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(2020). Hawkeye policy report: Iowa Policy Research Organization 2019-2020. Iowa Policy Research Organization, University of Iowa. <https://doi.org/10.17077/rep.005746>

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HAWKEYE POLICY REPORT

Iowa Policy
Research Organization
2019-2020

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https://honors.uiowa.edu/experiential-learning/ipro/hawkeye_policy_report_2018.pdf

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Photo attributions:

- Cover – WHO TV (2020), <https://whotv.com/news/coronavirus/iowa-legislators-suspend-session-in-response-to-covid-19/>
- Table of Contents – Alison Page, Travel Iowa (2015), <https://blog.traveliowa.com/view-post/Iowa-Citys-Old-Capitol-Building-A-History-Buffs-Delight>
- Background (Chapter 1) – University of Iowa Course Catalog (2018), <http://catalog.registrar.uiowa.edu/liberal-arts-sciences/political-science/political-science-ba/>
- Membership (Chapter 2) – Courtesy of Iowa Policy Research Organization (2020)
- What is the Most Important Issue to Iowans (Chapter 3) – Kevin M. Barry, Iowa News Now (2015), <https://cbs2iowa.com/news/local/hawkeye-poll-tackles-iowa>
- Improving Iowa’s Mental Health (Chapter 4) – Roosevelt Institute (2018), <http://rooseveltinstitute.org/health-care/>
- Decreasing the Use of Disposable Bags (Chapter 5) – K. Thor Jensen, Newsweek (2019), <https://www.newsweek.com/ohio-republicans-ban-plastic-bag-bans-1477002>
- Incentivizing Cover Crops in Iowa (Chapter 6) – Mary Schultz, WCBU (2017), <https://www.peoriapublicradio.org/post/cover-crops-help-preserve-ecosystem#stream/0>
- Iowa Gun Rights: Strict or Reasonable? (Chapter 7) – Stark County (2020), <https://starkmhar.org/featured-news/canton-recovery-court-provides-innovative-drug-docket/>
- Should We Stay or Should We Go? (Chapter 8) – Fresno State (2020), <http://fresnostate.edu/president/coronavirus/>
- Getting Involved (Chapter 9) – Charles R. Poliquin, Strength Sensei (2017), <http://www.strengthsensei.com/research-can-cant-tell-optimal-diets/>
- Next Steps (Chapter 10) – Courtesy of Jason Kander, Let America Vote (2018)
- Bibliography – Horton Books (2018), <http://www.hortonsbooks.co.uk>

Latex template information:

The Legrand Orange Book, Version 2.3 (8/8/17)

Originally designed by Mathias Legrand (legrand.mathias@gmail.com) with modifications by: Vel (vel@latextemplates.com) (major modifications) and Bryce J. Dietrich (bryce-dietrich@uiowa.edu) (minor modifications)

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First printing, March 2020





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1. Background

1.1 What is Iowa Policy Research Organization?

IPRO (the Iowa Policy Research Organization) was founded in 2006 by Professor Tom Rice, who started a similar organization during his time at the University of Vermont, called the Vermont Legislative Research Shop. When Tom left the classroom in 2010 to become Associate Provost for Faculty, Professor Rene Rocha took over the class shortly thereafter. In 2017, Professor Bryce J. Dietrich became IPRO's fourth director and ultimately edited the first annual *Hawkeye Policy Report*.

Students of IPRO collaborate to provide the Iowa legislature with timely, high quality research and information on important policy issues facing our state. IPRO members meet major figures in government and politics throughout Iowa and communicate the results of their research directly with Iowa legislators and other policymakers. Recent reports have examined a wide range of issues, including mandatory drug testing for welfare recipients, state recycling programs, and regulations on agricultural runoff.

Those who join IPRO gain valuable skills in research, writing, and teamwork. Nic Pottebaum, who participated in the program in 2010, says this about IPRO:

The Iowa Policy Research Organization puts honors students in a graduate-style learning environment, which is not found in most undergraduate education experiences. As a result of this, it not only challenged me but accelerated my abilities. IPRO has provided a unique experience that is beneficial for any post-graduate plans [3].

Virginia Davis, a 2015 IPRO alumnus, echoed these sentiments in her article "Students Engage Locally and Nationally" where she said:

IPRO is not only an excellent way for students to develop an honors community and work closely with their peer group but also a way for them to engage in the Iowa City community. Their reports and research have appeared in Press Citizen and The

Daily Iowan. Involvement in IPRO is especially good for students who are considering graduate school in policy. Alumni of the program have gone on to do political research in various settings around the country [1].

We want Iowa citizens, students, and legislators to be fully informed about the many important issues facing our state. IPRO helps students achieve this end while simultaneously giving them the experience and skills necessary for affecting public policy in Iowa and beyond.

1.2 How Do I Become an IPRO member?

The IPRO recruitment process has remained largely the same ever since Prof. Rice started the program in 2006. An email is sent to all honors students and political science majors explaining the course and inviting them to submit a resume. The best applicants are then interviewed before they are finally invited to join IPRO. Although numbers do vary, for the most part, IPRO only admits 12-15 students a year, meaning IPRO members are truly the best of the best.

Not only are IPRO students active in a number of student organizations, like College Democrats, College Republicans, and Student Government, but they are also among the top students in their respective classes. More specifically, IPRO students have excelled in a number of relevant substantive and methodological classes, ranging from introductory/advanced statistics to more specific classes on public health policy. Simply put, IPRO students are some of the best in political science and the university as a whole.

1.3 How Do I Learn More About IPRO?

To find out more information about IPRO, please visit our website: <https://honors.uiowa.edu/iowa-policy-research-organization>. There you will find relevant contact information and also more information about our organization. You can also follow us on Twitter (@IowaPolicy). We are currently updating both our website and Twitter page, so please continue to check both in order to find the latest information about IPRO! For more a more detailed description about IPRO, please read "Students as Policy Researchers for State Legislatures" in: *Civic Service: Service-Learning with State and Local Government Partners*. John Wiley & Sons, 2009 by David Redlawsk and Tom Rice. More general descriptions can be found in several iterations of the Honors and Political Science newsletters. Additional information is available upon request. If you need anything else, please email our director Professor Dietrich (bryce-dietrich@uiowa.edu). He would be happy to answer any and all inquiries!



2. Membership

2.1 Current Members

In this section, we provide biographies for each member of our Des Moines delegation and the names of each legislative research seminar participant. Short descriptions of the “Des Moines Delegation” and “Legislative Research Seminar” are also provided below.

- The mental health policy research team (Madhuri Belkale, Carly Heying and Caely Tietz) wrote the “Improving Iowa’s Mental Health” chapter. Madhuri Belkale and Carly Heying edited the chapter and put together the final version for the *Hawkeye Policy Report*. This chapter was also the runner-up for best undergraduate paper in the Department of Political Science for 2019-2020.
- The chapter titled “Decreasing the Use of Disposable Bags” was written by the IPRO environmental research team (Thomas Dainty, Ganon Evans and Omar Khodor). All three team members helped finalize the chapter for publication in the annual IPRO magazine.
- The agricultural research team (Madeleine Bradley, Sarah Henry and Lauryn Schnack) wrote the “Incentivizing Cover Crops in Iowa” chapter. All three team members edited the chapter and put together the final version for the *Hawkeye Policy Report*.
- The chapter titled “Iowa Gun Rights: Strict or Reasonable?” was written by IPRO’s legal research team (Reagan Hansen, Maya Mahajan and Jocelyn Roof). Reagan Hansen and Jocelyn Roof edited the chapter and put together the final version for the *Hawkeye Policy Report*.

The chapter order was chosen randomly. All authors and editors are listed in alphabetical order. Although far from the primary author, the IPRO director (Bryce J. Dietrich) helped with minor editing and formatting issues.

2.1.1 Des Moines Delegation

After completing the legislative research seminar, several IPRO members are chosen to serve as our Des Moines delegation. These individuals take another course the following Spring in order to put together the *Hawkeye Policy Report* and ultimately present it to the state legislature during the

Hawkeye Caucus Day. Not only does the Des Moines Delegation edit each aspect of the *Hawkeye Policy Report*, but they also meet individuals on and off campus to talk about IPRO. For example, in 2018, the Des Moines Delegation discussed IPRO with Jason Kander who was the former Missouri Secretary of State and ran for the U.S. Senate in 2016. These experiences highlight the Spring course and also underline the importance of the Des Moines Delegation. Both inside and outside the classroom, these Honors students represent the political science department and the university as a whole. IPRO really could not function without their help!

2.1.2 Legislative Research Seminar

IPRO also relies heavily on the legislative research seminar participants. In this class, students learn about policy analysis and begin researching topics that are important to the state of Iowa. This is facilitated primarily using three person research teams. These teams are comprised of students with common research interests. For the next three months, each research team analyzes and discusses their chosen topic, ultimately producing a 20-30 page white paper. IPRO also owes a debt of gratitude to these fantastic Honors students!

2.2 Past Members

IPRO members past and present are an essential part of our organization. Even though most students come from political science, we have also had representatives from economics, ethics, and public policy. Their hard work and dedication to IPRO's mission cannot be understated. A lot of IPRO communication happens on our organization's Slack channel. We do this because we want to give past IPRO members the ability to communicate directly with our current members.

The first day of the legislative research seminar begins with a discussion of the past, present, and the future of IPRO. This is because we view IPRO as a continuing organization, meaning those who took IPRO in the past are always part of IPRO's present and future. Ever since its first iteration, the *Hawkeye Policy Report* has listed all the former IPRO members precisely for this reason. We want to show our current members that they are really part of something special! Even though they may no longer live in Iowa City, they are still a member of IPRO!

2.2.1 Des Moines Delegates

2019-2020

- Madhuri Belkale
- Madeleine Bradley
- Thomas Dainty
- Ganon Evans
- Reagan Hansen
- Sarah Henry
- Carly Heying
- Omar Khodor
- Jocelyn Roof
- Lauryn Schnack

2018-2019

- Conrad Beech
- Tommy Duffy
- Alex Mahanna
- Noel Mills
- William Montague

- Sam Nelson
- Serena Qamhieh
- Tristan Schmidt
- Rita Tewolde

2017-2018

- Kyle Apple
- Logan Drake
- Jennifer Eggerling
- Lauren Ellbogen
- Marcus Miller
- Matt Wallack
- Austin Wu

2.2.2 Legislative Research Seminar Participants

2019-2020

- Conrad Beech
- Tommy Duffy
- Gabriela Escoto
- Andrea Lynch
- Alex Mahanna
- Ally McKenoe
- Noel Mills
- William Montague
- Hira Mustafa
- Sam Nelson
- Parker Nissen
- Serena Qamhieh
- Ben Soll
- Tristan Schmidt
- Erin Taber
- Rita Tewolde

2018-2019

- Kyle Apple
- Kiera Deal
- Logan Drake
- Jennifer Eggerling
- Lauren Ellbogen
- Scott Hastings
- Riley Lewers
- Marcus Miller
- Gustave Stewart
- Matt Wallack
- Austin Wu

2017-2018

- Kyle Apple
- Kiera Deal
- Logan Drake

- Jennifer Eggerling
- Lauren Ellbogen
- Scott Hastings
- Riley Lewers
- Marcus Miller
- Gustave Stewart
- Matt Wallack
- Austin Wu

Bryce J. Dietrich
Director



Bryce J. Dietrich is an assistant professor of social science informatics in the Department of Political Science and the Department of Sociology at the University of Iowa. He is also currently a faculty member in the Iowa Informatics Initiative (UI3). His research uses novel quantitative, automated, and machine learning methods to analyze non-traditional data sources such as audio (or speech) data and video data. He uses these to understand the causes and consequences of elite emotional expression in a variety of institutional settings, with a particular emphasis on non-verbal cues, such as vocal pitch. More recently, he has used text, audio, and video analysis to explore issues related to descriptive representation and implicit gender/racial bias. His work has appeared in the *American Political Science Review*, *Political Analysis*, *Political Psychology* and the *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, & Parties*. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. He also received an MA from the University of Kansas. His work has received grant support from Amazon, C-SPAN, and the National Institute of Health. It also won the Kathleen L. Burkholder Prize from the University of Illinois and has been covered by BBC, FiveThirtyEight, *The Economist* and the *Washington Post*.

Madhuri Belkale

*Des Moines Delegation
Mental Health Research*



Madhuri Belkale is a fourth-year student originally from Cedar Rapids, IA. She is studying political science and psychology with minors in Spanish and international studies. She is particularly interested in women's rights, education, and immigration policy. Her honors thesis, titled "Is Casual Sexual Behavior Associated with Sexual Perception and Decision Making?", focuses on understanding the relationship between casual sexual behavior and sexual aggression on college campuses. This work contributes to the development of protective behavioral strategies which aim to reduce male-initiated aggression on college campuses. Currently, she works as a peer mentor for the Honors Program and a legal assistant at a small private firm in Iowa City. On campus, she is involved with the Indian Student Alliance and previously served as the President of Phi Alpha Delta pre-law fraternity. Next fall, she will be attending Columbia Law School to study immigration and human rights law. In her free time, she enjoys crosswords, baking, and having a good cup of tea with her friends.

Madeleine Bradley*Des Moines Delegation**Agricultural Research*

Madeleine Bradley is a fourth year undergraduate from Johnston, Iowa studying environmental science and global health studies. Within environmental health, Madeleine is particularly interested in the role of policy solutions for improving water quality and Iowa's problems with nutrient pollution. Madeleine currently serves on the Climate Action Commission for Iowa City and works as a research fellow at the Iowa Social Science Research Center. She also does research involving water quality and stream degradation in Iowa and hopes to pursue a graduate degree in environmental engineering with a focus on hydrology.

Thomas Dainty
Des Moines Delegation
Environmental Research



Thomas Dainty is a sophomore student at the University of Iowa, studying Political Science with a double minor in Economics and Philosophy. He is also pursuing a certificate in Social Science Analytics. After college, Thomas is hoping to go to graduate school and get his Master's in Political Science as well. Joining the Iowa Policy Research Organization was an excellent opportunity to develop the skills and background to be better prepared for graduate school while conducting research. Working at the Iowa Social Research Center as an undergraduate research support fellow, Thomas has been able to apply what he has learned in class to his work as well.

Ganon Evans
Des Moines Delegation
Environmental Research



Ganon Evans is a sophomore studying Mathematics and Economics from Weldon Spring, Missouri. He was drawn to IPRO out of an interest in public policy analysis, and has recently interned with an interest group in Washington D.C. As policy coordinator for Iowa's branch of the Roosevelt Institute, he has written about public education funding and Housing First solutions to homelessness. He is currently a policy researcher with the American Conservation Coalition, where his research has focused on nuclear waste disposal. His research interests include environmentally conscious consumer behavior as well as economic development in the 21st century. He is currently planning on graduating a year early, and will either become a research assistant, or pursue a policy career in the private sector. When not working, he is an active writer and player in the quiz bowl community, and enjoys cuddling with his dogs Rocco and Lola.

Reagan Hansen
Des Moines Delegation
Legal Research



Reagan Hansen grew up in Harlan, IA. He is currently a junior at the University of Iowa with majors in Political Science and Ethics and Public Policy, and minors in Economics and Philosophy. After graduation, Reagan hopes to attend law school and later work in governmental relations. He currently serves as the Academic Affairs Chairman in the University of Iowa Student Government and works for the Writing Center as a Writing Fellow. Reagan is very involved in the Delta Sigma Phi fraternity, completing his term as Chapter President last fall and currently serving as the Undergraduate Director on the national Board of Directors. He is very interested in politics, having worked as an intern in the office of US Senator Chuck Grassley in Washington, D.C. last summer. In his free time, Reagan enjoys running, reading, and playing table tennis.

Sarah Henry
Des Moines Delegation
Environmental Research



Sarah Henry is a senior from Johnston, Iowa studying Ethics and Public Policy with minors in Political Science and Spanish. At the University, she serves as Vice President of University of Iowa Student Government, a student representative on the Council on the Status of Women, and a volunteer for Food Pantry at Iowa. She is currently working with a team of students to start a student organization to increase representation of women in Iowa's government and off campus she is a financial intern for the Rita Hart for Congress campaign. After graduation, she plans to pursue a graduate degree in higher education student affairs or public policy.

Carly Heying

*Des Moines Delegation
Mental Health Research*



Carly Heying is a junior from Dubuque, Iowa studying history and Spanish, with minors in political science and dance. At the University of Iowa, Carly is currently working as an undergraduate research assistant for Professor Timothy Hagle. Additionally, she is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, a teaching assistant for an honors seminar, and the treasurer of the Iowa Swing Dance Club. Previously, she worked as an intern at the United States Senate in the Office of Senator Grassley. After finishing her undergraduate degree, Carly hopes to pursue a career in law.

Omar Khodor

*Des Moines Delegation
Environmental Research*



Omar Khodor is a senior from Sioux City, IA majoring in Environmental Science with minors in Arabic and Biology and a certificate in Sustainability. After graduation, Omar plans to attend law school with a special interest in environmental law. In his time at the University of Iowa, Omar has been involved in mock trial, the Arab Students Association, student government, evolutionary research in the Forbes biology lab, and study abroad programs in Melbourne, Australia and Kerala, India. He enjoys camping, rock climbing, biking, and pretty much anything else outdoors.

Jocelyn Roof*Des Moines Delegation**Legal Research*

Jocelyn Roof is a junior at the University of Iowa studying sociology and political science. She is originally from Waterloo, IA, where her parents, brother, and 2 cats still reside. She has interned at the UI Public Policy Center in the Social and Education Policy program, founded the University of Iowa's nonpartisan voter engagement organization called Hawk the Vote, and currently serves as a resident assistant in Currier Hall. In the future she hopes to study public administration and work in community and economic development somewhere in the Midwest, where she has always called home. In her free time, she enjoys biking and drinking coffee at local cafes.

Lauryn Schnack*Des Moines Delegation**Agricultural Research*

Lauryn Schnack is a senior from Quincy, Illinois studying Political Science with minors in Economics and Social Justice. Within Political Science, Lauryn is interested in equity policy centered on employment and the environment. At the University of Iowa, Lauryn is the President of the Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity University of Iowa Pre-Law Chapter, a Senator with the University of Iowa Student Government, and a co-founder of the new Students for Worker Justice organization. After graduation, Lauryn will be working as a Paralegal at a law firm in Iowa City, and plans to attend law school in the near future to pursue a career in worker's rights advocacy.



Legislative Research

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3. What is the Most Important Issue to Iowans?

Since 2007, the University of Iowa Department of Political Science has conducted the Hawkeye Poll. This experiential learning opportunity gives students the ability to develop questions and ask them during the course of a telephone interview. This year, over 250 undergraduate students helped conduct the poll in October/November of 2019 which was aimed towards likely caucus goers. Of the students that participated, 12 were members of the Iowa Policy Research Organization (IPRO). Given the focal point of IPRO's research, we decided to ask Iowans what was the most important issue facing our state. These results are reported in Table 3.1.

In total, 1,046 of 1,181 respondents answered this question with one of the categories that were given. We had 135 respondents who chose "something else" and entered a response that was different from the categories outlined in Table 3.1. Ultimately, we found economic issues tended to be most on Iowans' minds with 46.27% of respondents listing Trade, Jobs, Economy, and Income Inequality as one of their "most important issues". If "National Debt" and "Taxes" are added to this list, then a majority of respondents (or 55.07%) would have listed at least one economic issue as being one of their most important issues.

Although what was the most important issue is undoubtedly important, we actually found the issues that did not tend to be listed by Iowans being more interesting. For example, of the 1,046 respondents who are entered into Table 3.1 only 2 listed "Women's Rights" as being one of the most important issues facing our state. This is surprising given that 23.1% of the likely Democratic caucus goers said they would caucus for Elizabeth Warren. Similarly, only 4 of the 1,046 respondents who are entered into Table 3.1 listed "Gay Rights" as being one of their most important issues, which is again surprising given that Mayor Pete Buttlegieg won the Iowa Caucuses a few weeks later.

It is beyond the scope of this analysis to explain these relationships. Instead, we are interested in what the Hawkeye Poll says about the chapters you will find later in this magazine. The first chapter – titled "Improving Iowa's Mental Health" – outlines deficiencies in the state's mental health system. Although we did not ask about mental health specifically on the Hawkeye Poll, IPRO did ask about

Table 3.1: The Most Important Issues Facing our State According to the 2019 Hawkeye Poll

Issue	Total	Percent
Trade	228	21.80
Healthcare	153	14.63
Environment	129	12.33
Jobs	127	12.14
Economy	109	10.42
Education	82	7.84
National Debt	64	6.12
Immigration	42	4.02
Taxes	28	2.68
Income Inequality	20	1.91
Foreign Policy	18	1.72
Transportation	16	1.53
Abortion	8	0.76
Race Relations	8	0.76
Gun Control	5	0.48
Gay Rights	4	0.38
Terrorism	3	0.29
Women's Rights	2	0.19

Note: In October/November of 2019, IPRO members participated in the Hawkeye Poll which asked Iowans which issue they thought was most important to our state.

healthcare and general. This ended up being the second most important issue with 153 respondents (or 14.63%) listing this as one of their “most important issues,” suggesting this year’s Hawkeye Policy Report is not only well-researched, but also quite timely.

