



**IOWA
ASSOCIATION
OF BUSINESS
AND INDUSTRY**

BUSINESS

JANUARY 2026 MONTHLY

2026 ABI Legislative Preview



STORY ON PAGE 14

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 23
ABI Legislative Update
(Members Only)
VIRTUAL
Continues every other Friday during session.

FEBRUARY 20
Registration Open:
Taking Care of Business
Conference

MARCH 5
Connecting Statewide Leaders
MUSCATINE

MARCH 11
Business Day in Des Moines
DES MOINES

MARCH 16
Nominations Open:
Coolest Thing Made in Iowa

APRIL 6
Nominees Announced:
Coolest Thing Made in Iowa

JUNE 2-4
Taking Care of Business
Conference
CORALVILLE & IOWA CITY

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

INSIDE

FROM THE CHAIR: Kellan Longenecker	12
ABI FOUNDATION: A Year of Leadership	13
CAPITOL BUSINESS: Q&A with Bobby Kaufmann.....	16
WHAT'S TRENDING: Jack Carra.....	17

MEET ABI'S NEWEST MEMBERS

Visit our newest members' websites, and see how their products and services can benefit you.

- Crawford Trucking | crawfordtrucking.com
- Comcast | comcast.com
- Iowa Wolves | iawolves.com
- VSP Vision | vsp.com
- Garcia Flooring | garciaflooringinc.jobbersites.com
- Kossuth / Palo Alto County Economic Development Corporation | kpacedc.com
- EOS Worldwide - Michelle Skogerson | eosworldwide.com
- Pyra Logistics | pyralogistics.com

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

FROM THE CHAIR:

Preparing for the Year Ahead

As this month's Business Monthly looks ahead to the 2026 legislative session, it's a good reminder that preparation is often just as important as outcomes. For ABI and our members, success begins well before the session convenes — through listening, collaboration, and thoughtful planning.

One of ABI's greatest strengths is the way our members work together to identify the issues most broadly affecting Iowa employers. Through ongoing conversations, committee meetings, and engagement across the state, ABI gathers real-world insight that helps inform our work and ensures member perspectives are well understood.

This issue's cover story offers a closer look at that process. It reflects the input, experience, and insight shared by ABI members, along with the work of our staff to stay closely connected to the challenges and opportunities facing businesses in the year ahead. That approach allows ABI to provide timely information, context, and support as the legislative session unfolds — helping members stay focused on growth and competitiveness.

We're also preparing for another important milestone. Planning is underway and the agenda is beginning to take shape for the 2026 Taking Care of Business Conference, taking place June 2–4

in Iowa City and Coralville. Registration will open next month, and I encourage you to watch for details and make plans to join us.

As chair, I'm proud of the role ABI plays in convening leaders, sharing trusted insights, and creating space for constructive dialogue. This work is about supporting a strong and competitive business environment for Iowa.

I encourage you to spend time with this month's issue and learn more about the preparation and collaboration happening across our organization. Together, we're positioning Iowa's business community for a successful year ahead. ABI



Kellan Longenecker

ABI Chair
General Mills

Leaders in engineering and innovation.

IMEG has built a global reputation for engineering high-performance buildings and infrastructure using forward-thinking solutions.

We believe that together we create positive outcomes for people, communities, and our planet.

- 100+ Locations Nationwide
- 3,000 Team Members / 250 Local
- QC Headquartered
- Full-Service Engineering & Surveying
- Building Design & Infrastructure
- Sustainability & Energy Solutions
- Consulting & Advisory Services

IMEG

IMEGCORP.COM

The Rawlings Experience, St. Louis, MO | 2025 ICSC Global Design & Development Gold Award

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 Uni-

versity, 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**



Celebrate our great state's
creativity, innovation, and talent by nominating and voting
for your favorite made-in-Iowa products!

Nominations Open March 16

Nominations and voting
are open to the public

Your product could be named the
2026 Coolerest Thing Made in Iowa!

Presented by:



IOWA ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY



MidWestOne Bank



Supporting Iowa's Industry from the Ground Up

From design to construction and ongoing support, Terracon helps Iowa's manufacturing and industrial projects grow strong, efficient, and built to last.

Let's make 2026 the best year yet!

