to evolve. The businesses that thrive will be those that anticipate, not just react. Start by asking yourself:

- Are we ready to respond to the next tax or tariff shift, without scrambling?
- Do we have the systems and talent to act on real-time data?
- Are we investing in what will move us forward — or just maintaining the status quo?

**Q: What's the call to action for leaders today?**

**A:** The businesses that thrive will be those that anticipate, not just react. Make sure your business is ready to perform, protect, and prosper — no matter what comes next.

This means:

- Prioritizing data visibility
- Automating for efficiency and scalability
- Preparing your teams for strategic roles
- Making smart investments in resilience and growth •

## CAPITOL BUSINESS:

Iowa's Tax Policy Reforms  
Support Life After Career

This month's Business Monthly highlights the transition from career to what some call "life after career." With Iowans living longer, healthier lives, the traditional idea of retirement is changing. More individuals are continuing to contribute to their communities—through volunteerism, civic leadership, mentorship, and philanthropy—well into what was once considered retirement.

Recognizing this, ABI has long advocated for policies that make Iowa an attractive place to live throughout every stage of life, including these post-career years. Thanks to recent reforms, Iowa is now among the most tax-friendly states for retirees.

In 2022, with the passage of Senate File 2317, Iowa made sweeping changes to its tax code:

- **Retirement Income Exemption** – All retirement income — including pensions, IRAs, and 401(k)s — is now exempt from state income tax.
- **Support for Employee-Owned Companies** – Income from the sale of Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) shares is also exempt, a critical incentive for those who helped build employee-owned businesses.
- **Farmer Tax Equity** – Special provisions ensure fairness for

Iowa's agricultural community. Income from renting farmland held for at least 10 years is treated as retirement income and exempt from tax. Additionally, when a farmer retires and sells farm equipment or liquidates a livestock operation, those transactions are non-taxable.

While Iowa has not eliminated income taxes altogether, the state has transitioned to a flat 3.8% rate — one of the lowest in the country. This makes Iowa less vulnerable to losing late-career professionals and retirees to states with no income tax, where individuals often relocate for "six months and a day" to avoid state-level taxes.

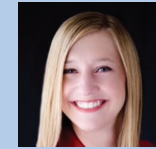
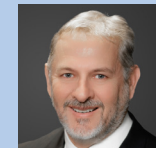
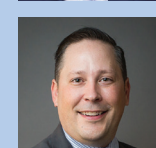
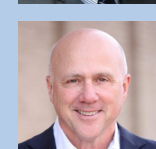
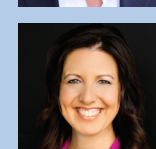
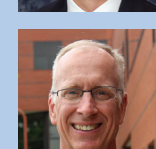
By reducing the incentive to leave, these reforms keep parents closer to children and grandchildren and allow retirees to continue investing their time, talent, and resources locally. Communities benefit from their leadership in nonprofits, civic organizations, cultural amenities, and mentorship of the next generation of Iowans.

Iowa's tax reforms are about more than just dollars — they're about people. As more Iowans choose to remain rooted here during life after career, our communities gain strength, stability, and the invaluable wisdom of individuals who still have much to give. **ABI**



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The Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) has been the voice of Iowa business since 1903. Its mission is to provide a strong, unified voice to business and industry on issues affecting Iowa employers. ABI is comprised of member companies representing all industries and sizes in Iowa's 99 counties. ABI members employ more than 330,000 Iowans.

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