A similar story can be said for the fifth chapter in our report – “Decreasing the Use of Disposable Bags” – which deals with the massive amount of waste produced each year by Iowans from something as simple as a grocery bag. Again, we did not ask a specific question about this policy, but we did find the “Environment” was the third most important issue facing our state according to the Iowans who participated in the Hawkeye Poll. The fact that 129 people (or 12.33%) listed this as one of their most important issues also bodes well for the chapter titled “Incentivizing Cover Crops in Iowa” which appears after our chapter dealing with disposable bags (see Chapter 6). Perhaps more importantly, we found that many Iowans listed issues related to agriculture in the open-ended portion of this portion of the survey which again suggests our research speaks directly to the issues that are most relevant to Iowans today.

Chapter 7 of the Hawkeye Policy Report – titled “Iowa Gun Rights: Strict or Reasonable?” – addresses recent efforts to bolster the second amendment in the state. Although only 5 Iowans listed “Gun Rights” as one of the most important issues facing the states, the authors of this chapter are quick to point out the large interest group network in the state that are active on this issue. This suggests that gun rights may be of interest to fewer people in the state as compared to other issues, but these individuals are organized and active, ultimately making their importance to the policy making process much greater. Moreover, we remind the reader that the Hawkeye Poll was targeted towards Democratic caucus goers, so the issue of “Gun Rights” may be much more salient had the poll been targeted towards Independents or Republicans.

Ultimately, the Hawkeye Poll was an incredible experience for IPRO members. Not only did they

gain a better understanding of the survey process, but they also learned that their research spoke to many of the issues that Iowans find most important to our state. As you will find in the chapters below, IPRO provides a great framework to begin discussing these issues and also has several policy recommendations which we think will improve the state in many different ways.



4. Improving Iowa's Mental Health

4.1 Executive Summary

Mental health inpatient care maximizes positive mental health outcomes through stabilized care, specialized treatment services, and careful observation of patients. Almost 4,000 per 100,000 Iowans suffer from severe mental illnesses and benefit greatly from inpatient psychiatric care. After the state of Iowa shut down two of four psychiatric institutions in 2015, Iowa ranks 51st – including the District of Columbia – in the ratio of state psychiatric beds to residents, with only two state psychiatric beds per 100,000 residents. This does not effectively meet Iowa's need for proper inpatient psychiatric care. **The clear first step to improving mental health care in Iowa is to increase inpatient care capacity.** Our report examines three different alternatives for funding increased inpatient care: a state-mandate, a state sales tax, and block grant incentivization.

Inpatient Care Funding Alternatives

State Mandate – Pass a law that requires all mental health regions in Iowa to comply with a set of standards set by the state, funded independently by each region.

Sales Tax – Implement a 1-cent increase to the state sales tax to provide additional funding for increased inpatient care for mental health services. $\frac{5}{8}$ of the additional sales tax would go towards mental health care.

Block Grant – Mandate an increase in inpatient care, suggesting that counties raise property taxes to fund this new requirement. In return, the state would distribute the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant to only those regions who meet the inpatient care minimum mandate.

Each alternative will be evaluated for *effectiveness* (expected increase in the ratio of inpatient care per Iowan, for every tax dollar spent), *equity* (increased access to inpatient care across all regions), and *feasibility* (public and political support). In accordance with this criteria, we found the following:

1. The inpatient care capacity ratio – measured by inpatient beds per Iowan – shows a distinct lack of accessibility in rural regions.
2. Without a sustainable source of funding, implementing a state mandate would fail to increase

the available inpatient mental health care across the state.

3. Without incentivization, regions are more likely to put funding towards outpatient care, thereby decreasing quality and capacity of inpatient care services.

For these reasons, we recommend the state of Iowa should incentivize mental health regions to increase inpatient care capacity with the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant.

4.2 Introduction

In 2015, then-governor Terry Branstad effectively shut down two – of four – state mental health institutes in Mount Pleasant and Clarinda, by vetoing funding for the facilities without assent from the legislature. After criticism and public debate about the constitutionality of the governor's autonomy in this decision, in 2016, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled that Branstad's decision to cease funding for these institutions was constitutional, supporting the closure of the two institutions. This decision greatly limited the availability and accessibility of inpatient care for mental health services in Iowa, sending the state into a crisis for providing adequate mental health care.

Quick Facts about the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant

- The Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) is a federal formula grant awarded to each state based on a combination of population and other economic factors.
- It is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is managed by the DHS, Division of Mental Health and Disability Services.
- Iowa receives about \$3.3 million from the MHBG each year.
- In Iowa, 70% of the MHBG is required to be distributed to accredited community mental health centers for outpatient care services.
- The remaining 30% of the grant is used for administrative costs, mental health education and training, and required data collection.

Mental health care is an important issue for Iowans. Around 600,000 Iowans are currently affected by mental illnesses, making up 19% of the state's population. Approximately 126,000 of those people live with serious mental illnesses, such as severe bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. These are illnesses that cause serious functional impairments and greatly limit one or more major life activities ("Facts and Figures"). Many people suffering from such illnesses benefit from inpatient care services, such as those provided by the institutions in Mount Pleasant and Clarinda (Leys). According to former governor Branstad, however, these institutions represented an outdated way of institutionalizing people with severe mental illnesses. His office contended that private agencies could provide the same services more efficiently and more effectively (Petroski).

This decision meant the loss of 83 inpatient mental health care beds for Iowans, resulting in a critical shortage of mental health care in the state. It is not uncommon for Iowans to drive hundreds of miles to find an open bed in a psychiatric hospital unit, which has become increasingly difficult after the closing of the two institutes. Furthermore, both Mount Pleasant and Clarinda are located in rural counties so rural Iowa citizens, who now had to drive much farther to reach state inpatient care facilities, were disproportionately affected by these closures. While the former governor's office argued that this decision would increase access to care and modernize mental health treatment across the state, critics have raised questions about this logic. Peggy Huppert, executive director for the Iowa chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), said her group is not in support of the decision. She said, "... if you're going to close state beds, there have to be alternatives. At this point, there are not enough alternatives in the community... There was some very good care happening at those facilities" (Leys). Unfortunately, since Governor Branstad's decision, this is no

longer the case.

A study by the Treatment Advocacy Center echoed many of these anecdotes, finding that decreasing capacity for inpatient mental health treatment leads to increasing numbers of seriously-mentally-ill people in ERs and prisons. By 2014, the study reports, 10 times more people with serious mental illness were in prisons and jails than in state mental hospitals, a circumstance widely attributed to the decline of beds available to provide timely treatment (“Psychiatric Bed Shortages”). In Iowa, lack of trained professionals and funding further limit the accessibility and function of community-based treatment. After the facilities in Mount Pleasant and Clarinda were prematurely shut down, these community-based treatment centers became overwhelmed with patients and were unable to provide adequate care to those with serious mental illnesses (Leys).

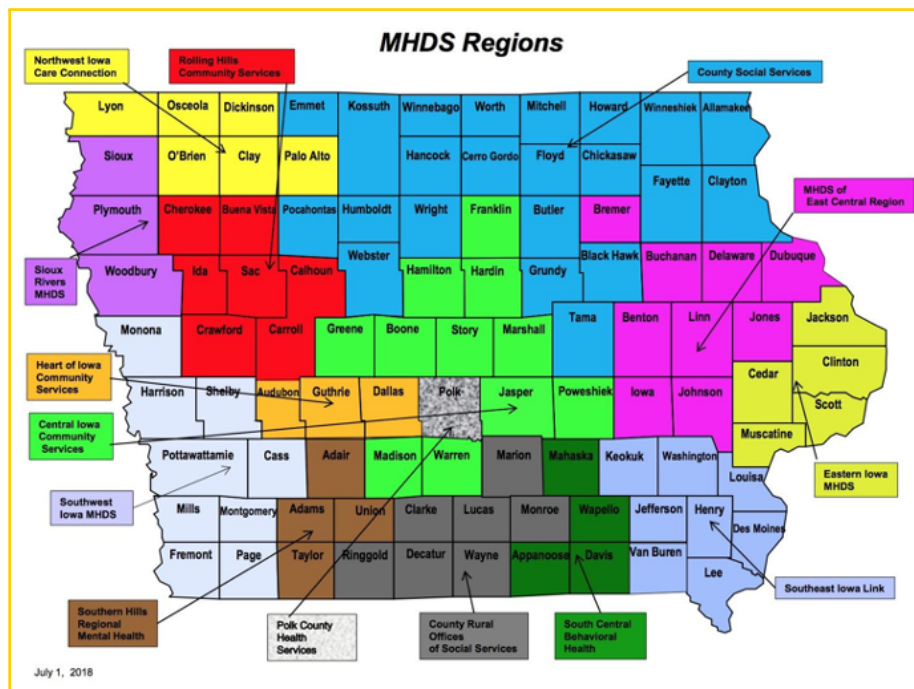
In fact, several patients passed away after being transferred to nursing homes due to the closing of facilities in Clarinda and Mount Pleasant. Ron Kuker, of Carroll, Iowa, was the third of such patients. Mr. Kuker, who had schizophrenia and used a wheelchair, had spent around nine years at the facility in Clarinda where he was a resident of a special program for elderly people with severe mental illnesses. Just two months after being transferred to a local nursing home, Mr. Kuker died. His family noted that he had lost significant weight and had become withdrawn after the transfer. His sister, Jolene Happe, noted that the nursing home lacked the resources and capability to handle such complicated, fragile patients. She said, “Putting [him] in a place that wasn’t capable was a death sentence” (Leys and Pfannenstiel). For Iowans suffering from complicated and severe mental illnesses, like Mr. Kuker, outpatient care is simply not adequate.

Iowa’s current mental health care system, however, focuses primarily on outpatient care at the expense of inpatient care. Meanwhile, studies show that increasing inpatient care is the obvious first step to improving mental health care. In a study by the Mental Illness Policy Organization, the authors found that outpatient care services often practice “micro-hospitalization,” where patients are discharged as quickly as possible due to financial restraints. When this happens, important steps are skipped, such as taking appropriate medical histories, doing important medical workups, failing to titrate medications, failing to make sure they can survive safely in the community and have appropriate follow-up services, and patients suffer the consequences. On the other hand, the study reports that access to inpatient mental health care decreases overcrowding in emergency rooms and jails, while providing necessary treatment for patients experiencing the most severe mental illnesses. This is critical because psychiatric patients often fear seeking treatment, lack family and community support, as well as transportation to treatment, and are unable to fully participate in their treatments because of the effects of their mental illnesses (Glick, et. al.).

In 2015, Iowa switched from a county-based system to a regionally-based system for coordinating mental health care, and the entire system is overseen by the Mental Health and Disability Services, a division of the Department of Human Services (see Figure 4.1). Regions are responsible for funding core mental health services when no funding is available through Medicaid or private insurance. Counties primarily raise these funds through property taxes. With regionalization, counties have the ability to pool tax dollars in order to generate enough revenue to comply with core requirements. Regionalization was also implemented in order to allow counties to share administrative responsibilities. For the purposes of this paper, we will assume that the regional mental health care system will remain unchanged without debating the merits of the change to a regional system.

Today, Iowa has 731 beds, both public and private, for inpatient psychiatric care. Of these beds,

Figure 4.1: Iowa Corporate Tax Rate History



Note: In 2015, the Department of Human Services divided the state into mental health regions. Each region has an administrative body that oversees the mental health care in that region, as directed by the MHDS. (Source: Iowa Department of Human Services)

64 are state beds, meaning that Iowa has only 2 state hospital beds for every 100,000 people, while around 126,000 Iowans suffer from severe mental illnesses. Additionally, only 24 facilities offer inpatient psychiatric treatment in the state of Iowa. This places Iowa last among all states in terms of state capacity for inpatient psychiatric care. Some of this deficit is balanced by private beds in Iowa, but the number of total beds is still well under the minimum of 50 beds per 100,000 people that studies show are needed to adequately serve the state (“Psychiatric Bed Shortages”).

Table 4.1 represents the capacity for inpatient care in each mental health region in Iowa. The table includes the name of each region, the total population in that region, inpatient care capacity in that region, and the ratio comparing the total population to inpatient care capacity. The population in each region was calculated by combining the 2010 Census populations of each county in a given region. Inpatient care capacity was determined by combining the number of beds available for inpatient care, including public and private, in each region. Then, the ratio was calculated by dividing the total population in each region by the inpatient care capacity. Note that three regions (County Rural Offices of Social Services, Heart of Iowa Community Services, and Southern Hills Regional Mental Health) have no inpatient care capacity, resulting in a ratio of zero. In summary, Iowa has a total inpatient care capacity of 731 beds for the approximate 126,000 Iowans living with serious mental illnesses (172 people per bed).

The state of Iowa appears to be ready for sweeping mental health reform as some incremental changes have been made recently to address the issue. In May 2019, Governor Reynolds signed a comprehensive mental health policy system into law for children. HF690 establishes a state-wide system for addressing mental health needs of Iowan children. It requires a core set of services to be provided in every mental health region of the state as well as crisis mobilization, mobile response

Table 4.1: Iowa’s Capacity for Inpatient Care by Mental Health Region

Mental Health Region	Total Population	Inpatient Care	Total Population to Inpatient Care
County Social Services	455,458	86	5,296/1
MHDS of East Central Region	698,27	266	2,625.1/1
Eastern Iowa MHDS	300,789	30	10,026.3/1
Southeast Iowa Link	162,196	8	20,274.5/1
Central Iowa Community Services	338,508	19	12,816.2/1
Polk County Health Services	487,204	130	3,747.7/1
South Central Behavioral Health	78,659	22	3,575.4/1
County Rural Offices of Social Services	78,524	0	0
Northwest Iowa Care Connection	62,096	15	4,139.7/1
Rolling Hills Community Services	197,305	60	3,288.4/1
Heart of Iowa Community Services	103,483	0	0
Sioux Rivers MHDS	71,872	30	2,396/1
Southwest Iowa MHDS	188,412	65	2,899/1
Southern Hills Regional Mental Health	29,368	0	0

Note: In 2015, the Department of Human Services divided the state into mental health regions. This table represents the capacity for inpatient care in each region, in beds available per person. The capacity for inpatient care is 731, while around 126,000 people with serious mental illnesses live throughout the state of Iowa.

teams, 24-hour hotline access, and over \$1 million distributed for community-based treatments (“Gov. Reynolds creates first state-wide Children’s Mental Health System”). There was wide bipartisan support for the bill and it passed the legislature 83-14 in the House and 46-2 in the Senate. The bill piggybacked on the Strategic plan formulated by Governor Reynolds and the Children’s Behavioral Health System State Board in 2018. Reynolds expressed her excitement for the bill and proclaimed that it “marks a major milestone for mental health in our state. The historic bill [...] helps lift the veil of stigma associated with mental illness and replaces it with hope, healing, and comfort of the community,” (“Gov. Reynolds creates first state-wide Children’s Mental Health System”).

Despite Governor Reynolds’ good intentions, we contend mental health resources have actually been eroded, especially in rural areas where inpatient psychiatric facilities are dangerously low. Given the assumption that increasing inpatient psychiatric care is the clear first step to increasing the capabilities of Iowa’s mental health care system, this paper focuses on discussing ways that the state of Iowa can fund increased inpatient psychiatric care across the state.

4.3 Policy Alternatives

Mental health inpatient care maximizes positive mental health outcomes through stabilized care, specialized treatment services, and careful observation of patients. After two state psychiatric institutions were closed in 2014, the state of Iowa, specifically for its rural population, lacks sufficient mental health inpatient care when compared to peer states. Iowa has sacrificed inpatient health care in favor of community-based practices, which rely on local funding and often turn to outpatient services. These community-based practices lack financial support and sustainability, failing to adequately provide care for a significant population of Iowans. Our goal is to determine the best way for the Iowa state government to increase Iowa’s capacity for inpatient mental health treatment.

4.3.1 State Mandated Changes with No Financial Support

It is evident that mental health care in the state of Iowa must be addressed. The state should take action to pass legislation that standardizes care for Iowans with mental health needs. Our first policy alternative would be to pass a state mandate in the Iowa legislature that requires all previously determined mental health regions to comply with a set of standards set by the state, but would not include a set budget to financially support the mandate. Each mental health region would be required to independently fund their inpatient care facilities that address mental health needs in that region. Each region would have a different set of requirements in the mandate based on its population. It would be decided by each region how they would prefer to raise these funds, through property taxes in that region if necessary. This alternative can be considered the status quo as there is no particular statewide plan as to how to finance the alternative. The only difference we recommend is that the state make a mandate to ensure that regions are required to find the funds necessary to increase inpatient care in their respective mental health regions.

4.3.2 Increase State Sales Tax

One policy recently debated within the Iowa state legislature is a 1-cent increase to the state sales tax. $\frac{3}{8}$ th of each cent would go towards improving the quality of water and other natural resources, a decision approved by voters roughly a decade ago. The remaining $\frac{5}{8}$ th of each cent could be used for other state initiatives, including mental health (Rodriguez). If $\frac{5}{8}$ th of each additional cent of the sales tax were used for funding inpatient psychiatric care, the state would have a sustainable method of funding mental health care without requiring counties to increase already-contentious property taxes. A 2018 poll done by the Des Moines Register and Mediacom Iowa found that two-thirds of Iowans support raising the sales tax by 1 cent to help pay for mental health care (Rodriguez).

4.3.3 Incentivize Block Grant Distribution

Those who are not in favor of raising the state sales tax turn to raising local property taxes as a financial solution to mental health funding. Here, the state would mandate an increase in inpatient care, suggesting that counties raise property taxes to fund this new requirement. In return, the state would distribute the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant to only those regions who meet the inpatient care minimum mandate. Currently, Iowa receives around 3.3 million dollars each year from the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (“Mental Health Block Grant”). At least 95% of this grant is allocated to eligible providers. The state currently uses discretion to distribute these funds among the 14 regional centers, who then divide funds among providers in their region. At least 70% of the funds given to providers are required to be distributed to accredited community mental health centers, who provide outpatient or telehealth treatment. By selectively distributing this grant to regions who fund the inpatient care requirement, the state can incentivize regions – without using additional funds – to comply with the mandate. If states do not meet the mandate, however, this runs the risk of also limiting funding for community-based mental health treatment in suffering regions.

4.4 Policy Evaluation Criteria

These are the criteria with which we will assess our three policy alternative options. We chose effectiveness in order to assess the value of each tax dollar spent. Equity was considered to determine how each policy will affect regions and communities differently throughout the state. Lastly, feasibility was included to analyze the political and public support of each alternative.

4.4.1 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is arguably the most important criteria to consider when analyzing policy alternatives for inpatient mental health care in Iowa. The goal of any policy alternative would be to increase inpatient care; if done, would deem as an effective policy. Effectiveness also measures how much the state is spending on each alternative, and how the money is being spent in a cost-benefit analysis. We evaluate this in the ratio of inpatient beds per resident for every tax dollar spent. We consider how likely it is that funds generated will effectively go towards inpatient care, and if the funding is sustainable over time. The first step in fixing the current broken system is to improve inpatient care, if this is not addressed in a policy alternative, it is not effective.

4.4.2 Equity

Currently in Iowa, there is a wide disparity across mental health regions in terms of access to care, especially with regard to inpatient care. This lack of psychiatric care disproportionately affects rural areas of the state. Additionally, the regional map shows an unequal distribution of resources. Furthermore, when discussing methods of increasing state funding for mental health care, it is important to note that many taxation policies would have unequal effects across regions. Low-income and rural counties might be disproportionately affected by regressive tax policies, meaning that they would need to pay a higher percentage of total income for the same standard of care. For these reasons, equity is an important criterion to examine, and the differences in population and income between regions in the state must always be considered.

4.4.3 Feasibility

Mental health care is a very important issue to Iowans; it is near-universally agreed that increased support should go towards mental health care (“Facts and Figures”). Yet, policies for reform face restraints and opposition along various dimensions. Through this criterion, we will determine which alternative will satisfy the most people. We will assess the political and social feasibility of each policy alternative. For political feasibility, we will consider approval among legislators and the ability to actually pass legislation for each alternative, as needed. For social feasibility, we will consider the public opinion on each alternative.

4.5 Choosing the Best Policy for the State of Iowa

4.5.1 State Mandated Change

The initial solution to increase inpatient mental health care capacity in the state of Iowa is to simply issue a state mandate that would detail requirements for improving inpatient capacity within each mental health region. The mandate would be passed and regulated by the state but would not require any specific type of funding or would reallocate state funds to support the mandate. This plan would require that each region finds its own way to fund their inpatient care services and increase funding in whichever way they choose to be able to meet the requirements of the mandate specific to that region.

Effectiveness

This alternative would not be effective in terms of solidifying the ratio of inpatient care per Iowan for every tax dollar spent. A state mandated change could not guarantee that regions will comply with no incentive or assistance. Regions would have no reason to follow the mandate if they feel as if they are not receiving anything in return. The mandate would require that each region reports back to the state about the progress they are making and whether or not they are able to increase inpatient care capacity. However, there are no repercussions if a region does not report back to the state as they will not lose funding or other state support. If funds were generated to support this

plan, the funds would be generated directly within the region and therefore would stay there in order to be allocated directly to inpatient care, making it effective. In addition, the state will not have to spend any of its own budget for this mandate.