Quad Cities **Cedar Rapids**
(563) 355-0702 (319) 366-8321

Terracon.com/iowa



Explore with us

- Facilities
- Environmental
- Geotechnical
- Materials

2026 ABI Legislative Preview

BY CHELSEA KEENAN PRIEST

With the 2026 legislative session now underway, the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) has a full agenda, advocating for legislation to ensure Iowa companies can continue to thrive while also attracting new businesses to the state.

The organization, which represents businesses across all industries in Iowa, is focusing its attention on workforce solutions, tax policy, and regulatory reform.

"We're focused on the fundamentals that help businesses succeed in Iowa," said Nicole Crain, president of ABI. "Workforce, taxes and regulation are always at the core of those conversations, and we'll be actively engaged wherever those issues come up during the session."

Workforce Challenges and Solutions

Attracting, retaining, and upskilling Iowa's workforce remains a top priority for ABI in 2026. Iowa businesses operate in a tight labor market — with the state's labor force participation rate around 67% and unemployment rate under 4%. A continued legislative focus on workforce support would strengthen Iowa's ability to recruit, retain and develop talent critical to growth, ABI leadership said.

"Before the pandemic hit, Iowa had a workforce participation rate that was the envy of the country. We are bouncing back but there are barriers," said JD Davis, vice president of public policy for ABI.

Access to affordable childcare and housing tops the list, Mr. Davis said. Several solutions have been implemented since 2020 to help Iowa's workforce, but there's still work to be done to address affordability, accessibility, and sustainability.



NICOLE CRAIN

"Is there a best practice that's happening somewhere in Iowa?" Mr. Davis said. "Part of the job of ABI is to be reflective of what policymakers are thinking about, and perfecting what we already have that's working."

The organization is also focused on expanding training programs and work-based learning opportunities that link employers with students and Iowans looking for a job. There is a finite number of employees in Iowa, Mr. Davis said, so adding skills to the workforce helps employers get more from their workers and helps employees get more from their careers.

ABI has been working to solve the skills gap for years, added Ms. Crain.

"We've invited legislators to learn about manufacturing, to come to schools and community college campuses to see what we're doing to get students ready," said Ms. Crain. "Part of our role is educating legislators about how our members are part of the solution — not just coming to them and asking for money."

Tax Policy and Competitiveness

Building on last session's progress, ABI continues to advocate for tax policy that enhances Iowa's competitive edge, including property tax relief and maintaining coupling with federal tax law changes that encourage growth.

"They've been at (property tax reform) for three sessions," said Mr. Davis, adding he is hopeful this is the year for a solution. "Property taxes are over-ripe for reform," he said. "But let's not just shift the burden from one group to another. Relief doesn't come at the expense of someone else."

ABI supports legislation that will provide relief for not only residents but commercial and industrial businesses as well.

"We have the same players in place who have been doing lots of work on this for years now. I'm hopeful we will figure out how to get something done," said Mr. Davis. "But this is an election year, so there will be an impulse to do something that has great presentation value but may not get everything done. We hope they can do something with a long-term positive effect."

ABI also encourages Iowa to stay aligned with federal tax reform gains, such as short-term incentives and permanent tax cuts.

"The federal reconciliation bill, or the 'One Big Beautiful Bill' has notable provisions that are extremely beneficial to businesses of all sizes," said Brad Hartkopf, senior director of public policy for ABI. "These are good drivers for investment that will help businesses hire more and make commitments to long-term investments."

While some states, including Illinois, have opted to decouple from federal tax provisions to bolster state revenues, Iowa has so far remained aligned with federal tax law. Mr. Hartkopf said the Iowa Department of Revenue estimates the bill would have a short-term budget impact of about \$430 million in the current fiscal year.

ABI remarked that the federal reconciliation bill has allowed the country to continue on a growth trajectory, even amidst geopolitical uncertainty.

"Other states are making it harder for businesses to grow. Staying coupled with the federal law will put Iowa at a competitive advantage when it comes to new business creation, expansion of existing businesses and business location decisions, he said.





BRAD HARTKOPF

“The federal reconciliation bill, or the ‘One Big Beautiful Bill’ has notable provisions that are extremely beneficial to businesses of all sizes. These are good drivers

for investment that will help businesses hire more and make commitments to long-term investments.”

