



**IOWA
ASSOCIATION
OF BUSINESS
AND INDUSTRY**

BUSINESS

NOVEMBER 2025 MONTHLY

Year in Review: New Leadership, Statewide Outreach and Policy Wins



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2025 NOVEMBER 6 Connecting Statewide Leaders FORT DODGE	JANUARY 14 Leadership Iowa Alumni Dinner DES MOINES
2026 JANUARY 14 Legislative Briefing and Reception DES MOINES	MARCH 12 Business Day in Des Moines DES MOINES

Visit www.iowaabi.org and click the "Events" tab for details on upcoming events.

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Learn more about how ABI membership could benefit your company by visiting www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi.

FROM THE CHAIR:

Reflecting on Progress, Planning for the Future

As this Year in Review edition of the Business Monthly shows, ABI continues to strengthen its role as a trusted resource and unified voice for Iowa business. From advancing major policy initiatives to expanding member engagement and launching statewide programs like the Elevate Iowa Manufacturing Tour, this year has demonstrated the power of working together.

Our organization's success is built on partnership—between business leaders, policymakers, and communities. Whether it's connecting members with national partners like the U.S. Chamber of Com-

merce and the National Association of Manufacturers or helping Iowa companies navigate change, ABI continues to serve as an anchor and an advocate for progress.

At the same time, we know that sustaining this momentum requires a clear vision for the future. That's why ABI and the ABI Foundation are embarking on a strategic planning process to guide our work over the next three years. We've engaged a respected consulting firm to help us align our priorities, gather meaningful input, and set a strong foundation for long-term success. Member feedback has already been submitted and we look

forward to taking a deep dive into that data in the weeks ahead.

This effort is about ensuring ABI remains forward-thinking and responsive to our members' needs. It's an opportunity to reaffirm what we do best—and explore how we can continue to drive growth, innovation, and opportunity across Iowa.

As we reflect on the past year and plan for what's next, I want to thank you—our members—for your commitment, leadership, and trust. ABI's strength comes from you, and together, we're building an even brighter future for Iowa business. **ABI**



Kellan Longenecker

ABI Chair
General Mills

ABI FOUNDATION:

A Year of Leadership, Learning, and Lasting Impact

As the ABI Foundation concludes its program year and embarks on a new year with Leadership Iowa, we look forward to strengthening partnerships and continuing to serve students, individuals, and organizations throughout 2026.

In 2025, Business Horizons, our five-day immersive program for high school students, welcomed 66 participants from across the Midwest to Drake University's campus in July. Before and after the program, students completed surveys reflecting on their experience. Many reported gaining new knowledge and skills, developing a sense of belonging and accomplishment, and forming lasting friendships with peers from other schools.

Throughout the week, students not only collaborated to launch their own

start-up ventures but also visited local organizations across a range of industries. These visits allowed them to meet with business leaders, ask questions, and explore the many career opportunities available in Iowa. Notably, 87% of participants said the program improved their understanding of Iowa businesses and helped them think more clearly about their future paths.

Leadership Iowa University took place in early August, bringing together 20 college students and interns representing a variety of Iowa companies. The program focuses on helping participants strengthen their personal and professional brands while discovering the many career and leadership opportunities available right here in Iowa.

An impressive 93% of participants

reported that they now have a better understanding of how to create positive change within their organizations and communities.

Tracy Ngo, a student at Drake University, shared "Leadership Iowa University is such a great experience for college students like us as we get closer to entering the workforce. We gained lessons that will have a lasting impact on our lives and learned so much about Iowa's economy and its endless opportunities in entrepreneurship."

The ABI Foundation is proud to continue empowering and supporting the future leaders of Iowa's workforce. If you're interested in sponsorship opportunities or volunteering during the program, we'd love to connect with you! **ABI**



Anna Mable

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CAPITOL BUSINESS:

ABI Members Bring Iowa's Voice to Washington, D.C.

Members of ABI traveled to Washington, D.C., September 16–18 for the bi-annual D.C. Fly-In, connecting directly with Iowa's congressional delegation and federal partners on key policy issues.

Over three days, ABI members met with U.S. Senators Joni Ernst and Charles Grassley and Representatives Marianne Miller-Meeks, Randy Feenstra, Ashley Hinson, and Zach Nunn. Discussion topics ranged from workforce development and tax policy to infrastructure and trade — all critical to sustaining Iowa's strong business climate.

The delegation also attended briefings with the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the Business-Industry Political Action Committee (BIPAC), and the U.S. Small Business Administration, gaining insight into national policy trends that affect Iowa businesses.

The Fly-In is an important opportunity for our members to build relationships with policymakers and advocate for commonsense policies that support Iowa's economy. However, it is just one part of ABI's robust public policy engagement. Members also shape policy through committees, legislative events, political action, and voter engagement.

Public Policy Committees: Members help develop ABI's annual Business Agenda, which guides advocacy during the legislative session. Committees cover employment and workforce, workplace and product safety, economic growth, environment, and tax policy, giving members a platform to bring issues forward and collaborate on solutions.