Equity

In terms of equity, a state-mandate with no additional assistance or financial support cannot guarantee that all regions will comply. It is likely that wealthier regions will have more opportunities to fund the mandate than more rural regions that struggle financially. This is not equitable because it will not guarantee that each region will benefit from this policy alternative. Further, regions that are wealthier tend to already have better resources and thus, better inpatient care capacity numbers. Rural access will likely not improve at all without state oversight and assistance, in essence increasing disparity between regions that have the resources to support those who have mental health needs and those regions that do not, creating an inequitable solution to the lack of mental health resources in the state of Iowa.

Feasibility

When analyzing the stand-mandated change in terms of feasibility, both through political and public support for the policy, we concluded that this policy alternative would be feasible. The state mandate would not be controversial or particularly bipartisan as it does not reallocate any of the state's budget or require financial support at all. The state is passing the responsibility onto regions to ensure they self-fund whatever means necessary to increase inpatient beds within their own region. Our other policy alternatives require either a property or sales tax increase in order to allocate funding for inpatient care. Property taxes are often unpopular both within the legislature and also within the general public (Rodriguez). Further, state requirements already cap property taxes for some counties so they cannot be increased much higher, which may not make this option feasible. It is important to consider, however, that without sustainable funding, it may be difficult for counties to comply with the mandate, which can be viewed as unpopular by the public. To this extent, we have found this alternative to not be feasible. Ultimately, we recognize the limits of this alternative, but determine it to be feasible when considering political support.

Inpatient Care Evaluation Criteria

Effectiveness – The effectiveness of each alternative will be measured by the expected increase in the ratio of inpatient care per Iowan, for every tax dollar spent.

Equity – The equity of each alternative will be determined by focusing on increased access to regional inpatient care.

Feasibility – The feasibility of each alternative will be based on public and political support for the proposals.

4.5.2 Increase State Sales Tax

Another way to increase inpatient mental health care in the state of Iowa would be to increase the state sales tax. The Iowa legislature has already debated the merits of increasing the state sales tax by 1 cent on the dollar. If this sales tax were implemented, the state has already guaranteed that $\frac{3}{8}$ of the funds generated would go towards improving the quality of natural resources like water. The remaining $\frac{5}{8}$ of the funds generated could go towards mental health care initiatives. If this tax increase were paired with a state-mandated increase for available inpatient health care within each mental health care region, the state could allocate funding to ensure that each region had the ability to comply with the state-mandated standards of inpatient care.

Effectiveness

Unlike a state-mandated change, increasing the state sales tax would increase the available funding that could go towards inpatient mental health care across the state. This would also give each region access to funds in order to comply with the inpatient mental health care mandate, thereby making new inpatient mental health facilities and treatment more sustainable. However, there is no guarantee that the additional funds generated by an increase in the state sales tax would go towards increased inpatient mental health care, and there is also no guarantee that the state would use the revenue generated from a 1-cent tax increase exclusively on mental health care.

By increasing the state sales tax, allocation of mental health care funding would be at the discretion of the state. This would mean that funds would not remain within each district, however, the state would be able to distribute additional funding to less-affluent regions. This would likely decrease the disparity between access to inpatient care in wealthier regions and access in less-wealthy regions. This would also likely increase rural access to inpatient care, which is one of the primary problems affecting Iowa's mental health care system.

Another important point to consider is the regressive nature of sales taxes. Sales taxes disproportionately affect lower-income Iowans because they take a greater percentage of income from people who earn less money. The effects of this could be mitigated, however, by ensuring that basic necessities (including food and medicine) remain exempt from the sales tax.

Feasibility

Taxation increases tend to be unpopular, and this could make it difficult for legislation increasing the sales tax to pass the state legislature. However, a poll conducted by the Des Moines Register and Mediacom found that $\frac{2}{3}$ of Iowans support a 1-cent increase in the sales tax to help pay for mental health services. The poll found that the proposal to increase the sales tax has garnered bipartisan support among Iowa voters.

A 1-cent sales tax increase has already been debated in the Iowa legislature, and although it has not been implemented, it is clear that there is political momentum in support of increasing mental health care in the state of Iowa. With the bipartisan support that the recent children's mental health bill, HF690, received within the Iowa legislature, increasing the state sales tax to support inpatient mental health care may be the clear next step to improving mental health care in the state.

4.5.3 Incentivize Block Grant Distribution

The final policy alternative to fund increased inpatient care is a block grant incentivization program. The state currently receives a federal Community Mental Health Block Grant for community-based mental health care, which they distribute to regions with discretion. Each region has the responsibility of allocating this funding to any form of community-based mental health care, which is largely outpatient care ("Mental Health Block Grant"). This alternative proposes that the state withholds the block grant funding until regions meet a minimum mandate for inpatient care, using the grant as an incentive for increasing inpatient care.

Effectiveness

Unlike an increased sales tax, this alternative guarantees that increased funding will go towards inpatient care. By withholding the grant until regions have complied with the inpatient care mandate, the state ensures that regions will put resources towards inpatient care, in order to receive additional funding for their community-based mental health services from the block grant. The state will not spend any additional tax dollars for this alternative, so we expect the ratio of increased inpatient

care per Iowan – in respect to tax dollars spent – to be high.

Consequently, this alternative would penalize regions who fail to meet the mandate by withholding the additional grant funding which they are currently receiving. Struggling regions could receive larger portions of the grant to assist funding of community-based mental health services, but only after complying with the inpatient care mandate. Overall, we expect that this alternative will increase the amount of inpatient care across the state without spending any state tax dollars.

Equity

In terms of improving regional access to care, there are several considerations to be made. If all regions were able to comply with the mandate by producing funding for inpatient care, we would expect to see more equal access to inpatient care across the regions. Since each region would increase inpatient care to provide adequate resources for their population, rural regions would see a much smaller disparity in access to care. By our standards, this alternative would be the most equitable.

It is likely that low-income and rural communities, however, will struggle more than other communities to produce adequate funding due to smaller populations and less property to tax. By withdrawing the Community Mental Health Block Grant and only providing it to regions who are able to meet the mandate without state assistance, this alternative runs the risk of decreasing funding in already suffering regions. While this program is intended to hold each region accountable for meeting the inpatient care mandate, withdrawing financial support from low-income regions may further decrease the inpatient care capacity in these regions. To combat this possibility, the state should set reasonable and feasible mandates for each region, such that each mandate matches the population and capabilities of its region.

If the mandate was met in each region, this alternative would produce the most accessible care options across the state. Furthermore, the Community Mental Health Block Grant could be prioritized towards regions in need once they complied with the mandate, to assist low-income and rural regions in strengthening community-based and outpatient care services.

Feasibility

We found incentivizing the Community Mental Health Block Grant to be politically feasible. Since this alternative incentivizes a national block grant, it does not require any additional taxation or funding from the state. Instead, counties will have to increase property taxes to fund inpatient care, which would be controlled by each individual region and/or county.

This alternative also has social feasibility. While taxes are widely unpopular, in general, local property taxes going towards local mental health care is more favorable than a statewide sales tax. There is wide support for increased mental health funding in Iowa, and local funding provides a direct channel for increased inpatient care resources (Murphy). For example, funding generated in Johnson County could go directly towards increased inpatient care at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. On the other hand, since the Community Mental Health Block Grant is a national funding source, it is not possible to determine the sustainability of this alternative. If the grant ceases to exist, this alternative would no longer be viable. Overall, this alternative is currently politically and socially feasible.

4.6 Policy Recommendation

We recommend the state of Iowa should incentivize mental health regions to increase inpatient care capacity with the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant. This alternative meets our expectations for effectiveness, equity, and feasibility, as shown in Table 4.2. Without spending additional state dollars, this alternative will guarantee an increase in inpatient care and decrease the disparity in access to care for rural populations. While this alternative runs the risk of limiting funding to regions who fail to meet the mandate, providing differing guidelines for each region should make it easier for all regions to meet increased standards for inpatient care. As long as the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant is in place, this alternative is feasible, and the ideal solution to increasing inpatient care in Iowa.

Table 4.2: Final Policy Evaluation Using Criteria-Alternatives Matrix

	State Mandate	Sales Tax	Block Grant
Effectiveness	–	–	+
Equity	–	+	+
Feasibility	+	+/-	+

Note: Each policy alternative has been given a (+), (–), or (+/–) for each criteria. A rating of (+) indicates that the alternative meets our requirements for the given criterion. A rating of (–) indicates that the alternative does not meet the requirements for the given criterion. A rating of (+/–) indicates that the alternative neither met nor failed to meet the requirements for the given criterion. Based on this matrix, only the Block Grant Incentivization alternative received three (+) ratings, while the State Mandate and Sales Tax alternatives received a combination of ratings.

Because the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant relies on the continuation of a federal program, the state does not have full control over the existence and total amount of funds brought in by the grant. If funding for the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant ceases to exist, it is still critical for the state of Iowa to fund inpatient health care. If funding from the block grant decreases or ends, we would recommend increasing the state sales tax to continue to provide a sustainable source of funding for mental health care.

Because of recent developments in the Iowa government, the state may be more inclined to increase the state sales tax to fund mental health care. In February of 2020, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds proposed a bill that would increase the state sales tax by 1 cent, in order to fund mental health care and programs improving water quality and outdoor recreation (Gruber-Miller). Some Iowa legislators have raised concerns that funding mental health care through the state’s general fund (as opposed to property taxes within each mental health region) would cause instability, since legislators would have to approve the amount of funding granted to mental health care each year (Gruber-Miller). As discussed earlier, increasing the state sales tax and funding mental health care through the general fund would ease the financial burden on less-wealthy regions, but we would urge the state to guarantee funding for mental health care. We would also strongly urge the state to use revenue generated by the 1-cent sales tax increase to increase the state’s capacity for inpatient mental health care.

Overall, there are many contributors to the decline in mental health care in the state of Iowa. While increasing inpatient care capacity throughout the state is the clear first solution, it is only the first step to improving mental health care. After increases in inpatient care capacity has been made throughout the regions, the state of Iowa needs to focus on strengthening community-based services and other facets of outpatient care. Many components should be considered in this process, does the state have the responsibility of maintaining quality of care throughout the state or can MHDS

regions assess their own individual needs within their jurisdiction? What are the best outpatient treatments and programs for mentally ill Iowans and how can Iowan communities support these services? Ultimately, mental health is a very important issue and much can be done to improve the quality of care in the state. Any policy that aims at improving mental health care in Iowa is progress for the state.



5. Decreasing the Use of Disposable Bags

5.1 Executive Summary

Plastic bag waste has the potential to produce contaminated water runoff, harm wildlife, and deteriorate Iowa's natural landscapes. Yet, it is one of the easiest pollution sources to control and reduce. There are numerous policy opportunities to reduce plastic bag waste. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how a hypothetical 5 cent plastic bag tax in the state of Iowa could be redistributed in government. Our report examines three policy alternatives to achieve this goal:

1. **State-Majority option:** Designate a higher percentage of the 5 cent tax to the state level
2. **County-Majority option:** Designate a higher percentage of the 5 cent tax to the county level
3. **Equal-Split option:** Designate an equal split between the state and county

These policy alternatives were judged using two criteria: equity and efficiency.

1. **Equity** is defined in two ways:
 - (a) *Process Equity* occurs when the tax money is reallocated throughout Iowa, with special consideration towards areas of low-income and low representation.
 - (b) *Outcome Equity* occurs when the allocation produces equitable outcomes for low income and underrepresented communities.
2. **Efficiency** is defined by the capability of a particular agent to produce beneficial change with a given amount of returned tax money.

Based on the analysis below, we recommend the state of Iowa adopt a State-Majority option when distributing allocations of a plastic bag tax. After coming to this conclusion, we explore programs and opportunities that could be funded with the tax money. Some already exist in Iowa today and others are inspired by successful bag tax programs elsewhere in the country.

Summary of Findings

<i>Equity</i>	
State-Majority Option	We found this option to be less equitable than the County-Majority option in terms of process equity. However, the state has potential to produce equitable outcomes for underrepresented communities through government programs.
County-Majority Option	We found this option to be the most equitable because it returns funds back to communities in the most direct way.
Equal-Split Option	We found this option to be equally equitable to the State-Majority option. An equal split is equitable in process equity. Yet, dividing funding between state and county can result in weaker outcome equity.
<i>Efficiency</i>	
State-Majority Option	We found this option to be the most efficient because the state has a large political framework to enact the greatest amount of change with a given amount of money.
County-Majority Option	We found this option to be the least efficient because Iowa counties do not have the capacity or political infrastructure to enact change like the state.
Equal-Split Option	We found this option to be more efficient than the County-Majority option but less efficient than the State-Majority option. Splitting up funding may result in insufficient resources for either the state or county to enact meaningful programs.

Summary of Findings: Efficiency

<i>State-Majority Option</i>	<i>We found this option to be the most efficient because the state has a large political framework to enact the greatest amount of change with a given amount of money.</i>
County-Majority Option	We found this option to be the least efficient because Iowa counties do not have the capacity or political infrastructure to enact change like the state.
Equal-Split Option	We found this option to be more efficient than the County-Majority option but less efficient than the State-Majority option. Splitting up funding may result in insufficient resources for either the state or county to enact meaningful programs.

5.2 Introduction

In the summer of 2008, 221 Iowans joined together to remove 47.4 tons of trash from the Winnebago, Shell Rock, and Cedar rivers. With a mission to clean up Iowa's waterways, the "A Watershed Awareness River Expedition" (AWARE) program traveled along 80.4 miles of river. AWARE board member, Brian Soenen, stated that the stretch of plastic bags hanging from the

vegetation caused volunteers to vow never to use plastic bags again.¹ However, since 2008, the use of plastic bags has only increased. A 2017 DNR waste audit found that plastic bags have increased in landfills from a 0.3% weighted average in 2011 to 0.9% across Iowa.² Although this percentage is seemingly small, plastic bag waste is not negligible. Plastic bags have crowded Iowa landfills and waterways, leading to adverse health concerns and the deterioration of Iowa's natural landscapes.³ Plastic bag reduction is one of the most readily available ways to mitigate waste without severely disrupting industry procedures.

Reducing the use of plastic bags is a multifaceted approach which demands many solutions. Given the size of the problem, it is unreasonable to address each and every facet in a single report. To move this policy discussion in the right direction, the present paper only considers different distributional variations of a 5 cent sales tax. However, we acknowledge the importance and feasibility of other policy proposals. We focus on this tax because it highlights a critical issue surrounding plastic bag reduction: tax distribution. At the end of this paper, we discuss additional avenues of policy and governmental programs our report hopes to motivate.

Table 5.1: Policy Dimensions in Reducing Plastic Bag Usage Via a Bag Tax

<p>Beneficiaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will the money gained from the tax be distributed? - Should the tax have income goals? <p>Principal Agent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should the tax amount be decided by the state or local communities? - Should a free-market solution address the plastic bag problem? - How much input should businesses have in the tax? <p>Tax</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How much should the tax be? - Should the tax be bracketed based on community income? <p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How soon should the tax be implemented? - Should a plastic bag reduction be carried out through a tax, grant, or ban? - What will be the geographic spread of the tax?
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Note: This table outlines the different policy dimensions to reduce plastic bag consumption in Iowa. Curbing plastic bag usage requires exploring the following facets: beneficiaries, principal acting agents, tax structure, and tax implementation. This listing is not dispositive; it simply illustrates the complex nature of disincentivizing plastic bags. This policy report will answer the first highlighted question.

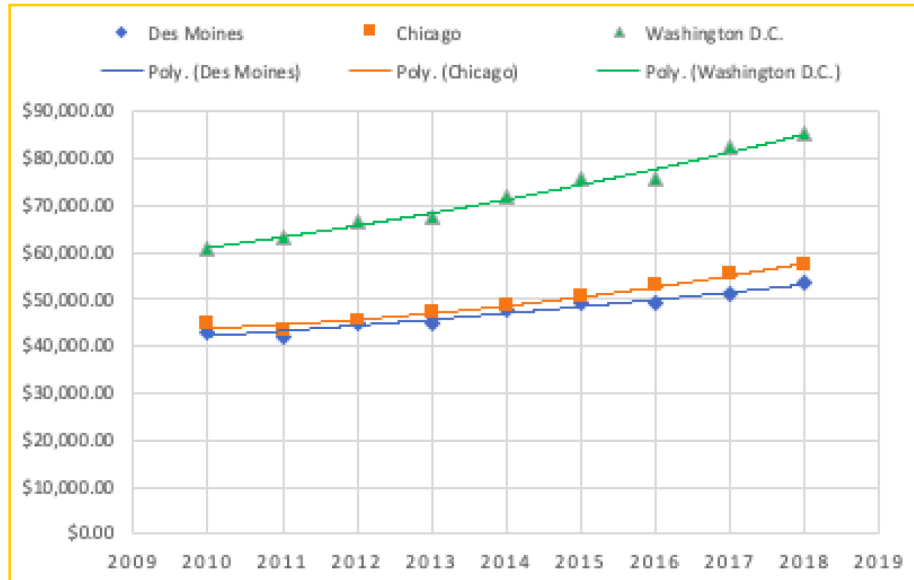
The scope of this policy proposal is limited to discussing the profit distribution of an assumed 5 cent plastic bag tax in Iowa. Other facets, found in Table 5.1, may explore the state's involvement in implementing the tax, the specific disincentive to minimize plastic bag usage, etc. Yet, this proposal is beginning with the assumption that a 5 cent plastic bag tax already exists in Iowa, and we will analyze which distributional schema best serves the ultimate goal of plastic bag reduction.

¹Kilen, Mike. "Plastic Problem: What One Tiny Iowa Town Did to Combat It, and How Yours Ranks." *Des Moines Register*, 4 May 2018

²"Environmental Protection." Iowa Department of Natural Resources, <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Land-Quality/Waste-Planning-Recycling>.

³Lithner. "Environmental and Health Hazards of Chemicals in Plastic Polymers and Products." *GUPEA*, 15 Apr. 2011, <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/24978>.

Figure 5.1: Median Household Income



Note: This graph uses American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The data estimates median household income values between 2010-2018. A household is defined as one or more people who occupy a housing unit. A best fit line is used to illustrate the similar economic trends seen in all three cities, even though the raw numbers differ. For instance, Washington D.C.’s median household income values are higher than those of Chicago and Des Moines. However, a similar growth trend is observed across the three cities.

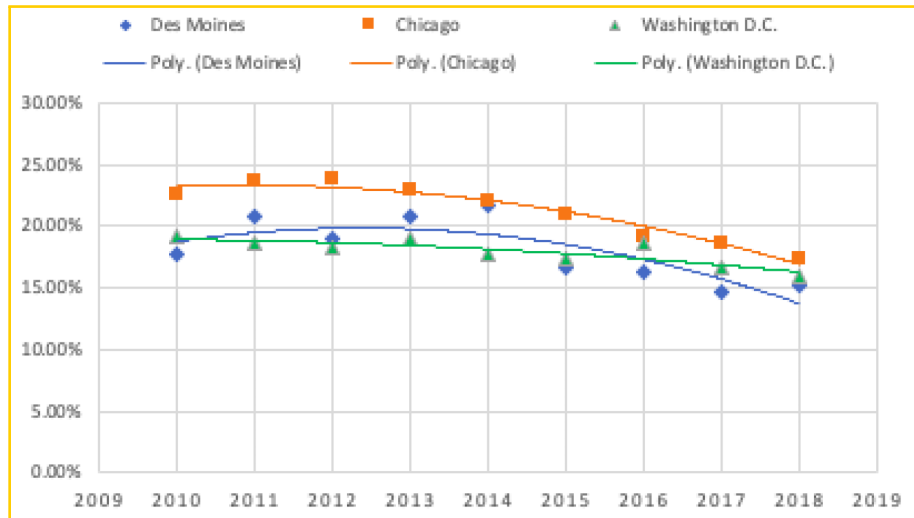
In addition to the Iowa tax assumption, it is assumed that businesses get 1 cent of the 5 cent tax because cities which currently have a plastic bag tax, such as Washington D.C., incorporate a business refund into their schema. In 2014, a survey found that 50% of D.C. businesses reported saving money as a result of the tax.⁴ Because of the success seen in Washington D.C.’s businesses, we decided to assume the same model which designates 1 cent to businesses. This policy report focuses on what happens with the rest of the 4 cents.

The cities of Washington D.C. and Chicago provide empirical examples which demonstrate the success of a plastic bag tax. These examples were used to assume a hypothetical bag tax for Iowa. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show how Washington D.C. and Chicago are comparable to Iowa’s capital, Des Moines. Although these cities may seem dissimilar, an analysis of the median household income and impoverished populations show similar trends across all three cities.⁵ These similar trajectories are used to assimilate tax programs in Chicago and Washington D.C. to Des Moines and the greater state of Iowa. Like Iowa, Washington D.C.’s waterways are overrun with plastic bags. In 2009, Washington D.C. passed legislation titled “Anacostia River Clean Up and Protection Act” to place a tax of 5 cents on plastic bags. Since its conception in 2014, Washington D.C. has observed a 60% decrease in plastic bag usage⁶ Washington D.C.’s success, coupled with its comparability to Des Moines, confers a useful bag tax framework to model for Iowa.