Regulatory Modernization and Reform

Regulatory reform remains a cornerstone of ABI’s public policy agenda, including streamlined permitting processes, elimination of outdated or redundant regulations, and more collaborative rulemaking with state agencies.

“There is never a year when members aren’t interacting with the state government in some form,” Mr. Davis said. “That relationship never stops, and we have built up a pretty good rolodex to make sure things work.”

ABI will be active throughout the session with events designed to keep members informed and engaged, including:

- Legislative briefing and reception (Jan. 14) — strategic networking and priority overview.
- Weekly legislative updates providing real-time insight into bill movement during session.
- Business Day in Des Moines (March 11) — a key advocacy day connecting business leaders directly with legislative leadership. ABI



JD DAVIS

“There is never a year when members aren’t interacting with the state government in

some form. That relationship never stops, and we have built up a pretty good rolodex to make sure things work.”



Considering an expansion or new location?

PARTNER WITH IADG

Technical Assistance & Data Resources

Available Sites & Buildings

Financial Incentive Packaging

WWW.IADG.COM | 800-888-4743



AVAILABLE SITES



AVAILABLE BUILDINGS



PROJECT LOCATIONS

CAPITOL BUSINESS:

Q&A with House Majority Leader Bobby Kaufmann

Q: This is your first legislative session as House Majority Leader. Explain to readers what the role of the Majority Leader is and how you plan to execute that over the next several months.

A: The Majority Leader's role is to set the agenda for House debate, manage debate on the floor, and ensure that our caucus is unified and effective in advancing priorities that matter to Iowans. It also means working closely with the Speaker, committee chairs, and members to move good policy forward in a thoughtful and disciplined way.

Over the next several months, my focus will be on clear communication, steady leadership, and follow-through. I want to make sure members have the support they need, that our process is transparent and efficient, and that we remain focused on delivering results—especially on issues like property tax relief, public safety, and protecting private property rights.

Q: Before becoming Majority Leader, you served as Chair of the Ways & Means Committee... With everyone focused on this topic in 2026, what are your goals for property tax reform?

Iowa has made tremendous progress improving our overall tax climate, and I'm proud of the work we've done on income, unemployment, and inheritance taxes. Property taxes are the next major challenge, and they are understandably front-of-mind for homeowners, farmers, and businesses across the state.

Our caucus goal is to provide meaningful, sustainable property tax relief while maintaining predictability for local governments. That means focusing on reforms that slow the growth of property taxes, improve transparency, and ensure taxpayers understand where their dollars are going. We need a system that is fair, competitive, and doesn't punish Iowans simply for owning a home, farm, or business.

Q: Will property tax reform discussions include the streamlining of local services to eliminate cost pressures on local governments?

That conversation is an important part of the overall discussion. Property taxes are driven largely by local spending, so if we want long-term relief, we need to look at ways to reduce cost pressures on cities, counties, and school districts.

That could include encouraging shared services, reduce unfunded mandates, and modernizing how local governments operate. The goal is not to undermine local control, but to ensure taxpayer

dollars are being used as efficiently as possible.

Q: Finding qualified employees for open jobs continues to be difficult... Do you anticipate legislation to address these and other barriers to employment?

Workforce challenges remain a real issue for Iowa employers. Housing affordability, child-care availability, and workforce participation are all connected, and we need to continue taking a holistic approach.

I anticipate ongoing legislative efforts to expand access to affordable childcare, encourage workforce housing development, and remove barriers that keep people out of the workforce. Making Iowa an affordable place to live and raise a family is critical to attracting and retaining workers.

In the Iowa House, we have also made it a priority to refocus our higher education system on filling Iowa's workforce needs. I see that continuing to be a focus during this legislative session as we work to ensure we are training and retaining the next generation of workers in Iowa.

Q: An important factor in making our state more competitive is enhancing the state's legal climate... Can you talk a bit about that bill and why it's important for it to become law in 2026?

This case is an example of the federal government creating an impossible legal environment for an American company that makes their product right here in Iowa. The federal government writes the labeling requirements for a company, and then that company gets sued repeatedly for following those requirements. It's an unacceptable example of the federal government bureaucracy's incompetence and I believe it's an important issue that must be addressed this legislative session. However, as with all things in the Iowa House, we must reach 51 yes votes within our caucus for me to bring the bill forward as Majority Leader.