Legislative Events: ABI hosts signature events like the Legislative Briefing



Brad Hartkopf

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and Reception in January and Business Day on the Hill in March. Monthly Legislative Update Teleconferences and regional meetings provide members with timely updates and opportunities to weigh in on pressing issues.

Political Action: Through the Iowa Industry Political Action Committee (IIPAC) and the Iowans for Jobs Initiative, members support candidates who understand the importance of a pro-business climate. Building relationships around a strong business climate helps position ABI as a trusted voice for important policies effecting our membership.

ABI's D.C. Fly-In shows how members can make their voices heard at the federal level. Combined with committee work, legislative events, and political action, ABI provides a full spectrum of opportunities for members to actively influence the policies shaping Iowa's business climate. **ABI**



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COVER STORY FROM PAGE 11

Year in Review: New Leadership, Statewide Outreach and Policy Wins



BY CHELSEA KEENAN PRIEST

With new leadership at the helm, a renewed focus on outreach and education through a statewide RV tour, and active advocacy on major policy issues, 2025 marked a major year for Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI).

Nicole Crain took over as the organization's president in January. Ms. Crain — who served as ABI's executive vice president since 2019 — stepped into the role after ABI's long-time president Mike Ralston retired at the end of 2024.

"I came in January 1," Ms. Crain said. "There's a new federal administration, there's talks about trade and tariffs, there's legislation that we're defending against on behalf of members. There were just a lot of things all at once and it was great to see how members leaned in."

"If someone were to have asked me 'what do you think the first six months will look like' I don't think my answer would have been a global trade war," she added. "I think it's so reflective of the climate we're all in now. There is a lot of uncertainty, there is the need to pivot quickly and I think it really highlights the need for organizations like ABI."

Ms. Crain said ABI has seen an increase in both new members and event attendance, adding the organization has really solidified its role as a resource for Iowa business. ABI leadership has strengthened relationships with national partners, like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers to educate and inform ABI members about what's going

on at a federal level.

"(Members) are interested in having those real conversations 'this is what we're seeing in our business, what are you seeing and how are you managing it,'" said Meg Schneider, ABI's vice president of strategic initiatives and member engagement. "In times of change, there's a lot of value in being anchored to an organization like ours that can help you digest trends and data, and help manage that information flow and also filter out the noise."

This year, ABI launched a new initiative to promote Iowa manufacturers and highlight career opportunities. The Elevate Iowa Manufacturing Tour traveled across the state, making 20 different stops at businesses, colleges and high schools. It brought together elected officials, business leaders and community members to learn about the state's manufacturing industry, which employs more than 200,000 and adds \$43 billion to Iowa's economy.

"There were lots of great conversations and connections," Ms. Schneider said. "The tour helps communities feel pride but also demonstrates the breadth of career opportunities."

Students and their parents don't always understand all of the career pathways manufacturing offers, Ms. Schneider said. The RV tour helped tell the story and give students an opportunity to explore potential careers.

"One thing we realized," Ms. Crain said, "is that we need to start educating students sooner than high school."

One way to do that is through a board game aimed at grades 4-9. The

Manufacturing Institute, part of the National Association of Manufacturers, lets kids have hands-on experience with 3D printing, robotics and other crucial skills. ABI recently received a grant from Union Pacific to get the game into Iowa schools. Ms. Schneider said they've only been using it for about a month and she's excited to see what they'll be able to accomplish next year.

One major challenge and opportunity the organization faced was in a legislative fight over employer health care costs. After advocating against and providing preferred fixes to a bill that sought to address pharmacy price controls ABI and other business and labor groups filed a federal lawsuit challenging the new law in June.

Proponents of the law claimed the focus was to increase transparency for PBM activity, support smaller, independent pharmacies, and reduce prescription drug costs. But ABI and other business groups argued it would impose burdensome regulatory changes and increase health care costs for individuals and businesses across the state.

The law is currently winding its way through the court system. A federal judge put a temporary hold on it, but the Iowa Insurance Division, the government agency tasked with implementing the law, has appealed the decision.

"We support small, independent pharmacies" said JD Davis, vice president of public policy for ABI. "ABI members are served from these types of pharmacies and we want to keep them going. But this bill is much more costly than just helping small, rural independent pharmacies."

Public Policy Wins

ABI remained deeply active in the legislative and regulatory arenas in 2025. Its policy agenda focused on enabling business growth, managing workforce and employment issues, and tax reform. Highlights include:

Governor's unemployment insurance premium reform bill - The legislation cuts the taxable wage base in half from \$39,500 to \$19,500, minimizing the tax rates businesses pay. It's estimated to provide nearly \$1.2 billion in relief while maintaining the solvency and health of the unemployment insurance trust fund.

Like any insurance policy, it's important to make sure the correct amount of premiums are being collected to appropriately serve the people who need benefits, said Mr. Davis. The change in legislation does not impact the amount of money those who are unemployed are able to collect in benefits, he added, but the trust fund now better reflects the current workforce environment as the amount of time Iowans are unemployed has dropped from about 16 weeks to 10 weeks.