⁴“New Survey Data Shows District’s Bag Law Is Working.” DC.gov, 7 Jan. 2014

⁵U.S. Census Bureau, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>.

⁶“New Survey Data Shows District’s Bag Law Is Working.” DC.gov, 7 Jan. 2014

Figure 5.2: Percent of Population Below Poverty Level

Note: This graph uses American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The data estimates the population percentage of those living beneath the poverty level between 2010-2018. A best fit line is used to illustrate similar trends seen in all three cities, even though the raw numbers differ.

5.3 Policy Evaluation Criteria

An evaluation of state and county tax allocation must consider the following factors: how tax money is returned to a community, how efficiently the tax money is used, and which level of government can best utilize the money. To weigh these factors, we will be using the criteria equity and efficiency.

Equity is defined by how the tax money is reallocated throughout Iowa, with special consideration towards areas of low-income and low-representation. We will be evaluating process equity (will the money be distributed fairly amongst taxed communities?) and outcome equity (will the money actually enact tangible change in underrepresented communities?) in our analysis.

Efficiency weighs which governing body could most easily convert the tax money into productive programs. Similar to analyzing outcome equity, efficiency largely considers any programs dedicated to reducing plastic bag waste. Efficiency differs from outcome equity by focusing on how productive programs can be with the money received. Outcome equity considers if these programs are being efficiently carried out in small, poor, and underrepresented communities.

5.4 Policy Alternatives

Most plastic bag taxes feature a split allocation from the collected tax. In Washington D.C., retail establishments that collect the tax-exempt fee receive 1 cent of the 5 cent tax and can receive another cent for meeting certain conditions. The remaining 3-4 cents go into what is called the “Anacostia River Cleanup and Protection Fund” to be used for public education campaigns, trash clean up, and reusable bag distribution.⁷

Because this report assumes businesses receive 1 cent of the tax, 4 cents are leftover to allocate between the state and counties. We consider 3 alternatives about how the remaining 4 cents should

⁷“Subchapter 1-A: Anacostia River Clean-up and Protection.” District of Columbia Official Code: 2001 Edition, District of Columbia, 12 Oct. 2012

be allocated:

1. **State-Majority Option** – A greater proportion of the funds should be given directly to the state (3 cents state; 1 cent county).
2. **County-Majority Option** – A greater proportion of the funds should be given directly to the county (3 cents county; 1 cent state).
3. **Equal-Split Option** – State and county should both receive an equal amount (2 cents state; 2 cents county).

5.5 Choosing the Best Policy for the State of Iowa

5.5.1 Equity

State-Majority Option

When evaluating the equitability of this alternative, there are a few things to consider. First, counties like Polk or Johnston would likely get the lion's share of the aggregate tax funds if mostly kept at the county level, if one considers the tax as similar to a local option sales tax.⁸ If counties kept the majority, funds would improve services, drawing people and businesses away from other areas with worse services, bringing in more revenue and leading to unequal outcomes in the tax. Second, the State-Majority option could ensure redistribution to lower-income and rural areas that would be negatively impacted by the tax and receive less of the benefits. However, this is more dependent on the whim of the state legislators in how they use the funds. For instance, the state legislature could choose to offset the costs to small businesses that are having difficulty adapting to the bag tax. However, a County-Majority allocation would be more likely to use the funds for that purpose given the direct costs to that county's community. But while counties could do so, they would not have all the tools nor the scale of programs that the state does to create those incentives and aids. Counties would also be able to use their funds for whatever they determine is best while the state covers the costs to their local businesses. Because of this, the linchpin for this option is whether the state is sensitive to county needs.

County-Majority Option

This alternative ranks higher in process equity than the State-Majority Option because it directly returns tax dollars back to Iowan communities. The State-Majority Option risks disproportionately allocating funds to environmental programs in areas of higher populations.⁹ This results in less allocation for smaller, poorer, or underrepresented counties which already may be struggling to keep up with environmental standards and goals. A County-Majority Option would return more of the tax to smaller communities. In turn, this would give smaller, poorer communities more financial freedom to mitigate environmental problems locally. Additionally, counties will likely have a clearer financial and environmental context on how they should spend money in their community. The State-Majority Option will be more disconnected with the localized financial and environmental situations of each county. Thus, a state allocation program may be disjunct with the actual needs of a community. However, a State-Majority Option may rank higher in outcome equity than a County-Majority Option. The state will have a larger governmental structure in place to solve county based problems for small, poor, and underrepresented communities.

Equal-Split Option

Equal funding to both the state and county may seem like the fair distribution choice; but, this is with regards to process equity, not outcome equity. Receiving one large payment from a single

⁸Zhao, Zhirong Jerry, and Yilin Hou. "Local Option Sales Taxes and Fiscal Disparity: The Case of Georgia Counties." Wiley Online Library, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd (10.1111), 14 Feb. 2008

⁹Maxwell, James A., and Jay Richard. Aronson. Financing State and Local Governments. Brookings Institution, 1977.

program is simpler and easier to manage in comparison to receiving that same payment from dozens of different program allocations. A centralized revenue allocation from either the state or county level (not both) would be an easier avenue for small county bureaucracy to manage rather than dealing with the intricacies of both. Established programs in Iowa like the Iowa Family Investment Program, Medicaid, Low Income Energy Assistance, and many others are all administered by the state level government. This indicates that comprehensive social programs intended to affect statewide communities would most likely be strongest if it began at the state level.¹⁰

With this being said, the County-Majority Option has a more direct impact on communities than the State-Majority Option. Local governments are naturally more in tune with their smaller communities than large state officials, and because of this, county based programs are more easily tailored to the counties in which they exist. In theory, a tax split between the state and county would offer both tailored programs at the county level combined with the large scale administrative oversight of state efforts. This split solution could work, but programs at both levels need to be centralized enough to maximize funding. Two separate programs at the state and county level receiving equal funding may scrape by on a small budget. On the other hand, one comprehensive program at either the state or the county level would avoid partitioning the tax fund, allowing for a better funded program. Besides Connecticut, no other state implements a program at the state level.¹¹ For example, Chicago's bag tax, which has seen a bag reduction from 80% usage to 54%, allocates 5 cents of its 7 cent tax to the city while the other 2 cents is returned to businesses.¹² Because of this local control, places like Chicago and Washington D.C. have seen success with tailored projects intended to benefit taxed communities.

5.5.2 Efficiency

State-Majority Option

The state has a larger budget and wider variety of program possibilities in comparison to county level governments. However, counties wouldn't receive the majority of what may be an unpopular tax. Backlash and a lack of public support may hamper better funding options as legislators strive to meet public demand to stay in office.¹³ Legislators acting solely to their district's needs could inhibit potential programs and cause inefficient outcomes for the state at-large. Despite this, the state would have greater established administrative resources and infrastructure to support established programs. Many Iowa counties will not have such infrastructure to establish efficient programs. Additionally, the state has more revenue at its disposal to use and could thus create larger-scale policies than a single county or even a collection of counties could create.

Additionally, one could argue that counties know best about their particular needs. If there is miscommunication or a lack of county input, then outcomes could be less efficient at the state level than the County-Majority or Equal Split options.¹⁴ If county input is not given adequate consideration, the state may not direct environmental clean up or aid towards counties that need it most. For in-

¹⁰“Government Benefits Available to Iowa Citizens.” Iowa Welfare - Learn and Find Benefits, www.welfareinfo.org/ia/.

¹¹Schultz, Jennifer. “State Plastic and Paper Bag Legislation.” State Plastic and Paper Bag Legislation, National Conference of State Legislatures, 1 Nov. 2019, www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/plastic-bag-legislation.aspx.

¹²Ruppenthal, Alex. “Bag Tax Study: Use of Disposable Bags Down But Still Above 50 Percent.” WTTW News, 7 Sept. 2016, news.wttw.com/2018/09/07/bag-tax-study-use-disposable-bags-down-still-above-50-percent

¹³Niemi, Richard G; Stanley, Harold W; Vogel, Ronald J. State economies and state taxes: Do voters hold governors accountable? *American Journal of Political Science*; Oxford Vol. 39, Iss. 4, (Nov 1995): 936.

¹⁴Gerber, Elisabeth R. “Legislatures, Initiatives, and Representation: The Effects of State Legislative Institutions on Policy - Elisabeth R. Gerber, 1996.” SAGE Journals, 1 June 1996

stance, Iowa was ranked 17th in the nation for toxic air emissions by the Center for Public Integrity in 2019. There are only 5 power plants contributing to almost half of the chemicals released in 2014 in Iowa.¹⁵ Pollution has adverse immediate effects and contributes to a negative impact for the state at-large. State misallocation or a misinformed state legislature would reduce the chance of funding going to where it is actually needed or result in an ineffective program. While air pollution is declining now, problems such as these would make that reduction less steep than it could be.

County-Majority Option

Efficiency judges the ability of the county to use their allocations to impact environmental change in Iowa. In Chicago, localized allocation proved to be successful because the city was able to effectively refinance the tax into environmental programs for the city.¹⁶ However, every county in Iowa does not have the resources and organizational structure of Chicago. Therefore, creating effective environmental programs may fall short at the county level.¹⁷ A centralized power, such as the state, could have the capacity to spend less while accomplishing more. The state of Iowa, with complex infrastructure already in place, could arguably achieve more with a given amount of money because of its resources and ability to organize. For these reasons, it is likely that a State-Majority Option would be more efficient than a County-Majority Option.

Equal-Split Option

A plastic bag reduction program would have a greater impact if consolidated at either the state or county level but not both. Spreading the revenue from the plastic bag tax across numerous programs dilutes the quantity of money each program receives. As demonstrated by Figure 5.3, small environmental programs, like those in Iowa, witness a stronger increase in efficiency the more money they receive early on.¹⁸ Thus, spreading money over a series of small programs is not as efficient as investing in a few healthy, medium-sized programs. Furthermore, centralized funding will provide spillover benefits between environmental programs because their goals sometimes overlap.¹⁹

At both the county and state levels, there exists current programs dedicated to reducing pollution and waste. A bag reduction program is more likely to be effective if it's centered at one level of government. For instance, the successful "Anacostia River Clean Up" project in Washington D.C. has managed to reduce plastic bags, and this project was only implemented at the city level. A large scale state clean up program has not yet been implemented in Washington D.C., but splitting the tax between the state and county level risks lowering the capabilities at both levels.

Split funding between state and county programs might not provide sufficient funds to establish a sustainable program. Rather, these divided funds would only be well equipped to assist already existing programs in their efforts, and could not support new, ambitious environmental reduction programs.

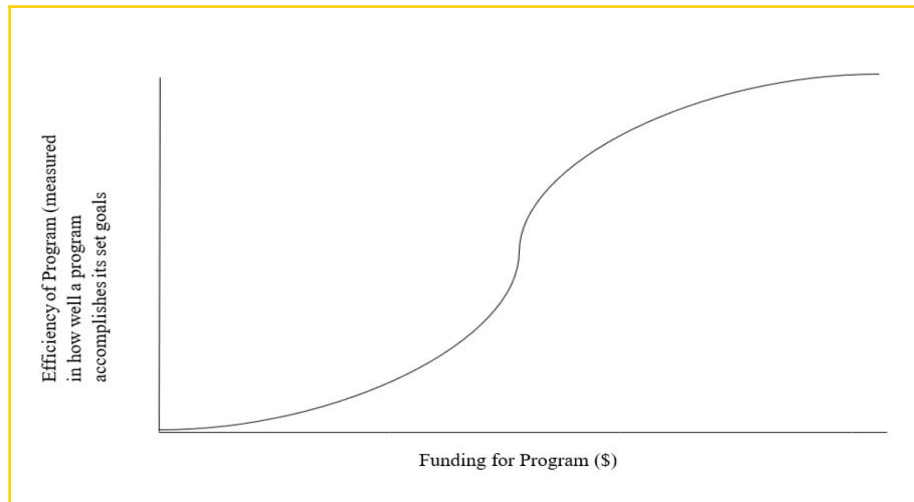
¹⁵Eller, Donnelle, and Jeffrey C. Kummer. "Iowa Ranks in Top 20 for Toxic Air Releases." Des Moines Register , Des Moines Register, 30 Sept. 2016, www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/health/2016/09/29/iowa-ranks-top-20-toxic-air-releases/90435546/.

¹⁶Schultz (n 11)

¹⁷Maxwell (n 9)

¹⁸Dunleavy, Patrick. Bureaucrats, Budgets and the Growth of the State: Reconstructing an Instrumental Model. British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Jul., 1985), pp. 299-328.

¹⁹Edwards, Chris. "Bureaucratic Failure in the Federal Government." Downsizing the Federal Government ,Downsizing the Federal Government, 1 Sept. 2015

Figure 5.3: Funding vs. Efficiency Trade-Off

Note: The startup of a bureaucratic program requires covering fixed costs in the beginning, such as hiring staff for the first time, developing administrative infrastructure for the program, and material purchases. These initial costs are dedicated to getting the program off the ground. Once the program is active, there is a middleground zone where money put into the program is translated into increased output and efficiency of the program. Money is most effectively put to use in this area. However, administrative bloat and bureaucratic inefficiency can lead to diminishing returns from each dollar spent on the program, eventually leading to a plateau where money is just being poured into a program with little improvement. For the context of this paper, we want to select a distribution where funded programs will have enough money to comfortably sit in that middle area (where the most output is achieved per dollar). We are concerned with overcoming the startup hump and administrative bloat, and therefore we will be judging the options that can best supplement existing environmental efforts.

5.6 Policy Recommendation

Evaluating program equity must consider what distribution would most directly return tax money to communities while simultaneously judging the efficiency of the distributional scheme. Typically, the two types of counties that produce the most plastic bag pollution are populous counties. In Iowa's case, these counties would be places like Polk and Linn County, and industrial centers like Dallas and Plymouth.²⁰ Given this, the greatest potential for waste reduction exists in these counties. However, these counties are within the top 10 highest average income counties in the state, and they naturally have more money to put towards waste reduction.²¹ Appanoose County,²² which has the lowest median income in the state, reported only one booster club dedicated to environmental clean up, with \$788,632 of the county budget dedicated to county environment and education in FY 2018-2019.²³ In comparison, Polk County yielded \$14,926,953 to the same cause and hosts over 50 different environmental organizations.²⁴ Thus, it seems that directly delivering funds to low income programs awards more funding in proportion to the income level of that county. A state

²⁰Paulson, Amanda. "US Counties Get Mixed Grades in 'State of the Air' Pollution Report." The Christian Science Monitor, The Christian Science Monitor, 18 Apr. 2018, www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2018/0418/US-counties-get-mixed-grades-in-State-of-the-Air-pollution-report.

²¹Kendall, Michaela. "Here Are The 15 Richest Counties In Iowa." OnlyInYourState, 21 Sept. 2015, www.onlyinyourstate.com/iowa/15-richest-counties-in-ia/.

²²"Nonprofit & 501C Organizations Appanoose County IA." Appanoose County Iowa Nonprofits and 501C Organizations - Search and Download Lists, 16 Nov. 2019, www.taxemptworld.com/organizations/appanoose-county-ia-iowa.asp.

²³"Levy Calculator." Iowa Department of Management: Local Government Budget Publication, 5 Mar. 2018, www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/localbudgets/.

²⁴Dunleavy (n 18)

level distribution may accomplish a similar dissemination of the funds to low income counties; but, a county level program would accomplish this objective more directly and with less bureaucratic steps between state and county level. An Equal-Split Option likewise poses excessive bureaucratic steps to distribute funding to counties.

Table 5.2: Final Policy Evaluation Using Criteria-Alternatives Matrix

	State-Majority	County-Majority	Equal-Split
Equity	2	3	2
Efficiency	3	1	2
Total	5	4	4

Note: The table above showcases how we ranked each alternative using the two criteria. The ranking system uses a scale of 1 to 3 - 3 being the highest, and 1 being the lowest. Thus, the alternative with the highest total, a maximum of 6, is what we determine to be the best. Scores were determined based on the reasons and arguments for/against each option under the corresponding criteria. From this evaluation, we determined that the State-Majority Option would be the overall best policy.

The literature analyzing whether state or county-run pollution programs are more efficient is still being developed as new programs are implemented. Connecticut is the only state that currently collects and allocates revenue from a bag tax on the state level.²⁵ In theory, most federal environmental programs pass from federal to state jurisdiction - not immediately down to the counties. For instance, Clean Air Act regulations, watershed measures, and other pollution protocols are all statewide programs.²⁶ At the same time, county level spending on environmental programs mainly constitutes septic system installation and health regulations for businesses such as tattoo parlors and restaurants.²⁷ With regard to Figure 5.3, large scale plastic bag cleanup initiatives at the county level would incur large startup costs. This means the tax generated funds might be squandered trying to startup a program which cannot last without greater funding. Meanwhile, the state already has the pollution initiatives and bureaucratic network established from previous programs. It's more likely that the state would properly intake money from the bag tax and transfer it into progress. Therefore, the State-Majority Option wins out in terms of efficiency, with the next most viable option being the Equal-Split Option. The County-Majority Option is deemed least efficient.

5.7 Tax-Funded Policy Options

We decided to additionally investigate a list of potential programs which utilize the profits from the bag tax. However, no recommendation is given as to which program is best.

We will use the Washington D.C. bag tax as a model case for Iowa. The Washington D.C. Department of Energy and Environment reports over \$19 million has been raised in revenue for the district to use over the span of nearly 10 years.²⁸ While D.C. itself does not have a larger population than Iowa (showcased in Figure 5.4, with less than 1/3rd of Iowa's total population), the D.C. metropolitan area has a larger population than Des Moines.²⁹ This could mean that the amount

²⁵“Single-Use Plastic Bag Fee – Effective August 1, 2019.” CT.gov , 1 Aug. 2019, portal.ct.gov/DRS/Legislative-Summaries/2019-Legislative-Updates/Single-Use-Plastic-Bag-Fee.

²⁶Iowa Welfare (n 10)

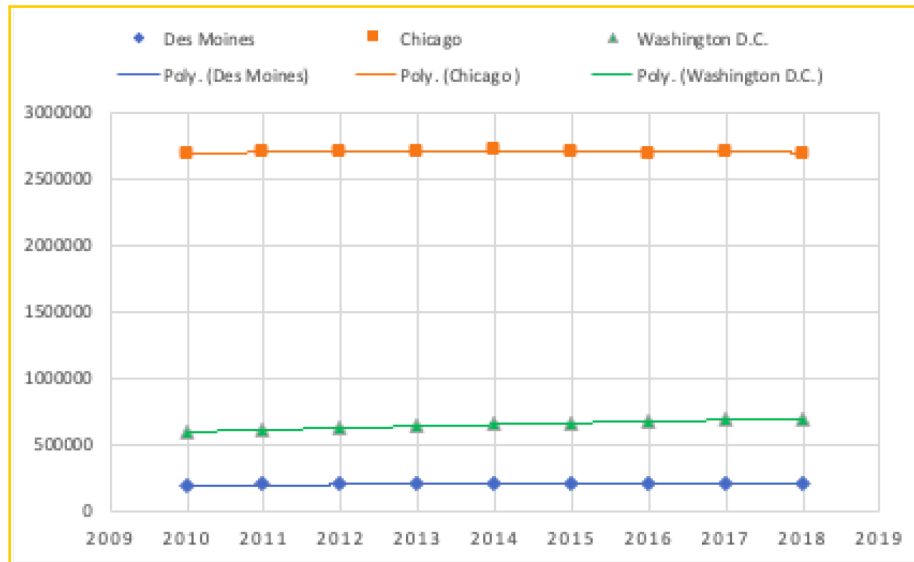
²⁷ADLM Environmental Health Main Page , Monroe County, Iowa, www.monroecoia.us/offices/adlm/index.htm.

²⁸“Skip the Bag, Save the River.” Skip the Bag, Save the River , doee.dc.gov/service/skip-bag-save-river.

²⁹“U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Iowa.” Census Bureau QuickFacts , U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov>.

of revenue D.C. is collecting would be larger than Iowa's, without considering taxes gathered from non-residents. Given this information, the money raised in Iowa could be less than half this amount over 10 years without even mentioning other potential factors.

Figure 5.4: Percent of Population Below Poverty Level



Note: This graph uses American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year data from the U.S. Census Bureau. This graph displays Des Moines, Chicago, and Washington D.C.'s estimated resident populations over time, from 2010-2018. A best fit line is used to showcase the trends in population for all three cities. Iowa as a whole has a population of over 3 million.