Q: Iowa's reserve funds are full... Can you comment on the state of Iowa's budget and then how might those reserve dollars be utilized?

Iowa is in a very strong fiscal position. Since taking the majority, Iowa House Republicans have produced a balance budget, reduced taxes, and still maintained healthy reserves. That puts us in an excellent budget position moving forward.

For years, Iowans were overpaying with their taxes and the state was collecting so much money that our reserve funds were at their stat-



Bobby Kaufmann
House Majority Leader

utory maximums and our taxpayer relief fund had reached over \$4 billion. We don't believe it's right for the government to be sitting on so much money that could be put back in the hands of Iowans and in turn being spent in Iowa's economy. So, we cut income taxes to a flat rate of 3.8% and created a responsible plan to navigate a temporary decrease in state revenues through payments from the Taxpayer Relief Fund. Additional reserve funds exist to protect taxpayers during economic downturns, putting Iowa in an even stronger, steadier position moving forward.

Q: Mandates in health care can increase costs... Do you expect any health care mandates to be enacted in 2026?

I am generally cautious about new health care mandates because they often increase costs for employers and employees alike. Any proposal should be carefully evaluated to ensure it does not unintentionally drive-up premiums or reduce access to care.

Our focus should remain on affordability, flexibility, and access, rather than adding requirements that could make coverage more expensive.

Q: When the gavel falls on the 2026 Session, how do you hope it is remembered?

I hope the 2026 Session is remembered as one where we delivered real results for Iowans—lowering property taxes, strengthening public safety by cracking down on career criminals, and protecting private property rights.

Above all, I want it to be seen as a session where Iowa House Republicans governed responsibly, stayed focused on the priorities of everyday Iowans, and continued moving Iowa in the right direction. ABI

WHAT'S TRENDING:

Impacts of Tariffs on the Insurance Industry

The tariffs imposed on imported and exported goods beginning in the first half of 2025 have had significant ripple effects across multiple sectors, including the insurance industry. While the immediate impact appears to be rising product prices, the underlying consequences are far more complex.

One of the most notable areas affected is the property and casualty (P&C) segment. Tariffs on construction materials and components have driven up project costs, which in turn increase repair expenses and ultimately raise claim values. This chain reaction underscores the interconnected nature of tariffs and insurance risk.

For example, if a home previously insured for \$600,000 now requires \$675,000 to rebuild due to higher material and labor costs, insurers must adjust coverage limits accordingly. This results in higher premiums for policyholders and extends beyond personal lines to

affect manufacturing, supply chains, and other industries tied to rebuilding and replacement costs.

The supply chain dimension further amplifies these challenges. Tariffs on essential materials such as lumber and steel not only raise costs but also disrupt import timelines. Delays in obtaining parts can lead to operational downtime, directly impacting business income coverage. As costs and delays accumulate, consumer demand may decline, creating additional pressure on insurers to reassess risk exposure.

The industry is now preparing for sustained premium increases as these effects cascade through the economy. Tariffs on everyday materials and products have far-reaching implications, influencing both household and commercial insurance markets. Over time, these pressures may force businesses and individuals to reduce/alter coverage or scale back operations, reshaping the broader risk landscape. **ABI**

**Jack Carra**

AssuredPartners
Executive Vice President
jack.carra@assuredpartners.com



JANUARY 2026 | VOL 16 | #1

Iowa Association of Business and Industry
400 East Court Avenue, Suite 100
Des Moines, IA 50309
515-280-8000 or 800-383-4224
abi@iowaabi.org, www.iowaabi.org

PRESIDENT: Nicole Crain

VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLIC POLICY: JD Davis

**VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
AND MEMBER ENGAGEMENT:** Meg Schneider

SENIOR DIRECTOR, PUBLIC POLICY: Brad Hartkopf

FINANCE DIRECTOR: Levi Hoffman

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT:
Olivia Jones

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MANAGER: Levi Lefebure

PROGRAMS MANAGER: Anne Lowder

**WORKFORCE PROGRAMS & ENGAGEMENT
COORDINATOR:** Anna Mable

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR:
Kelsey O'Connor

PARTNERSHIP RELATIONS MANAGER: Cami Schaefer

EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT:
Michelle Vollstedt

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SERVICES: Kerry Servas