"ABI, after years of working with Iowa Workforce Development to help people remain in the workforce, is pleased that steps were taken to right size the unemployment trust fund, so that employers can put more resources into their businesses and workforce while also safeguarding the unemployed," Mr. Davis said.

Drug and alcohol testing reform - The legislation flips the burden of proof

from the employer to the employee to prove the employer violated the statute. It modernizes communication methods regarding the exchange of testing results and eliminates subjectivity by ensuring employers can define certain jobs as a "safety sensitive position."

The purpose of random drug testing, Mr. Davis said, is to keep workforces and workplaces safe. This law helps modernize the state's random drug testing policy while also decreasing the risk of litigation for employers.

IEDA Tax Credit Bill - The legislation overhauls the Iowa Economic Development Authority's business incentive tax credits. Key features of the bill include expanding the workforce housing tax credit, capping the new research and development tax credit and establishing a tax credit program for activities directly related to capital expenditures of an eligible business.

"There's now a lot more predictability for both the taxpayer and the tax collector," Mr. Davis said. "This is a great example of the government working together with the private sector to improve the administration and the use of a valuable tool."

Property tax reform and relief - While this bill did not make it out of its Senate committee and died in the House, Mr. Davis is pleased with the progress. "So many times people see wins and losses as a signature from the governor," he said. "But big reform takes education." The bill looks to provide property tax relief for not only residents but commercial and industrial businesses as well.

"This has really been an attempt to get inclusive reform done," Mr. Davis said. "State lawmakers are really trying to figure out how to solve a core problem with property taxes. We are already having conversations with policymakers on how to approach a 2026 effort, and we think the process is working to really get down to what needs to be done." **ABI**



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ELEVATE IOWA:

Inaugural Elevate Iowa Manufacturing Tour a Resounding Success

The Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) celebrated manufacturing across the state with the inaugural Elevate Iowa Manufacturing Tour, a two-week initiative that culminated in record attendance at the ABI Manufacturing Conference. The tour highlighted the industry's vital role in Iowa's economy and brought together business leaders, elected officials, and workforce champions in communities statewide.

A Tour That Made an Impact

Over 20 stops showcased Iowa manufacturers and workforce training centers, drawing more than 500 Iowans who signed the "RV" in support of advancing manufacturing in the state. These visits provided a hands-on look at the innova-

tion, skill, and dedication fueling Iowa's manufacturing sector.

Seventeen elected officials joined the celebration, demonstrating bipartisan support for Iowa manufacturing, including Governor Kim Reynolds, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, several state senators and representatives, and Des Moines Mayor Connie Boesen. Three agency directors also participated: Debi Durham (Iowa Economic Development Authority and Iowa Finance Authority Director), Beth Townsend (Iowa Workforce Development), and Kayla Lyon (Iowa Department of Natural Resources). Their presence underscored the collaboration between government and industry in supporting Iowa's manufacturing workforce and economic growth.

Highlights from the ABI Manufacturing Conference

The tour concluded with the ABI Manufacturing Conference, which welcomed over 380 attendees, including industry executives, emerging leaders, and workforce development experts. The conference featured a business leaders panel, where executives shared insights on innovation, talent retention, and strategies for navigating the challenges and opportunities facing Iowa manufacturers today.

Attendees also heard from keynote speaker Eric Termuende, who emphasized that manufacturing is one of the industries experiencing the fastest pace of change. He explored how leaders can build incredible teams capable of adapting, evolving, and thriving, particularly

as AI and other technological advances reshape the way work is done. Mr. Termuende highlighted that despite rapid change, trust, clarity, and connection remain the most important competitive advantages for organizations seeking to succeed in today's environment.

Manufacturing: Driving Iowa's Economy

Manufacturing continues to lead Iowa's economy, contributing the largest share to the state's GDP. The Elevate Iowa Manufacturing Tour and conference highlighted the sector's ongoing importance while celebrating the people, companies, and communities that support Iowa's manufacturing workforce and drive innovation across the state. ABI



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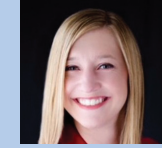
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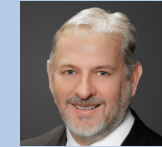
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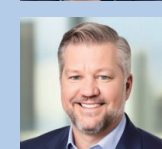
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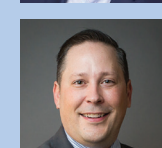
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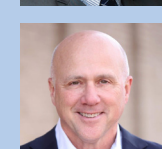
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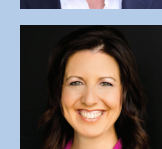
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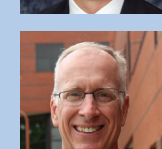
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The Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) has been the voice of Iowa business since 1903. Its mission is to provide a strong, unified voice to business and industry on issues affecting Iowa employers. ABI is comprised of member companies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

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