It's important to note that the tax is mainly intended to change consumer habits for environmental benefit, not raise revenue. The goal is to encourage consumers to reduce their plastic bag use to reduce litter and encourage environmental health. Plastic bags have multiple substitutes available; therefore, eliminating this waste source is one of the easiest ways to reduce pollution and litter. Additionally, the nature of the tax means there would naturally be a decline in revenue over time (the more people stop using plastic bags to avoid the tax, the more revenue will decrease). This occurred in Chicago which had set a goal of raising \$9 million in revenue within the first year of the tax and then raised less than a third of that goal 5 months after it took effect. Additionally, as a result of the tax, bag usage per trip dropped 42% within a single month.³⁰ As Figure 5.4 shows, Chicago and Des Moines have large population differences, but Chicago's city population is roughly comparable to Iowa's state-wide population. Yet, the population density may have an effect on the amount of raised revenue, and it does not consider the role non-residents play in each city/state economies. Because of the forecasted lack of revenue generation and the intention of the tax, we believe tax funds should be used to supplement environmental programs. The bag tax revenue should not be the sole source of program funding because it will not be consistent over time.

The proposed bag tax can further environmental goals such as clean air, clean water, litter reduction, etc. The tax can also be used to support currently existing programs in need of revenue. Because the funds are supplementary, the programs should not rely on them for long-term revenue. The bag tax funds should be fit into already established program structures. Given the constraints in revenue

gov/quickfacts/IA.

³⁰Svachula, Amanda. "Bag Tax Missing Revenue Goal but City Touts Drop in Use of Disposables." Chicago Sun Times, Chicago Sun-Times, 5 July 2017, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2017/7/5/18358005/bag-tax-missing-revenue-goal-but-city-touts-drop-in-use-of-disposables>.

and objectives of the tax, we provide potential funding priorities that we believe could benefit from supplementary funds and/or have received bag tax revenue in other states:

Environmental Education and Clean Up

A potential allocation could prioritize things such as environmental education, clean up programs, and reusable bag distribution. Washington D.C. has used funds to prioritize these types of programs and a number of other environmentally-related objectives. Distributing reusable bags to low-income areas and elderly individuals would promote equitability within the program. Environmental education, alongside clean up programs, would drastically reduce litter and plastic pollution. However, if an environmental program is defined using the bag tax as the funding source, the allocation of funds should be explicitly defined to avoid potential inefficiencies, as D.C. has faced. For instance, the bulk of the tax revenue went toward youth education and administrative positions. This left less than half of the tax revenue for actual river cleanup.³¹ Nevertheless, utilizing funds similar to D.C. would be a beneficial model to minimizing plastic pollution.

Land Recycling Program

Funds may be used for the Iowa's Land Recycling Program (LRP) to reduce land contamination in brownfields. The LRP permits owners or other stakeholders of a property to "voluntarily assess and implement remedial actions at a site that is contaminated or is perceived to be contaminated."³² After a site is deemed contaminated, The Department of Natural Resources then provides a "No Further Action Certificate" for the site "and/or other remedies to assure the protection of public health and the environment." An investigation conducted in 2012 by Iowa Watch found that cities and counties are not using programs that would help pay the costs of cleaning up brownfields, the major reasons being a lack of program awareness and the "daunting, unwanted task"³³ of filling out grant applications. Increased funding could help assist counties and cities with applying and getting more information about these programs, or could directly fund other bureaucratic measures which normally are impediments to small countries completing graphs. Just this year, the city of Oskaloosa has taken advantage of the EPA's brownfields grant and received \$300,000 in funds. In the same release, the EPA states how brownfield grants increase local tax revenue within a single year after clean up and increase residential property values.³⁴

Infrastructure Financing or Business Incentives

This option, as used in Chicago, increases funding of general operating funds and essential services such as road maintenance, public health, or police/fire protection.³⁵ This could potentially satisfy counties and gain their support of a bag tax, thereby increasing the political feasibility of the policy. Specifically, there is a need for road maintenance and improved infrastructure. The American Road and Transportation Builders Association released 2017 data showing that Iowa was ranked first for the number of "structurally deficient" bridges (5,067 total). Additionally, Iowa was ranked second for the total percentage of structurally deficient bridges (20.9%, second only to Rhode Island at

³¹Brittain, Amy, and Steven Rich. "Is D.C.'s 5-Cent Fee for Plastic Bags Actually Serving Its Purpose?" The Washington Post, WP Company, 9 May 2015, www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/nickel-by-nickel-is-the-dc-bag-fee-actually-saving-the-anacostia-river/2015/05/09/d63868d2-8a18-11e4-8ff4-fb93129c9c8b_story.html.

³²"Environmental Protection." Iowa Department of Natural Resources, www.iowadnr.gov/environmental-protection/land-quality/contaminated-sites/land-recycling-program-lrp.

³³Elmer, Mackenzie. "Iowa Cities, Towns Miss Opportunities When Cleaning Contaminated Land." Iowa Center for Public Affairs Journalism, 20 Dec. 2012, www.iowawatch.org/2012/09/16/iowa-cities-missing-opportunities-when-it-comes-to-cleaning-brownfield-areas/.

³⁴Murdie, Ashley. "City of Oskaloosa, Iowa, Selected for \$300,000 EPA Brownfields Grant to Address Contaminated Properties." EPA, Environmental Protection Agency, 5 June 2019, www.epa.gov/newsreleases/city-oskaloosa-iowa-selected-300000-epa-brownfields-grant-address-contaminated.

³⁵"Corporate Fund Revenue." Annual Financial Analysis, chicago.github.io/afa-2017/.

24.9%)³⁶ and nearly 9% of Iowa's roads are in poor condition.³⁷ Greater financing of road and bridge repair would be incredibly beneficial to Iowa's deteriorating infrastructure.

Infrastructure financing boosts economies and long-term growth. It has a multiplicative effect where "each \$100 spent on infrastructure boosts private-sector output by \$13 (median) and \$17 (average) in the long run."³⁸ Maintaining Iowa's infrastructure is important to attracting businesses and staying competitive in the market. Moreover, better infrastructure can combat damages incurred by flooding. Jasper County officials estimated roughly \$853,000 worth of damages because of flooding in March.⁴⁰ The bag tax could help repair roads and employ preventative measures to minimize future damage.

Offsetting costs to businesses is another way in which the bag tax revenue can be used. This would help minimize potential profit loss and address how this tax will equitably impact businesses. A program like this could even help businesses grow if the incentives create conditions better than the status quo before the tax. This might involve reducing other taxes businesses have to pay or providing tax incentives for promoting growth in small businesses. If this program is enacted, the legislature should determine the potential harm to businesses. After this assessment, resolutions that maximize taxpayer dollars and address business concerns should be employed.

5.8 Conclusion

After careful investigation of the data, our research has determined that the **State-Majority Option** is the best policy proposal. A State-Majority Option achieves the best blend of equitability and efficiency. While funds may not be as equitable in terms of process equity (counties that raise the money do not necessarily keep 100% of it), we find that the overall efficiency of the State-Majority Option outranks the other options (as ranked in Table 5.2). Given the state's capability and already established administrative resources, the tax funds ought to be allocated mostly to the state for maximum program productivity. Although the process equity of a State-Majority Option is a concern, we find that the state would give an equitable outcome in its redistribution and fund usage. This is why we gave the State-Majority option a 2 for equity. However, more research is needed to further understand this complex issue.

Our research is limited to analyzing the tax distribution of an assumed plastic bag tax. As Table 5.1 highlights, there are a multitude of other issues where further research should be pursued. Hopefully, this paper has encouraged further thought about a plastic bag tax and motivated additional questions about its multiple and complex dimensions.

³⁶"2017 National Bridge Inventory ASCII Files." American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), 2018

³⁷Fleig, Shelby. "Iowa Infrastructure Ranks 9th Worst in the Country, Says New Index." Des Moines Register, 14 Aug. 2018, www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2018/08/13/iowa-infrastructure-bridges-roads-9th-worst-country-24-7-wall-st-department-transportation-dot/978254002/.

³⁸Bivens, Josh. "The Potential Macroeconomic Benefits from Increasing Infrastructure Investment." Economic Policy Institute, 18 July 2017, ³⁹

⁴⁰Mendenhall, Mike. "County Estimates \$850K in Flood Damage to Roads, Infrastructure." Breaking News, Local News, Sports and Video - Newton Daily News, 27 Mar. 2019, www.newtondailynews.com/2019/03/26/county-estimates-850k-in-flood-damage-to-roads-infrastructure/aaypb6/.



6. Incentivizing Cover Crops in Iowa

6.1 Executive Summary

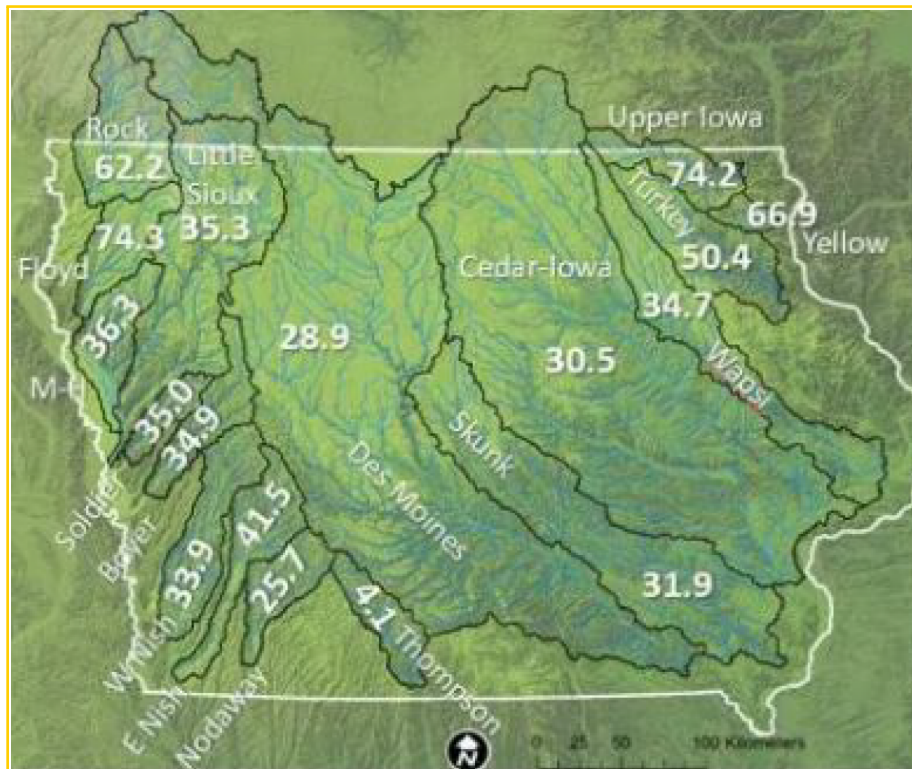
Cover crops serve a variety of purposes on farmland, including managing soil erosion, reducing nutrient pollution, and increasing biodiversity. Cover crops can be broadly defined as any non-cash crop grown in addition to the primary cash crop. They are planted and replanted yearly, and can take many forms including oats, rye, wheat or radishes. As a form of sustainable agriculture, their use on Iowa and surrounding states' farmland is steadily growing, going from being present on 592,000 to 880,000 acres of Iowa farmland from 2015 to 2018. However, their use is not a norm across the state, protecting only 3.9% of corn and soybean acres in Iowa. The goal of this paper is to determine the best way for the Iowa state government to incentivize more widespread implementation of cover crops. Some policies currently exist that encourage farmers to implement cover crops on their land. These include things like property tax incentives, cost share programs, and crop insurance reductions. While these programs are doing a small part to encourage the use of cover crops, more must be done to ensure widespread implementation of cover crop use. One of the main reasons to encourage this practice is the opportunity that cover crops provide for improving Iowa's water quality.

6.2 Introduction

Iowa is currently experiencing some of the worst water quality levels recorded due to nutrient pollution from agricultural practices across the state. While nutrient pollution can come from many sources, over 90% of stream nitrate in Iowa comes from agriculture. Since 2003, measurements have shown an increase of 100.4% in statewide stream nitrate loads, meaning the amount of nitrogen pollution in Iowa's waterways has doubled in the last 20 years. Figure 6.1 below shows the current amount of pounds of nitrates that are created by each acre of crops in Iowa.

Due to the detrimental effects of Iowa farming practices seen in Iowa and beyond, as demonstrated in Figure 36.2, Iowa created the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy. This strategic plan, formulated in 2008, aims to decrease the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen in Iowa's waterways.

Figure 6.1: Why Do We Need Cover Crops?



Note: 2019 nitrate losses in pounds per crop acre. (Source: IIHR Researcher University of Iowa.)

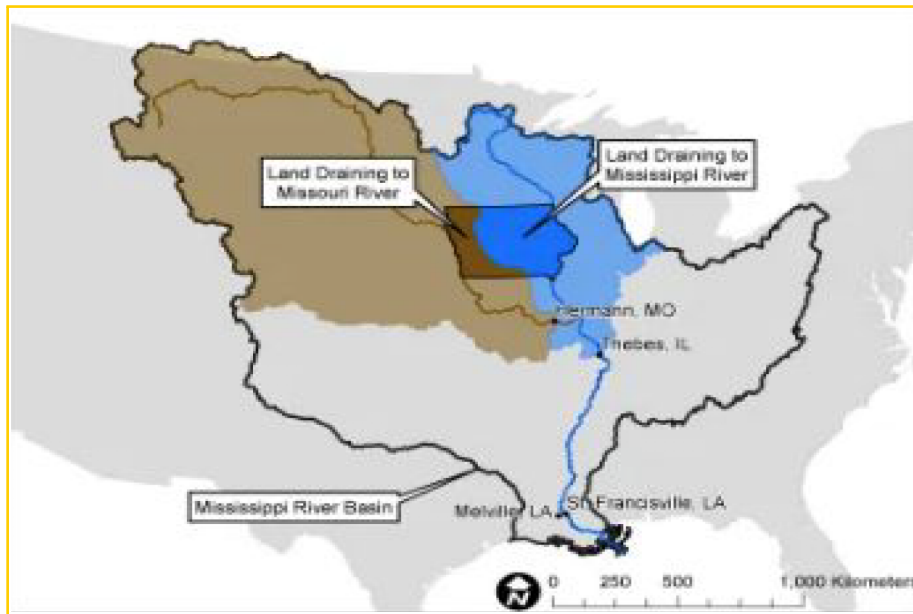
International Impacts of Iowa's Water Quality

Currently, one of the most profound effects of Iowa's polluted water systems can be seen in the Gulf of Mexico dead zone: an area the size of Connecticut containing oxygen levels so low it is unable to sustain marine life. This dead zone is the result of high levels of nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorous flowing into the Gulf of Mexico, mainly from the high concentration of fertilizer usage in the Corn Belt. On average, Iowa is responsible for 55 percent of the load in the Missouri River (Jones, et. al, 2018). As each of these lead to the Gulf of Mexico, Iowa holds a lot of responsibility for the current scenario in the Gulf.

This reduction is possible through both point sources and non point sources. Point sources are wastewater treatment sites and factories, and non point sources are farms. For the purposes of this paper, the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy's focus on non point source reduction is important, as farms make up a majority of land in Iowa. This is found in the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan, which outlines that Iowa farms must reduce total nitrogen by 41% and total phosphorus by 29%. Currently, one effective way of reducing this nutrient pollution and meeting these goals is through the use of cover crops.

According to Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy Assessment, cover crops have been shown to reduce nitrogen levels by 29%, and currently are the most effective practice for improving Iowa's water quality, alongside decreasing initial nitrogen applications. To meet nutrient goals, the Nutrient Reduction Strategy outlines a goal of 12.6 million acres of cover crops planted. In 2017, Iowa had

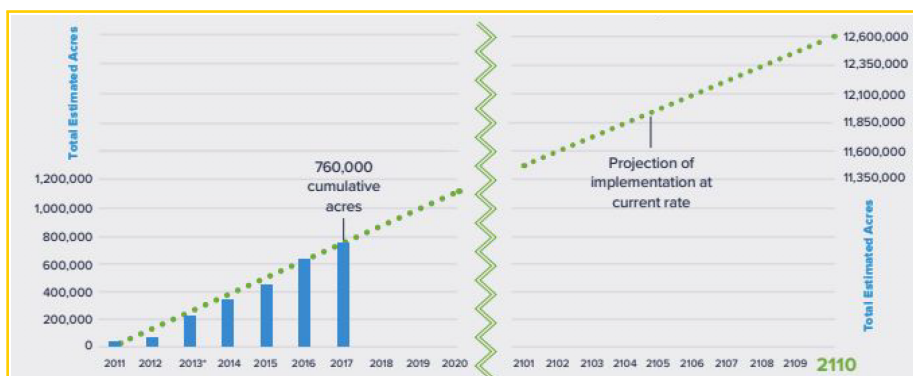
Figure 6.2: Where Does Iowa’s Run-off Go?



Note: Iowa areas draining to the Missouri River, Upper Mississippi River and Mississippi River watershed draining to the Gulf of Mexico. (Source: Jones et. al, 2018.)

only 760,000 acres of cover crops. If the current trend of increased usage every year continues, it could take 96 years to reach the ideal acres of cover crops. Figure 4 shows this projection along a timeline of 100 years. This was calculated by the Iowa Environmental Council, using data from Nutrient Reduction Strategy assessments which have reported cover crop use through the years of the program.

Figure 6.3: Projected Timeline to Reach Cover Crop Goal



Note: Approximate years to reach appropriate cover crop acreage to ensure water quality. Based on Scenario 1 outlined by the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy of achieving 12,600,000 cover crop acres in 20-30 years. (Source: Iowa Environmental Council.)

Therefore, the pace at which cover crops are implemented must continue to accelerate if the state’s goals are to be met within the given timeframe of 20-30 years. Additional assistance is needed to help farmers implement conservation strategies to achieve Iowa’s goals of nutrient reduction.

6.3 Policy Alternatives

It is difficult to incentivize farmers to implement cover crop practices on their own due to cost and feasibility. There are many ways to incentivize cover crop use, and in this paper we analyze potential policies to determine the best course of action to do so. They are: a cost-share program, a discount on crop insurance and a government mandate. These options, among many, are the most realistic and feasible courses of action, as there exist current administrative mechanisms that can implement them. In the following pages, a cost-share program, a discount on crop insurance, and a government mandate are evaluated based on which will provide the greatest effectiveness at the lowest cost. Below is a brief explanation of these options.

6.3.1 Cost-Share

Cover crops can be incentivized through cost-share programs. These programs allow farmers to use federal and local funding to assist them in purchasing and maintaining cover crops for the first few years until the crops are no longer a financial burden. There are several different programs targeted at both new cover crop users looking to engage in more conservation practices and experienced users. Depending on the program in which farmers enroll, they can receive a certain number of annual payments as they follow cover crop practices.

Cost-share programs in the United States are administered by the Department of Agriculture, which works one-on-one with farmers to determine their rates and guide them through the process of planting successful cover crops. Under the Department of Agriculture, two programs specifically incentivize agricultural conservation practices; the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Both programs provide annual payments to registered farmers that are accurately utilizing cover crops on their land.

6.3.2 Insurance Discount

Crop insurance, as it stands currently, is a federal government program; agricultural producers can buy into this program to protect their crops from various risks (USDA). Crop insurance, generally, is an opt in program that protects farmers' crops from natural disasters or circumstance-specific revenue declines. Farmers pay a premium, and the program functions as any typical insurance model. Crop insurance can be purchased from various private companies authorized by the federal government (USDA).

A crop insurance discount, in this context of cover crop incentivization, functions as a reduction in current costs to farmers who have crop insurance in exchange for desired behavior. In this case, the federal government may implement a discount-per-acre for farmers who plant cover crops alongside their cash crops. This is in contrast to other methods that entail directly providing funds to farmers to incentivize certain behaviors. Crop insurance discounting, specifically in exchange for planting cover crops, has existed in Iowa for several years now (USDA).

6.3.3 Government Mandate

Another way that the state could increase the use of cover crops is through a government mandate. This mandate would require that 25% of a farm's cropland be covered with a perennial cover crop in the winter and spring months by the year 2023. This deadline would give farmer's three harvests to figure out which kinds of crops work best on their fields. The type of cover crop would be at the discretion of the farmers, as different varieties of crops are more well suited to certain kinds of farmland. Farmers would still have access to government incentives programs such as crop insurance discounts and cost share programs mentioned above, to help meet the demands of

the mandate. This mandate would function as a starting point, and could be steadily increased if necessary to eventually result in a majority of acres having cover crop coverage.

6.4 Policy Evaluation Criteria

We will be assessing these policies in terms of their effectiveness and their feasibility. We define effectiveness as the likelihood that the program will result in increased cover crop adoption and use, and to what extent. This specifically is measured by the amount of cover crop acreage that is either increased or utilized as a result of the program design. We define feasibility in terms of cost to the government and we use our measurements and data from our effectiveness criteria to determine how costly it would be for each specific program to reach the cover crop acreage goal of 12.6 million.

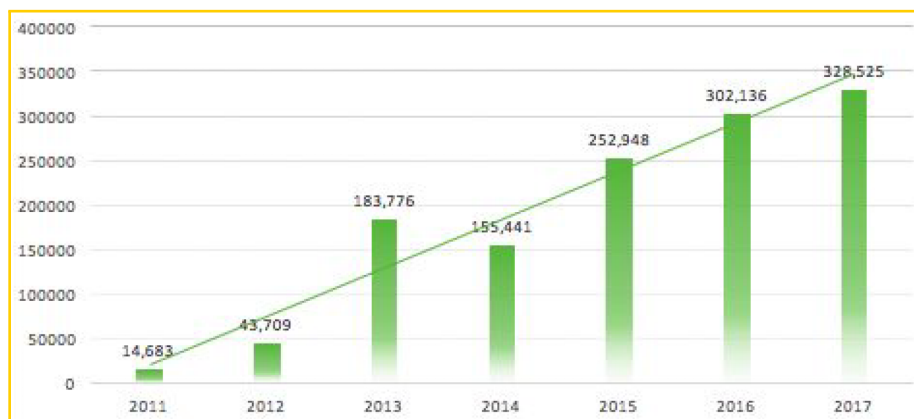
6.5 Choosing the Best Policy for the State of Iowa

6.5.1 Cost-Share Programs

There is evidence suggesting that cost-share programs as they currently function in Iowa are effective in incentivizing implementation. According to the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, government cost-share programs enrolled 330,000 cover crop acres in Iowa in 2017 and in the same year 760,000 total acres were planted. Since 2011, the state has experienced a steady increase in cover crop acres.

Researchers at Iowa State University studied cost-share effectiveness in the adoption of cover crops in the state of Iowa in 2013. They analyzed data from the Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll, an annual longitudinal survey of Iowa farmers, in order to estimate the effect of cost-share programs. The study revealed that cost-share funding has a positive and statistically significant effect on cover crop usage, both in the number of acres across Iowa that contain cover crops and the proportion of cover crops planted per acre. The study revealed that having cost-share funding tends to increase the proportion of cover crop acres planted by 15% among all farmers (González Ramírez). In summary, cost-share funding is generally effective in increasing cover crop acres in Iowa. Figure 6.4 below shows this program's success.

Figure 6.4: Acres of Cover Crops Enrolled by Cost Share Programs in Iowa



Note: Cover crop enrollment from 2011 to 2017. (Source: Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.)

While the current program has been effective in increasing cover crops planted, the policy's current

rates are not high enough to achieve the Nutrient Reduction's Strategy goal of 12.6 million acres planted in one year. As stated in the Nutrient Reduction Strategy, at the current rate of planting it would take Iowa 96 years to achieve this goal, which is far too long to make effective improvements to our water quality. As the federal government currently administers funding for these cost-share programs, the Iowa state government should supplement this funding to increase the payments farmers receive when they enroll. The federal government currently gives about \$10 million every year to Iowa farmers as incentives to plant cover crops (Charles). If the state were to supplement that funding at a 50% rate, Iowa would be contributing about \$5 million per year. Assuming that cost-share implementation would increase at a rate proportional with funding increases, cover crop usage would increase by an additional 50% every year as well. As the most recent measure of cover crop acres revealed 328,525 acres, this discount would increase by an additional 164,262 acres per year, totaling to 492,787 acres planted every year. This policy proposal would be effective at attaining the goal of 12.6 million acres after 24 years, which is within the window of time set by the Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

To attain 12.6 million acres of cover crops, Iowa will need to increase cover crop usage by 11,840,000 acres. This means increasing cover crop acres from 3.9% of Iowa's farmland to about 41%. At a cost of \$5 million per year to the state of Iowa and at a rate of 492,787 acres planted every year for 24 years, this policy would cost the state government \$120 million in total. Seeing as the annual state budget is over \$22 billion, this policy proposal would be a small fraction of the state's funding (Ballotpedia).

6.5.2 Discount on Crop Insurance

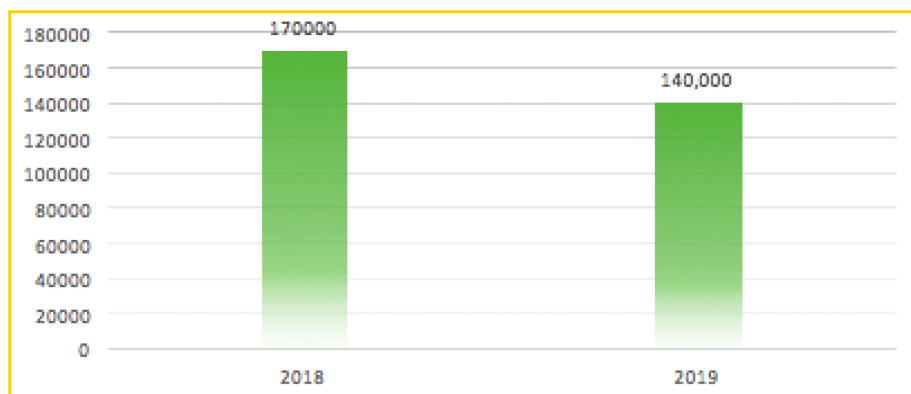
Iowa currently facilitates a discount on crop insurance for farmers that plant cover crops. Since 2018, the government of Iowa has collaborated with the federal government's United States Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency to provide a \$5 per acre discount on acres that have cover crops from current premiums (USDA). This discount is paid for, ultimately, by the state government, who foots the bill for these discounts via tax revenue.

Data on long-term success rates of a cover crop discount on crop insurance rates is limited, as Iowa has only implemented this program since 2018 and only Illinois has even more recently implemented the program with a similar design (Illinois). However, in the years since it's beginning, Iowa's policy has been successful and agricultural producers have been utilizing it. Figure 6.5 below shows the rates at which this program was utilized by farmers in its preliminary years.

In 2018, 170,000 acres were covered by this policy (USDA). Because of the way in which this program functions, the Iowa state government subsidizes this insurance premium through tax revenue directly and in full. Each acre of cover crops that is covered in this policy costs the state government \$5 (USDA). Consequently, in 2018, the total cost of this program to the government was \$850,000. In 2019, 140,000 acres were covered by this policy; this cost Iowa's government \$700,000.

One large reason for the reduction in acres from the first to the second year of the program is due to the program requirements. This \$5 premium reduction policy can only be utilized if farmers are not benefitting from any other related policy; in other words, they cannot "double dip" benefits (USDA). Year to year, farmers must make personal decisions about the best ways to finance their land and which programs to utilize. This program saw a decrease because different cost-share programs or property tax exemptions were able to compete with this policy for farmer opt-in.

Figure 6.5: Acres of Cover Crops Enrolled by Iowa’s Cover Crop Insurance Premium Discount Program



Note: Cover crop enrollment from 2018 to 2019. (Source: United States Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency.)

Because this program was successful in both 2018 and 2019, we would expect continued use of the program, even at smaller rates than the crop share program. However, in order to increase this program’s effectiveness, we advise that the program discount be raised to \$10.00 per acre. Pricing of crop insurance premiums per acre vary greatly depending on the type of crop that is planted, but a typical premium for a corn plant in Iowa is \$22.00 (Plastina). In terms of incentivization, a \$10.00 discount on this price is significantly more appealing than a \$5 discount. For other crops, such as Soybeans, premium prices can be as low as \$8.00-\$12.00; so with a discount of \$10.00 for planting cover crops, some farmers will be highly incentivized to utilize this policy, increasing the amount of cover crop acres substantially (Plastina).

To project the effect that this would have in terms of implementation, we analyze current acreage use and calculate the costs associated with them. Iowa has an estimated 30,622,731 acres of farmland (Iowa). The current amount of cover crop acres is approximately 880,000 (Iowa). With a 100% increase in the cover crop premium discount, we would expect program participation to generally double. Given that approximately 150,000 of the current 880,000 acres of cover crops are currently utilizing this program, we would expect 365,000 of the remaining cover crop acres to enroll in the program. We cannot expect full participation, as there will still be a stipulation that participation in this program requires non-participation in other discount or cost share programs. However, participation would exist simply due to the continuing trend of planting new cover crops paired with the discount increase. From 2015-2017, cover crop acreage increased by over 300,000 acres (Jordan). With conservative estimates, an additional 150,000 (the approximate initial participation rates from the \$5 discount announcement) of cover crops would be planted under this program change. Therefore, 515,000 total cover crop acres would utilize this program in the next cycle; accruing a total cost to Iowa’s government of \$5,150,000.

According to the Nutrient Reduction Strategy, the ideal amount of cover crop acres is 12.6 million. The current cover crop adoption rate, as Iowa’s insurance discount stands, is 1.1% of the ideal rate, at a state cost of \$700,000. In order to increase the adoption rate by just 3%, to total to a 4.1% adoption rate of the ideal 12.6 million, we projected that a premium discount increase was necessary, totaling the state cost to \$5,150,000. Even assuming that a discount increase was not necessary, and that adoption rates increased by this projected amount every year, full program participation with 12.6 million acres of cover crops would cost the state \$1.26 billion yearly and

take 33 years. However, in order to effectively incentivize that much utilization of the program, it would take a discount increase well over double what our recommendation is, rendering the crop insurance model ineffective and instead mimicking direct cash payments. The ideal cover crop acreage is not achievable or feasible under the crop insurance discount model.

6.5.3 Government Mandate

The price of cover crops, whether they are Ryegrass, Clover, Oats, Vetch, or others, varies greatly. To name a few: Ryegrass ranges between \$9.00 and \$16.00 per acre, Oats range between \$12.00 and \$17.00 per acre, and Clover ranges between \$14.00 and \$21.00 per acre. Costs of seeds per acre of cover crops generally range from around \$9 to \$36, with costs and ease of planting varying by location and specific geographical characteristics. For the purposes of simplicity in this paper, we will take a generous average for the cost of cover crops per acre of land. Across Iowa, the average cost of planting one acre of cover crops is \$18.00. Currently, there are around 26,256,347 acres devoted to cropland in Iowa, and the average farmer farms around 351 acres. That means that with this mandate, the average Iowa farmer would be required to spend around \$6,318 each year to cover their entire field with cover crops. With the initial 25% requirement, the average farmer would only need to cover around 88 acres of their field, requiring expenditures of \$1,584 each year. While some farmers may be able to cover those costs, to others this mandate would be an extensive financial burden.

There are no current examples of a similar mandate taking place within the United States. Some countries such as Romania and Uruguay have had success with varying levels of cover crop mandates, but since their infrastructure and agricultural systems are not comparable to Iowa's, we can't assume similar outcomes here in Iowa. In terms of effectiveness, theoretically the mandate option would ensure the most widespread adoption of cover crops. However, there are various technical and cultural barriers to this kind of a mandate that would not necessarily ensure equity, as some farmers would have a higher burden than others. Those farmers unable to afford to implement cover crops by the 2023 deadline would have no means to meet the mandate unless additional government assistance was offered. Furthermore, the implementation of a government mandate can be costly and in this case extremely hard to keep track of due to the growing number of rented acres in Iowa. Since no other state in the U.S. has implemented any sort of government mandate requiring cover crops, it is hard to estimate how this would be received by the farming community and how effective it would be as many farmers would not be able to meet these high individual costs on their own. It is for these reasons that we do not recommend adoption of a government mandate on cover crop implementation for the state of Iowa.

6.6 Policy Recommendation

Table 6.1: Effectiveness and Feasibility of Policy Alternatives

	Crop Share Program Increase	Discount on Crop Insurance	Government Mandate
Effectiveness	+	-	+
Feasibility	+	-	-

Note: Each policy alternative has been given a (+), (-), or (+/-) for each criteria. A rating of (+) indicates that the alternative meets our requirements for the given criterion. A rating of (-) indicates that the alternative does not meet the requirements for the given criterion. A rating of (+/-) indicates that the alternative neither met nor failed to meet the requirements for the given criterion.

Table 6.1 is a visual depiction of the relative strengths and weaknesses of a potential crop share program increase, discount on crop insurance, and state government cover crop mandate. Due to the need to drastically increase cover crop usage to meet Nutrient Reduction Strategy goals, in July of 2019 the Iowa Environmental Council proposed that the state consider mandatory participation for farmers to implement a variety of conservation methods. While requiring a basic standard of conservation measures through a government mandate could help improve Iowa's water quality, this is an option that would hurt both farmers and the state. In a 2018 Cover Crop User Survey conducted by the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, 83.39% of users indicated that they planned to use cover crops in the subsequent year. This strongly indicates that by increasing incentives and introducing more farmers to the practice of cover crops, high rates of continuous use would be observed across the state without mandating the action. Increasing Iowa's supplementation of the federal cost share program already in place would allow more farmers throughout the state to access the resources to plant cover crops on their fields. As it can take between three and five years for farmers to see the full impact of cover crops, it is important to ensure continual funding for these incentivization programs. With this increase in supplemental funding for cost-share programs in Iowa, farmers have the potential to drastically improve Iowa's water quality, creating a better future for Iowans and the rest of the world.



7. Iowa Gun Rights: Strict or Reasonable?

7.1 Executive Summary

The Iowa legislature proposed the addition of an amendment protecting Iowans' Second Amendment rights to the state constitution that would require courts to use a legal standard of strict scrutiny rather than a legal standard of reasonableness when evaluating gun regulation. As the legislature considers which level of scrutiny should be applied to potential gun regulations, it is important for them to balance the interests of Iowans who are gun rights advocates and also Iowans who are gun control advocates. Legislators have the responsibility of representing the interests of all of their constituents, so they must find a middle-ground between these competing groups.

We used three gun regulation policies, an **assault weapons ban**, **background checks**, and a **seven-day waiting period**, to evaluate the **impact of a strict scrutiny standard** on potential Iowa gun control legislation.

For **strict scrutiny**, where a government must have a compelling state interest for the law and the law must be narrowly tailored to that interest, we found the following:

- *Background Checks*: Strict scrutiny standard **is not met**.
- *Assault Weapons Ban*: Strict scrutiny standard **is not met**.
- *seven-day Waiting Period*: Strict scrutiny standard **is met**.

For **reasonableness**, where any reasonable regulation of the right to bear arms is constitutional and evaluating the significance of the burden is required, we found the following:

- *Background Checks*: Reasonableness standard **is met**.
- *Assault Weapons Ban*: Reasonableness standard **is met**.
- *seven-day Waiting Period*: Reasonableness standard **is met**.

We conclude that a **second amendment to the Iowa Constitution that does not include the standard of strict scrutiny would better balance the interests of both gun rights and gun control advocates**.

7.2 Introduction

Politicians in the United States have long debated the true meaning of the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Asserting the right to form citizen militias and bear arms against a corrupt government was declared unalienable in 1776, but there have been technological advancements in gun manufacturing which have put weapons far more lethal than the Founding Fathers could have foreseen into the hands of everyday, non-military personnel. This has led to debates about the role of the government in controlling gun ownership and regulation.

Table 7.1: Timeline of Gun Control Regulations in the United States

Year	Event	Description
1791	Second Amendment – U.S. Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to bear arms is established in order to allow citizen militias the right to organize
1939	<i>United States v. Miller</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to bear arms may not guarantee the right to keep and bear certain weapons if there is no relationship to a militia
1968	Gun Control Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ban on guns with no sporting purpose • Restrictions on the young and the mentally ill • Requires serial numbers and strict licensing
1993	Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background checks must be completed before gun purchased from a licensed dealer, manufacturer or importer
1994	Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (“Crime Bill”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included an assault weapons ban, which expired in 2004
2008	<i>D.C. v. Heller</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed precedent set by Miller in 1939 • Says the "individual right to possess a firearm is unconnected with service in a militia" • States handgun ban and trigger-lock requirement is unconstitutional

Note: List of most relevant gun control and gun rights legislation since the founding of the United States of America as first reported by Sarah Gray of Time Magazine on April 13, 2019.

Throughout the twentieth century, gun control was deemed an important step toward maintaining public safety. Several laws were passed (see Table 7.1), such as those which restricted gun purchasing for the mentally ill or banned military-style assault weapons.¹ Notably, in the 1939 U.S. Supreme Court case *United States v. Miller*, Justices declared that the right to bear arms may not guarantee the right to owning and operating all guns, external to a militia.

¹Gray, Sarah. TIME.com, TIME Magazine, 13 Apr. 2019, time.com/5169210/us-gun-control-laws-history-timeline/.

However, in 2008 the U.S. Supreme Court case *D.C. v. Heller* ushered in a new era of expanded gun rights by reversing the precedent set in *U.S. v. Miller*. This case determined that people have an individual right to possession of a firearm, separate from affiliation with a militia. This is important because it implies that the legal precedent defaults to the rights of gun owners, and any standard of legal burden is put on those challenging Second Amendment cases.

Several states have adopted their own Second Amendments within their state constitutions in order to bring more local control to the issue of gun rights. This has led to the current debate in the state of Iowa, which is relevant to our discussion.

In 2018, the Iowa legislature voted to approve a Second Amendment addition to the Iowa Constitution with language as follows:²

The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. The sovereign state of Iowa affirms and recognizes this right to be a fundamental individual right. Any and all restrictions of this right shall be subject to strict scrutiny.

Amendments to the Iowa constitution must be passed by both chambers of the legislature in two separate general assemblies and then put on a state-wide ballot. The legislature voted in the 2017-2018 legislative session to approve the language, and will vote on the amendment again in the next assembly, and then could be placed on the ballot as early as 2022.³

Iowa is one of six states that does not currently have the second amendment in its state constitution. Iowa's current proposed amendment goes above and beyond even the federal constitution by including strict scrutiny language, a level of regulation only three states – Alabama, Louisiana, and Missouri – currently have (see Figure 7.1).⁴

Gun rights advocates argue that the amendment containing strict scrutiny language would protect gun ownership as a fundamental right, where looser language may not. Gun control advocates would like for amendment language to mirror the U.S. Constitution, which does not include strict scrutiny language. They say the burden of strict scrutiny would prevent reasonable gun regulations from being passed and could threaten some current gun control laws. As seen below in Figure 7.1, only three states have language requiring strict scrutiny to evaluate gun restrictions: Missouri, Louisiana, and Alabama.

It is likely that the addition of the second amendment will come up again in the next legislative session and potentially move on to the state-wide ballot after that, so it is relevant for the Iowa legislature to evaluate the implications of different types of amendment language and how the interests of Iowans may be impacted by each.

7.3 Relevant Legal Standards

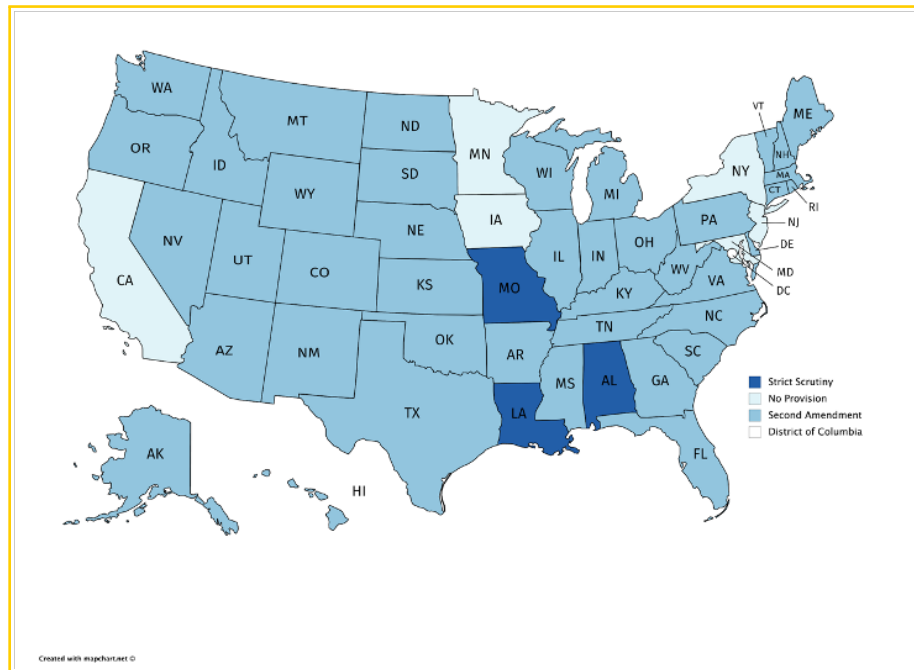
We will evaluate two alternatives for the second amendment language: one which mandates a legal standard of strict scrutiny, and one which leaves judicial discretion unspecified, meaning judges

²Boshart, Rod. "Iowa senate passes gun rights constitutional amendment." *The Gazette*, The Gazette, 21 Mar. 2018, www.thegazette.com/subject/news/government/iowa-senate-passes-gun-rights-constitutional-amendment-20180321.

³The Iowa Constitution, <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/law/statutory/constitution>

⁴"State Right to Bear Arms.", Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 8 Nov. 2019, lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/state-law/50-state-summaries/state-right-to-bear-arms/.

Figure 7.1: Second Amendment Provisions by State



Note: This figure shows a map of the United States by type of second amendment provision. The states shaded in dark blue represent those with strict scrutiny language, those in the next lightest shade have a reasonableness standard, those in the lightest shade have no amendment in their state constitution, and the District of Columbia is shaded white as it is not a state.

would evaluate the law by the legal standard of reasonableness.

7.3.1 Strict Scrutiny

Strict scrutiny is the toughest form of judicial review. Strict scrutiny requires a law to serve a compelling state interest and be narrowly tailored to serve that interest. Very few laws are able to survive this standard of review.⁵ As shown in Figure 7.1, only three states currently include strict scrutiny language as part of their state Second Amendments: Alabama, Louisiana, and Missouri. Gun regulation laws in such states are nearly always struck down, as strict scrutiny requires the constitutional “right” to be upheld except in relatively extreme circumstances.

The National Rifle Association’s campaign to add strict scrutiny language to state constitutions suggests an “iron wall” will be constructed around gun rights. The Louisiana Supreme Court, in a strict scrutiny state, has placed the burden of proof on those challenging gun regulations, stating that “[challengers] must demonstrate clearly and convincingly that it was the constitutional aim of [second amendment] provision to deny the legislature the power to enact the legislative instrument in question.”⁶ Gun regulations such as background checks or an assault weapons ban will presumably be deemed within the scope of the second amendment and thus subject to strict scrutiny.

⁵Pettys, Todd E. “The N.R.A.’s Strict Scrutiny Amendments.” Social Science Research Network, Social Science Research Network, 4 Sept. 2018, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3244081.

⁶ibid.

7.3.2 Reasonableness

In the absence of scrutiny specifications, courts have turned to a “reasonableness standard.” This standard is between rational basis and intermediate scrutiny, and requires evaluating the significance of burdens the regulation would impose. Under this standard, *any reasonable regulation of the right to bear arms is constitutional*.⁷ This standard gives judges more discretion when it comes to regulation.

To avoid specifying which tests Iowa courts should apply when evaluating restrictions on Iowa’s Second Amendment, language including levels of scrutiny and the words “fundamental right,” which implies strict scrutiny, would be left out. The purpose of not specifying the level of scrutiny that should be used is to allow the courts to decide which level to apply on a case by case basis. This allows the courts flexibility to determine which level of scrutiny to apply, and, in effect, determine the outcome of a case based on precedent versus the idea that gun rights must always be upheld.

However, there are some potential concerns about the standard of reasonableness. It gives the courts an enormous amount of power and discretion over outcomes of various cases, as it is not as specific as strict scrutiny. It is more difficult to predict the outcomes of court cases under the standard of reasonableness because the political makeup of the court will likely influence their interpretation of the standard. Still, this level of flexibility would likely be beneficial for both gun control advocates and gun rights advocates, as compromise is more feasible with the burden of a reasonableness standard rather than strict scrutiny.

7.4 Choosing the Best Policy for the State of Iowa

When state legislators consider constitutional amendments, it is important to consider stakeholders and in this case, the opinions of both gun rights and gun control advocates. The positions of gun owners are widely known and acknowledged by the National Rifle Association and would not be threatened by the addition of second amendment language to the Iowa Constitution, as the language would only place a burden on those trying to regulate the right to bear arms. If the proposed strict scrutiny amendment passes, it is the rights of gun control advocates who may be limited.

For this reason, we reached out to three gun control advocacy groups in Iowa: Iowa Moms Demand Action, Students Against School Shootings, and March for Our Lives. In the era of mass shootings and prevalent gun violence, gun control groups are frequent lobbyists at the state capitol and will continue to apply pressure to the state legislature to pass gun control legislation to maintain public safety. After thoughtful discourse and email exchange with each group about their legislative agenda in upcoming sessions, we determined three main asks of theirs to evaluate under both a strict scrutiny standard and a reasonableness standard: background checks, an assault weapons ban, and a seven-day waiting period.

Each of these are proposals the state legislature will continue to hear from the gun control groups. We sought to provide some insight on the fate of these asks if the second amendment language includes a standard of strict scrutiny versus a standard of reasonableness, particularly by looking at legal challenges in other states to their laws about background checks, an assault weapons ban, and a waiting period. This gives some basis for precedent when imagining how they might be upheld or struck down in Iowa. We also decided to take overall political feasibility and public opinion into consideration as criteria for success, because no law exists in a vacuum subject only to constitutional

⁷Winkler, Adam, and Edwin S. Grosvenor. "The Reasonable Right to Bear Arms." American Heritage, Oct. 2019, www.americanheritage.com/reasonable-right-bear-arms.

language. The desire of Iowans to pass certain legislation and also the political makeup of the legislature should be considered when thinking about the addition of second amendment language to the Iowa Constitution.

7.4.1 Reconsidering Background Checks

Overview

Background checks are the process of looking through a potential gun-purchaser's criminal history before allowing them to buy a firearm. They help prevent firearms from falling into the hands of those who are not legally allowed to possess them. The federal requirement for background checks was passed in 1994. Since that passage, over 3 million people have been stopped from purchasing or obtaining a permit to purchase a firearm, and over 35% of those who were prevented from possessing a firearm were convicted felons.⁸ While this is good news for gun regulation advocates, loopholes still exist for unlicensed sellers. Around 80% of all firearms used for criminal purposes were obtained through an unlicensed seller.⁹ Many criminals seek out unlicensed sellers because they are not required to conduct background checks for potential buyers. This is possible because some states do not have state regulations that require background checks.

Background checks are required by federal law, but as it currently stands, states can choose to not have their own requirement and instead have sellers go directly to the Federal Bureau of Investigation to conduct the check. In other words, states can choose to act as full points of contact for background checks or defer to the FBI to conduct the checks. Some states act as a partial point of contact, such as Iowa, while others offer no state contact. Despite some states (particularly strict scrutiny states) not being partial points of contact, national public opinion shows strong support for background checks.

Public Opinion

A Public Policy Polling survey revealed that 83% of gun owners nationwide supported universal background checks for all firearm sales, including those by private sellers.¹⁰ This is significantly higher than the 14% of gun owners that oppose background checks. This support extends to both sides of the political spectrum, with 90% of Democrats and 81% of Republican gun owners in support. 72% of the members of the National Rifle Association also support background checks. 66% of gun owners reported that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports background checks, 56% of those being from the Republican party. Advocacy from both major parties and gun owners alike show that background checks have high public support.

Case Studies

The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act was an act passed by Congress in 1993 that required federal background checks on people who purchase firearms.¹¹ This act required local chief law enforcement officers (CLEOs) to conduct these federal background checks. It mandates that licensed gun sellers must use the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) before selling a firearm. Unlicensed sellers, such as online and gun show sellers, are able to take

⁸Strong, Benton. "RELEASE: Gun Owners Overwhelmingly Support Background Checks, See NRA as Out of Touch, Poll Finds." Center for American Progress, 17 Nov. 2015, www.americanprogress.org/press/release/2015/11/17/125618/release-gun-owners-overwhelmingly-support-background-checks-see-nra-as-out-of-touch-new-poll-finds/.

⁹"Universal Background Checks." Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/background-checks/universal-background-checks/>.

¹⁰Strong (n 8)

¹¹United States General Accounting Office, 25 Jan. 1996, www.gao.gov/assets/160/155338.pdf.

advantage of a loophole in the federal law in order to not conduct background checks.¹² States can opt-in to being a contact for the NICS, otherwise sellers can conduct background checks directly through the FBI. States that do not have their own requirements increase access to private-seller loopholes because it enables them to sell without conducting checks. The three states that currently specify strict scrutiny language are not points of contact for background checks. Iowa, however, acts as a partial contact for these checks.

Reasonableness or Strict Scrutiny?

In order to pass **strict scrutiny**, universal background checks would first have to meet a *compelling government interest*. Background checks prevent people who suffer from mental illnesses or who have been convicted of felonies from possessing firearms. Keeping firearms out of the hands of people who pose a threat to the public is of compelling interest to the government. Second, legal precedent dictates that laws must be *narrowly tailored* to achieve that compelling government interest. Because universal background checks would be conducted on every purchaser from licensed and unlicensed sellers and are not limited to convicted felons and those with mental illness, they do not meet the narrowly tailored requirement of strict scrutiny.

Under the standard of **reasonableness**, any reasonable gun regulation is constitutional. Background checks meet a compelling government interest to increase public safety. Because the purpose of background checks is logical and public support is high, it is fair to say that background checks meet the reasonableness standard.

Louisiana has no state requirement for background checks when the seller is not licensed.¹³ Instead, background checks must go directly through the FBI. Alabama has no state requirement for background checks when the seller is not licensed. Instead, background checks must go directly through the FBI.¹⁴ It is unlawful to knowingly sell a firearm to a minor, patient of a mental institution, drug addict, or felon. Missouri has no state requirement for background checks when the seller is not licensed.¹⁵ Instead, background checks must go directly through the FBI.

Iowa currently acts as a partial point of contact for NICS background checks.¹⁶ Local sheriff's offices conduct checks on applications for handgun permits. Anybody who wants to obtain a handgun must possess a 5-year permit, which requires a background check every 5 years. If strict scrutiny were added to the Iowa Constitution, Iowa would be the only strict scrutiny state to be a partial contact for NICS background checks, as the other states do not have a state requirement.

Background checks have overwhelming public support. Gun owners from both major parties are in favor of universal background checks and closing all loopholes through unlicensed sellers. The majority of the public supports them because of the effects that they have on illegal possession of firearms, which in turn increases public safety. Because of these positive effects, it is reasonable to say that universal background checks fit a compelling government interest to protect the public from people who should not have firearms. Because support for background checks is vastly bipartisan, it is likely that the Iowa General Assembly would protect regulations dealing with background checks under the standard of reasonableness. However, background checks do not satisfy strict scrutiny, so background check regulations would likely not pass if Iowa adopted strict scrutiny language. Although background checks meet the standard of reasonableness and despite high public support,

¹²Universal Background Checks (n 9)

¹³ibid.

¹⁴ibid.

¹⁵ibid.

¹⁶ibid.

background checks would not pass Iowa's potential addition of strict scrutiny.

7.4.2 Reconsidering Assault Weapons Bans

Overview

The debate on an assault weapons ban in the United States has been going on for decades. To fully understand the breadth of this debate, it is important to define clearly what is and is not considered an assault weapon. Many gun rights advocates say "assault weapon" is a made-up term coined by the anti-gun lobby, and that it is overly simplified and used to incite fear in the general public. The reason for this is the distinction they claim between weapons like the AR-15 and the M-16. AR-15s are semi-automatic assault rifles that were first sold to the public in the 1960s, while M-16s are fully-automatic military-grade weapons used by personnel serving in the armed forces. The AR-15 can fire about 45-60 rounds per minute, where weapons like the M-16 (which is already banned for civilian use), can fire up to 1000 rounds per minute.¹⁷

Deep into the "tough on crime" era, President Clinton sought to pass multiple gun control and crime reduction bills during his tenure – among those, the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 and the infamous "Crime Bill": the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The 1994 Crime Bill is the first instance of a ban on semi-automatic assault weapons like the AR-15.

Currently, seven states and the District of Columbia have an assault weapon ban. Several other states and even some localities have some regulations on the type of weapon, size of magazine, alterations made to weapons, and age/profession of the person possessing an assault weapon. Assault weapon bans have been challenged in appeals courts in several states, but as of yet the U.S. Supreme Court has not agreed to hear any of the cases.

Public Opinion

While today the big push for gun control comes primarily from the Democratic Party, it was a much more bipartisan issue in the Clinton administration. Democrats and Republicans alike opposed assault weapon bans because of their unpopularity among the American electorate, and because assault weapons accounted for only a small fraction of total gun violence crimes in the United States. When the Crime Bill eventually passed in 1994, there was mass compromise on both sides of the aisle, and still, the assault weapon ban expired in 2004 after a sunset provision allowed it to expire, and it has not gained enough traction to be passed again. This is largely due to the fact that the Democratic Party lost many seats in Congress after its passage, and the ban has been blamed due to its mass unpopularity among gun owners. Thus, the popularity of an assault weapons ban is almost non-existent among politicians.

Additionally, 57% of Americans oppose a ban on assault weapons,¹⁸ and 56% of Iowans say stricter controls on gun purchases would not reduce the number of mass shootings.¹⁹ AR-15s are a very popular gun to use for recreational purposes, and many owners do not want their ability to use them taken away. There is a prevailing opinion that because the weapons are not fully automatic but only semi-automatic, they should not be considered military-grade or banned. Additionally, gun rights

¹⁷Dehm, Eric. "Before you have a gun debate, make sure your terminology is correct." Connectingvets.com, 23 Feb. 2018, connectingvets.radio.com/articles/you-have-gun-debate-make-sure-your-terminology-correct.

¹⁸Brenan, Megan. "Snapshot: Majority in U.S. Now Oppose Ban on Assault Rifles." GALLUP, GALLUP, 19 Oct. 2018, news.gallup.com/poll/243860/snapshot-majority-oppose-ban-assault-rifles.aspx.

¹⁹"Iowa Poll: Most say more gun control won't reduce mass shootings." Des Moines Register, edited by William Petroski, Des Moines Register, 11 Dec. 2017, www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2017/12/12/iowa-poll-most-believe-more-gun-control-wont-reduce-mass-shootings/932875001/.

advocates argue that banning guns will do very little to actually prevent people from using them in mass shootings and that gun control advocates should instead advocate for mental health resources because “guns don’t kill people – people kill people.”

Case Studies

Maryland currently has an assault weapons ban that the National Rifle Association and gun rights advocates have attempted to get overturned, but with no success.²⁰ In November 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case, defaulting to the Fourth Circuit Appeals Court’s judgment that the ban is constitutional. Maryland’s law bans “assault long guns,” which the NRA says limits an individual’s right to own a gun they deem fit to protect their family – and the most popular gun in America – the AR-15. The Supreme Court has also upheld bans in Connecticut and New York by declining to hear appeals.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court has not overturned assault weapons bans as of now, it is still unlikely that a state with strict scrutiny language would ever pass a ban of this caliber. Neither Louisiana, Alabama, nor Missouri has any laws which regulate the usage or sales of AR-15 weapons. It is unlikely that an assault weapons ban would be passed under strict scrutiny language, based upon precedent. However because the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the right of individuals to possess handguns in *D.C. v. Heller*, gun rights advocates are interested to see if this could extend to assault weapons as well. Currently, the U.S. Supreme Court has not agreed to hear any appeals on assault weapon bans.

Reasonableness or Strict Scrutiny?

It is up for debate whether or not an assault weapons ban would pass **strict scrutiny**. There is largely inconclusive research on their effectiveness in preventing violence,²¹ meaning the government may or may not have a compelling interest in using the ban to promote public safety. Additionally, the ban would not be narrowly tailored as it would restrict all gun owners, no matter what, from owning assault weapons.

Depending on the political make-up of the courts systems, an assault weapons would likely be upheld by the standard of **reasonableness**, as it has been in several states which already have bans. It is reasonable to assume that banning the weapons which have been responsible for dozens of mass shootings may keep them out of the hands of those who might use them for harm. However, the research has not shown a marked decrease in violence in locations which have bans currently.²²

Iowa has one clause which regulates the alteration of weapons to increase their rate of fire. Anyone who “sells or offers for sale a manual or power-driven trigger activating device constructed and designed so that when attached to a firearm increases the rate of fire of the firearm is guilty of an aggravated misdemeanor.”²³ Iowa does not currently regulate assault weapons – there are no formal regulations on the purchasing, selling, or owning of assault weapons in the state. However, even having some limitations on the alteration of guns makes Iowa unlike other states with strict scrutiny amendments.

²⁰Chung, Andrew. "U.S. top court spurns challenge to Maryland assault weapons ban." Reuters, Reuters, 17 Nov. 2017, www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-court-guncontrol/u-s-top-court-spurns-challenge-to-maryland-assault-weapons-ban-idUSKBN1DR1SE.

²¹"The Effects of Bans on the Sale of Assault Weapons and High-Capacity Magazines." , RAND Corporation, Mar. 2018.

²²ibid.

²³IA Code 724.29 (2018) <https://law.justia.com/codes/iowa/2018/title-xvi/chapter-724/section-724.29/>

It is not politically feasible to consider a complete assault weapons ban in the state, considering the partisanship of the legislature, and the unpopularity of assault weapons bans as noted through public opinion data. However, it may be possible for the state to maintain its no-ban stance while still implementing some regulations. It is up for debate whether an assault weapons ban would be feasible under a strict scrutiny standard. If the legislature chose to pass it, it would not likely be challenged, but it is hard to predict what may happen in the future given the current make-up of the courts.

7.4.3 Reconsidering Waiting Periods

Overview

Waiting periods mandate a delay of two to seven-days between the purchase and delivery of a firearm. Waiting periods put no restrictions on who can own a gun, but have a significant impact on gun deaths. Research out of Harvard Business School shows that waiting periods are associated with a 17% decrease in gun homicides and a 7% to 11% decrease in gun suicides per year. This decrease in deaths is thought to be because the delay creates a “cooling off” period which closes the window of opportunity for certain violent individuals and lets temporary feelings of rage or suicidal thoughts pass.

Currently, 17 states and Washington D.C. have mandated waiting periods, which are estimated to prevent roughly 750 gun deaths per year. While no federal waiting periods exist now, the 1994 Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act mandated handgun waiting periods for states that did not have instant background check systems.²⁴

Case Studies

In 2018, the Supreme Court of the United States declined to hear a Second Amendment challenge to California’s ten day waiting period, letting stand the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruling in favor of the State. The Court of Appeals concluded that the waiting period was justified by the need to conduct background checks and the benefits of the “cooling off” period.²⁵

Although the makeup of the Supreme Court has changed, it is unlikely that the court will hear and decide another Second Amendment challenge to waiting periods anytime soon, meaning the constitutionality of waiting periods under the Second Amendment has yet to be decided. As such, we have to rely on the rulings of lower courts to determine the likelihood of waiting periods standing up against Second Amendment challenges. Because of the different language included in state Second Amendments, it is necessary to review waiting periods under both strict scrutiny and reasonableness.

Reasonableness or Strict Scrutiny?

The 17% decrease in gun homicides and 7-11% decrease in gun suicides per year provides a compelling government interest, satisfying the first prong of the **strict scrutiny** standard.²⁶ A seven-day waiting period fits squarely under the State’s police powers, which means that a state can make “reasonable regulations for the purpose of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the people.”²⁷ The waiting period also does not restrict who can own a gun or what kind of gun

²⁴Larned, Victoria. "Handgun waiting period laws save lives, study says." CNN Health, 16 Oct. 2017, www.cnn.com/2017/10/16/health/waiting-period-firearms-study/index.html.

²⁵Savage, David G. "Supreme Court leaves in place California’s 10-day wait for gun buyers, rejects 2nd Amendment challenge.", Los Angeles Times, 20 Feb. 2018, www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-court-guns-20180220-story.html.

²⁶Larned (n 24)

²⁷Winkler (n 7)

they can own, meaning the law does not stretch beyond its intended purpose of preventing impulse crimes and allowing legal background checks to be conducted. The standard of **reasonableness** is always satisfied when strict scrutiny is satisfied because it is a lower bar.

Iowa has a three-day waiting period to obtain a five-year handgun permit, after which the permit holder can purchase additional handguns without a waiting period for the duration of the permit. The waiting period in Iowa applies to handguns only and concealed weapons permit holders are exempt from the waiting period.²⁸ If Iowa were to approve the strict scrutiny language in its proposed Second Amendment addition to the Iowa Constitution, it would be the only strict scrutiny state to have a waiting period. However, this doesn't mean that a strict scrutiny Second Amendment challenge to Iowa's waiting period would succeed. As shown above, it is possible to provide a compelling state interest in defense of waiting periods and show that waiting periods are narrowly tailored to achieve that compelling interest. While the reasonableness standard will be easier for waiting period laws to pass, passing strict scrutiny is not impossible. More difficult will be to garner the political willpower to pass a seven-day waiting period in the first place, four days longer than Iowa's current waiting period, or pass a law requiring the waiting period to apply to all firearm purchases. As Republicans control the Iowa Senate, House, and governorship, any extension of Iowa's waiting period is unlikely.

7.5 Policy Recommendation

We believe that adding strict scrutiny language to the Iowa Constitution would not adequately protect current and future gun control legislation. Iowa is unique in comparison to other Strict Scrutiny states because of the gun control legislation it currently has in place. Louisiana, Alabama, and Missouri do not act as partial points of contact for NICS background checks or require background checks by unlicensed sellers, but Iowa does. These states do not have waiting periods to purchase firearms and they have no regulations affecting the modification of assault weapons - unlike Iowa. The presence of these policies could be threatened by adding Strict Scrutiny language.

In particular, Strict Scrutiny language could threaten background checks and assault weapons bans that Iowa gun control advocacy groups want implemented. Background checks and assault weapon bans do not meet the strict scrutiny standard of being narrowly tailored, despite achieving a compelling government purpose.

For these reasons, we conclude that a second amendment to the Iowa Constitution that did not include the standard of strict scrutiny would best protect the interests of both gun rights and gun control advocates.

²⁸"Waiting Periods in Iowa." Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 15 Nov. 2019, lawcenter.giffords.org/waiting-periods-in-iowa/.



8. Should We Stay or Should We Go?

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many lives inside and outside of our state. According to Johns Hopkins University as of the writing of this chapter, there are 1.2 million COVID-19 cases in the United States with 69,680 deaths. Although Iowa only represents a small portion of these cases (9,703) and deaths (188), the state's response has created considerable confusion in many respects. Most notably, Governor Reynolds decided against a statewide stay-at-home order and instead opted to assign values of 1 to 3 to each county which meant some counties had more severe restrictions as compared to others. IPRO decided to evaluate this response by comparing Iowa to other states. Not only do we think this could help potentially inform the policy-making process, but we also wanted to speak to something that has profoundly affected our lives and the lives of many others inside and outside of our state.

For the most part, our team members focused on neighboring states, beginning with Jocelyn Roof's assessment of Nebraska which not only shares a border with Iowa, but it also somewhat similar politically. Nebraska's response began in early March after the first presumptive positive case of the virus was confirmed on March 6th. By March 13th, Gov. Ricketts had issued an emergency declaration and guidance for school closures to address the pandemic. On March 18, Gov. Ricketts limited all gatherings to 10 people and issued an executive order requiring bars and restaurants to move to carry-out and delivery only options. No other major actions were taken by the Governor until April 8, when he ordered all salons closed. Closely mirroring Iowa's response, Governor Reynolds and Gov. Ricketts have presented nearly identical responses and policies to combat the virus spread in these neighboring states. Neither Governor has issued a stay-at-home order, nor closed nonessential businesses. Notably, citizens of both states have been frustrated by the government's less-than-aggressive response to the pandemic, and both Gov. Reynolds and Gov. Ricketts have not seen the approval rating bumps that most other Governors have. According to Harvard, Northeastern, and Rutgers Universities' "State of the Nation: A 50-State COVID-19 Survey," nearly one in three Iowans and Nebraskans believe their state government is "not taking the outbreak seriously enough."¹

¹<https://kateto.net/COVID19%20CONSORTIUM%20REPORT%20April%202020.pdf>

When Nebraska's response is compared with Illinois' – the state analyzed by Lauryn Schnack – we find some evidence Nebraska and Iowa are exceptions, not the rule. More specifically, Gov. Pritzker immediately began working with researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Northwestern School of Medicine, the University of Chicago, the Chicago and Illinois Departments of Public Health, and outside consulting groups to formulate the state's response. The first stay-at-home order was issued on March 21st, originally intended to go through April 7th. This prohibited gatherings larger than 10 people and closed state parks and playgrounds. Vital occupations such as health care workers, grocery store employees, plumbers, and pharmacists could remain operational. Since the original stay-at-home order, the deadline to reopen has been extended to May 30th. Since May 1st, people have been required to cover their faces when out in public. Although personal face protection is now required, Gov. Pritzker has reopened some parks and golf courses and allowed new occupations to share in the “essential business” exceptions. Greenhouses, garden centers, nurseries, and pet groomers are now considered to be essential; but limiting gatherings and close contact is still the expectation. It is uncertain whether Gov. Pritzker will extend or change the stay-at-home order past May 30th; he has claimed that he has operated and will continue to operate based on current state cases and deaths and their subsequent projections, which are subject to change. As of May 8th, 70,873 Illinoisans have tested positive for COVID-19 and there have been 3,111 related deaths. While several polls show that Illinoisans approve of the stay at home order, many people have protested in Springfield, calling for the restrictions to loosen. Despite these protests, Gov. Pritzker has assured that he will be making decisions that he believes will lead to the least amount of COVID-19 deaths.

Such protests can also be found in other states, such as Wisconsin which was researched by Carly Heying. Similar to Illinois, Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers passed increasingly stringent restrictions on public gatherings after the state's first recorded case on February 5. By March 12, Gov. Evers had declared a public health emergency, and he closed all public and private K-12 schools the following day. By March 17, all Wisconsin bars and restaurants were ordered closed, and gatherings were limited to fewer than ten people. On March 24, Gov. Evers passed the “Safer at Home” order, which directed all individuals present within the State of Wisconsin to stay at home or at their place of residence, with the exception of essential activities, essential government functions, essential business operations, essential travel, and special situations. On April 16, this order was extended to May 26. Wisconsin's response to COVID-19 sparked a heated controversy over voting rights and executive authority. The state elections were scheduled to be held on April 7, and although many other states had postponed their elections, Wisconsin lawmakers did not authorize a postponement. Gov. Evers attempted to move the election date through an executive order, but he was blocked by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. A further attempt to extend the deadline for absentee ballots to after election day was blocked by the US Supreme Court. The elections were held on April 7 as scheduled, and many have criticized this decision for endangering Wisconsin residents and leading to effective disenfranchisement, ultimately leading to protests in the state's capitol.

Although IPRO team members understood the impetus for these protests, they were quite limited in nature, especially as compared to a state's population. For example, Thomas Dainty researched Minnesota's stay-at-home order and also found protests in the hundreds, but with a state population of approximately 5.64 million such demonstrations represent a small percentage of the population. Minnesota's overall response was similar to the other neighboring states already discussed. On March 15th, Gov. Walz ordered an eight-day closure of K-12 public schools to start on March 18th. One day later, Gov. Walz ordered public spaces such as museums, theaters, and restaurants to close to dine-in/in-person customers. On March 19th, Gov. Walz ordered health care providers to

postpone elective surgeries and procedures. On the 25th, schools were ordered to be closed until May 4th. and then just two days later, Gov. Walz issued a stay-at-home order for non-essential workers, which was set to end on April 10th but has since been extended. Part of the justification for the order was to give more time to transform arenas into hospitals, increase ICU capacity. On April 17th, Gov. Walz began reopening certain sectors of the economy with restrictions attached, such as golfing and boating. The aforementioned protests began shortly thereafter on April 25th, underlining the growing pressure that many governors faced, including Gov. Reynolds.

Nobody likely understands such pressures more than Gov. Whitmer of Michigan. This state was researched by Madeliene Bradley who ultimately found Michigan's response to be somewhat similar to Illinois'. On March 10, 2020, Gov. Whitmer issued Executive Order 2020-4 which declared a state of emergency to address the pandemic only a few days after Michigan's first confirmed case. Shortly thereafter, Gov. Whitmer closed all Michigan schools and banned gatherings of 250 or more. A few days later, bars, restaurants, and gyms were also ordered to close. Gatherings were then limited to less than 50 which ultimately laid the foundation for the statewide stay-at-home order for all non-essential workers on March 23rd. More recently, President Trump has went out of the way to challenge this stay-at-home order and encourage protests in the state's capitol. The publicity associated with the President's efforts have been both a blessing and a curse for Gov. Whitmer whose name recognition has undoubtedly increased, but at the expense of some level of instability. With that said, most polls show Michigan residents supporting Gov. Withmer's efforts, again suggesting that the views expressed in these demonstrations do not reflect the majority of state populations.

The potential for similar protests may have entered into Gov. Reynolds approach to handling the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is important to underline the potential benefits of stay-at-home orders. Ganon Evans' investigation of North Dakota perhaps provides an important lesson in this regard, especially since it has similar demographics, population density, and industry to Iowa. One week after the first case was confirmed on March 11th in the state, Gov. Burgum instituted stricter quarantine procedures than Iowa, including a mandatory quarantine period for travelers and certain non-essential business closures. As a result, North Dakota's ratio of recoveries versus deaths is 18:1 in comparison to the national average of 1.6:1, suggesting these early measures by the state likely prevented some community spread. North Dakota also found that over 95% of cases in the state were likely due to returning travelers. In response to this, Gov. Burgum asked the state to develop an app which tracks the movements of positively-tested community members so that citizens are more informed early on about whether they have been in contact with an infected patient. It is unclear the app's effectiveness, but we generally found North Dakota's response to be more innovative than what was found in Iowa's largely piecemeal approach.

However, Gov. Reynolds should be given some credit for shutting down certain parts of the state early on, something which was noticeably lacking from Missouri's response. According to Omar Khodor, Missouri's Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) waited until April 3rd to release the state's first stay at home order. Unlike Iowa, the order applied to the whole state, but – similar to Iowa – asked citizens to remain home and social distance a minimum of 6 feet and avoid gatherings of more than 10 people. Similar to Iowa, Missouri also encouraged employers and companies to allow their employees to work from home, but Missouri also held non-essential employees to social distancing standards, something noticeably lacking in our state. Schools have also been closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year while religious gatherings were still allowed with social distancing guidelines. As a part of their "Show Me Strong Recovery Plan," Missouri has recently issued an economic reopening on May 4th to end on May 31st (barring

any extension or reconsideration). Localized communities may use their own discretion on how quickly to reopen. 6 feet distancing practices are still in place, but industry and state buildings will be allowed to reopen as far as the state is concerned. However, retail businesses are required to limit how many customers they host at a given time based upon the square footage of the building.

Often the state responses to COVID-19 are seen through partisan lenses, but IPRO found many states – both Democratic and Republican – tended to respond in similar ways. With that said, undoubtedly major differences were found in some instances. For example, Sarah Henry's research of California found many instances where this state seemed to chart its own path in many ways. Indeed, following several weeks of actions taken to encourage social distancing, California became the first state to put a stay-at-home order in place on March 19th. This was almost two months after the first two cases of Covid-19 were confirmed in California on January 26th. California also was one of the first states to provide financial aid for students, the homeless, and people incarcerated in the state's prisons. Given the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult to say for sure the extent to which these efforts "flattened the curve," but California undoubtedly influenced the actions of other states, especially those on the West Coast. Unfortunately, California, like Iowa, are still seeing new cases and deaths, but their efforts underline some of the different responses we have seen across the United States, suggesting many citizens' experiences with stay-at-home orders have been considerably varied.

In Madhuri Belkale's research of her home state of Texas, one can also find fundamentally different response from city-to-city. Here, after the first case was diagnosed on March 4, major cities in Texas were quick to declare states of emergency. Then, on March 19, Gov. Abbott issued a disaster order for the state and called for a limit to social gatherings with Executive Order GA-08, in line with the President's and CDC's Guidelines for America. Although not named a "stay-at-home" order, his order closed all nonessential business and asked all Texans to maintain social distancing while practicing essential activities. This original order was extended on April 12 until April 30th, again based on the President's guidelines. With continued focus on economic relief for Texan businesses, Gov. Abbott issued EO GA-17 on April 17th, creating the Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas, including all aspects - work, school, entertainment, and culture. Meanwhile. In response, several counties, including those of the cities of Dallas and Houston, issued directives to further extend the order beyond April 30th, but Gov. Abbott issued Executive Order GA-18 on April 27th, calling for the reopening of operations such as in-store retail and dine-in restaurant services within specific capacity limits. Following this order, businesses are opening throughout the state in phases, while the number of cases in the state has not yet begun to decline.

The very different approach in Texas as compared to California underlined how IPRO members were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in both Iowa and their home states. For example, Reagan Hansen has many family members for Florida, so when he researched Florida's response he was struck by the extent to which stay-at-home orders (or lack thereof) have connected the experiences of citizens from different parts of the country. Here, the governor issued a stay-at-home order (on April 3rd), but also was one of the first to remove it on May 4th. After this occurred, restaurants were allowed to open, but only at 25% capacity. Conversely, elderly people and those with underlying conditions were still asked to stay indoors whenever possible. This is very different from the approaches of other states, but similar to other states, Florida allowed citizens to leave their homes under the stay-at-home order, but only for essential services, meaning banks, grocery stores, and pharmacies have remained open throughout the pandemic. Although these exceptions are grounded in the federal government's definition of "essential," they underline one of the many ways that the response to COVID-19 has been incredibly varied which has allowed states to address

the needs of their citizens, but has also arguably created some confusion.

As most state have begun to loosen their restrictions, policy-makers will begin to ask which states were most effective. This is beyond the scope of this chapter, but we found many similarities across states and some differences which will make identifying the effect of stay-at-home orders incredibly difficult, especially since many were incrementally applied. The Hawkeye Policy Report is presented each year to the state legislature in Des Moines. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, this did not occur this year. This certainly impacted our IPRO experience, especially for those who are graduating, but this pales in comparison to how others' lives have been turned upside down. Like many at the University of Iowa, we hope to return to some sense of normalcy in the Fall, but we also want to ensure the health and safety of those on campus and their families. This chapter is not only meant to help others understand state-by-state responses, but also gives IPRO members the ability to assert some control during these troubling times. We hope in doing so it has also proved informative to both policy-makers and the public as a whole.



Future Directions

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9. Getting Involved

9.1 How Do I Give IPRO New Research Topics?

IPRO is always looking for research topics, especially those that pertain to important issues facing the state of Iowa! We have produced policy research on a number of topics, including health care, education, tax, and environmental policy. If you would like us to research a specific topic, please email the IPRO director (bryce-dietrich@uiowa.edu). Professor Dietrich would be happy to put you into contact with the right IPRO members to help you with your research needs.

Additional information can also be found on our website (<https://honors.uiowa.edu/iowa-policy-research-organization>) and our Twitter page (<http://twitter.com/IowaPolicy>). There you will find information about IPRO and also our contact information. We are both a passionate and productive research organization. Not only do we produce the *Hawkeye Policy Report*, but we also have produce several additional publications, including the flyers you likely received at the *Hawkeye Caucus Day*. Please let us know how we can help!

9.2 How Can I Help?

In addition to providing research topics, we are also looking for individuals to contribute in any number of ways. If you are interested in donating to IPRO, please contact the IPRO director (bryce-dietrich@uiowa.edu). IPRO has received continues to receive incredible financial and technical support from the Department of Political Science and the Honors program at the University of Iowa. Any contribution will help IPRO continue to research the important issues facing the state of Iowa. If you have any questions, please ask!

We conclude the 2019-2020 *Hawkeye Policy Report* with the short- and long-term plans you would help support!



10. Next Steps

10.1 IPRO 2020-2021

Tom Rice's original vision still lives on in IPRO today. Not only has IPRO produced high quality research, but some of the best students at the University of Iowa have at one time been IPRO members. An expanded Honors Teaching Practicum is the newest feature of our organization. The goal of this program is to have past IPRO members mentor current IPRO students. More specifically, several current IPRO members will work with Professor Dietrich to do the following:

- (1) **Hawkeye Policy Blog** - The IPRO blog will give student the ability to actively describe and debate relevant policy issues. The content for the blog will be produced as short assignments in the Legislative Research Seminar. That content will then be edited by one of the current IPRO students to ensure it meets our organization's standards.
- (2) **Expanded Website** – Even though our website “is a major vehicle for report dissemination” [2], it does not give viewers the ability to interact with IPRO content. Through interactive graphics and other data visualization techniques we will more vividly display the work of IPRO students. Fortunately, one of our current IPRO members helps the University with website development, so we plan on asking him to assist with this project.
- (3) **Social Media Outreach** – Even though email has proven very effective for IPRO in the past, more and more information is being disseminated via social media. For example, one of our current IPRO members runs both the Instagram and Twitter accounts for another University organization. Through the Honors Teaching Practicum we will give this student the opportunity to do the same for IPRO.

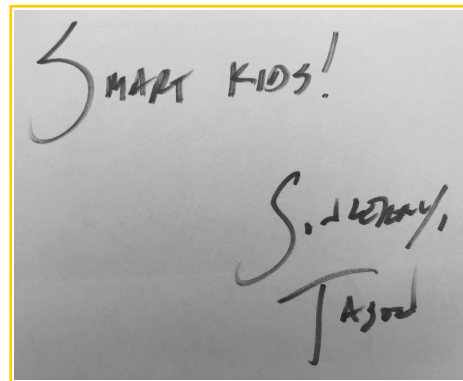
Although we are excited to further develop IPRO, we want to make sure we remain focused on our core mission: undergraduate research. The University of Iowa has many exceptional students and we want IPRO to be a place where those students can come together and research important policy issues facing our state. By better integrating past IPRO members into current IPRO curriculum, we will be able to face this challenge head on and in doing so create a sustainable education and research framework.

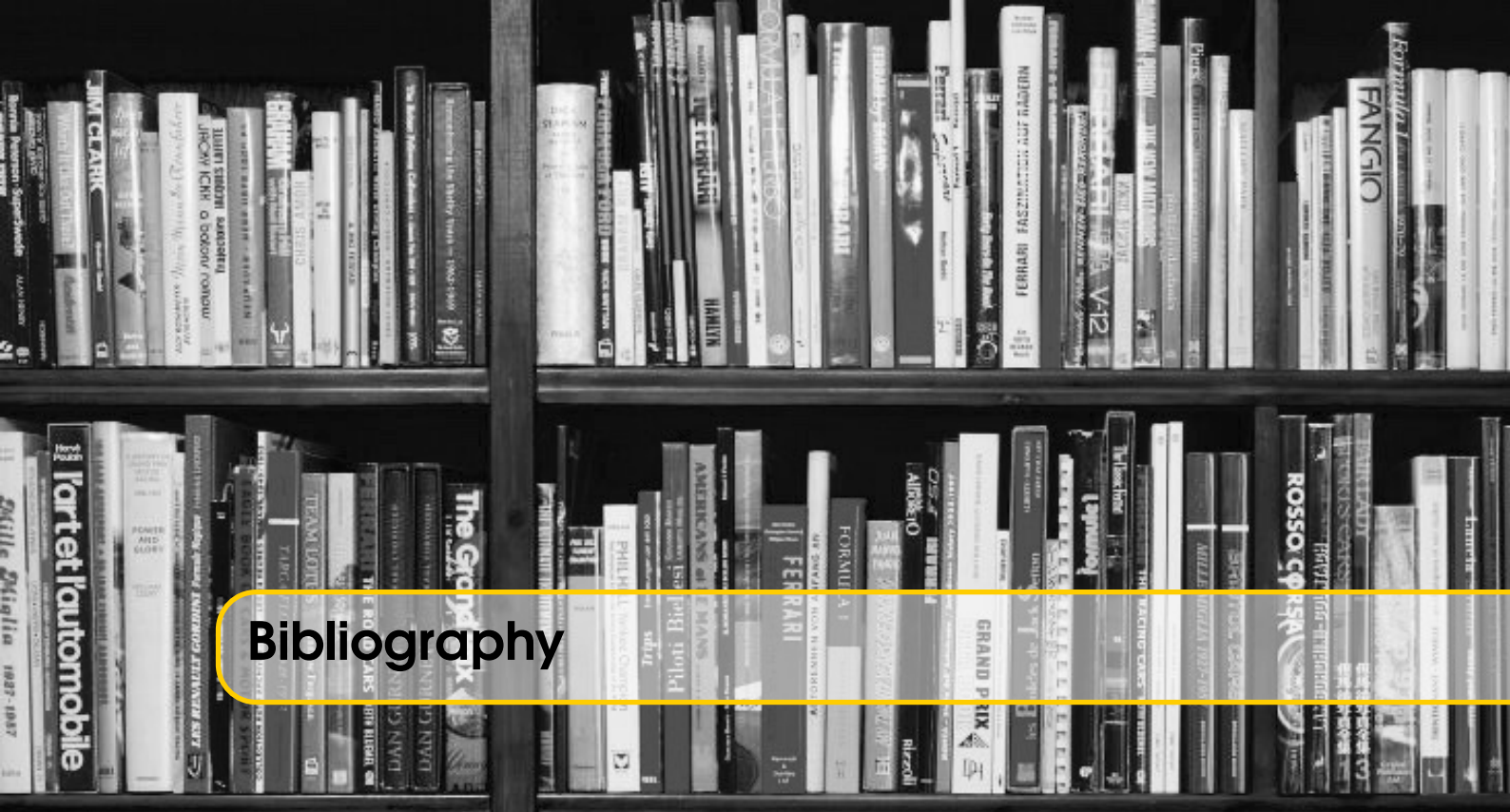
10.2 IPRO 2025-2030

IPRO's original mission was to produce usable research for the state legislature. We think attending the *Hawkeye Caucus Day* and producing the *Hawkeye Policy Report* are important first steps, but we also think more needs to be done. For example, the former gives us an opportunity to meet legislators in Des Moines while simultaneously building IPRO's research reputation through meaningful one-on-one interactions. However, we must begin fostering ongoing legislative relationships that do not begin and end on a single day. These relationships will not only produce valuable topics for our research endeavors, but they will also raise the public profile of IPRO as an organization.

The *Hawkeye Policy Report* achieves a similar end by providing a high-quality publication that legislators and other policy-makers can physically read. This is a major step forward for IPRO as an organization, but more steps need to be taken. For example, our current dissemination plans involve emailing legislators. This too is difficult to sustain since such emails are often ignored or forgotten. By increasing the outward facing profile of IPRO, we hope to bring readers to us, rather than the other way around. In doing so, we hope to highlight extraordinary undergraduates at the University of Iowa while simultaneously becoming a focal point for policy research more broadly within the state.

Jason Kander was kind enough to visit IPRO when he spoke with the College Democrats about his organization "Let America Vote." We think this excerpt from a note he wrote to us encapsulates what IPRO is as an organization. IPRO really is a group of exceptionally smart kids! Every since our founding, this is precisely what IPRO provides our members and those who request our services. We are the best and brightest students at the University of Iowa. IPRO gives us the ability to apply our skills to address important policy issues while simultaneously serving as representatives for the University as as whole. The 2017-2018 iteration of IPRO had many successes and we thoroughly look forward to many more in the future! Please let us know what IPRO can research for you!





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