



Iowa Institute for  
Cooperatives

# CO-OP VIEWS

News and information for the benefit of Iowa cooperatives.

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## Highlights of the 2017 Legislative Session

By Matt Pruss, Director of Government Affairs

As the Iowa legislature gaveled in for the first session of the 87th General Assembly, we saw Republicans in control of the House and Senate chambers as well as the Governor's office for the first time in 20 years. With this control of the law-making process, majority party legislators set to work prioritizing the bills they felt should pass this year's session. As session got underway, lower than expected revenue estimates had a large impact on discussions and priorities for the legislative body. With budget constraints becoming an ever-increasing issue, Republicans focused on several bills they wanted to ensure passed this year's session, including: worker's compensation reform, standardizing state-wide minimum wage, collective bargaining reform, mental health funding, abortion restrictions, fireworks legalization and gun rights expansions.

Although water quality was slated as a priority for this year's legislative session, and was encouraged by the Governor's office, the passing of a substantive water quality bill continued to get delayed and set aside. Most of the action on this issue came in the final week of session as the Senate passed a modified version of the Governor's 2016 proposal. The proposed bill would have substituted a water excise tax for the Iowa sales tax applied to the sale of metered tap water and divert that funding to water quality efforts. It would also have used revenues from Iowa gambling receipts to fund projects addressing both non-point and point sourced nutrient runoff on a cost-sharing basis. Upon receiving this

bill, the House made several changes and sent it back to the Senate on a largely bi-partisan vote. As the Senate refused to concur on the changes made to the bill, it was returned to the House and would not resurface before session came to an end on Saturday, April 22.

Though the details and language of a bill to fund water quality efforts are important, we are disappointed to end this session with no progress toward the establishment of a recurring and dedicated funding source for water quality improvement. The one-time appropriation to water quality for fiscal year 2018 from the RIIF (Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund) was also cut to \$5.2 million, down 45% from the Governor's proposal. The Iowa Institute has supported efforts to establish long-term sources of funding for water quality improvement projects and infrastructure. We feel the current method of making one-time appropriations provides inadequate funding and prevents farmers and organizations from setting up long-term and effective projects.

Another item Republicans had hoped to consider was significant tax reform. Given the difficult budget situation, it simply didn't come together in 2017 but is clearly a hot carryover topic for 2018. One bill that did get serious consideration was introduced by Representative Grassley and passed out of his House Appropriations Committee. The bill scaled back and placed limitations on biofuel credits and research credits, which are used by many biofuel producers

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and leading ag research companies such as Cargill, DuPont Pioneer and Monsanto. The bill did not receive consideration by the full House but was promoted as a beginning to larger, wholesale tax reform. Despite an inability to reach consensus on a water quality bill or significant tax reform, legislators did pass an REC reporting efficiency bill, a “Move over or

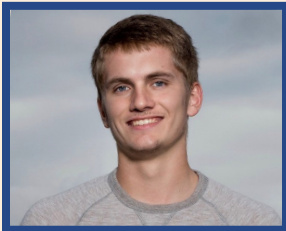
slow down” bill, several credit union bills, and an ag nuisance lawsuit protection bill.

Between revenue concerns and the upcoming midterm elections, next year’s session will certainly be focused on budget and fiscal matters. Nevertheless, we will continue to work on and support legislation that benefits our members.

## Four Students Receive 2017 Nielsen Scholarship

Together, the Iowa Institute and the National FFA Scholarship Program present the Kenneth & Ellen Nielsen Cooperative Scholarship each year as a way to reward students who are furthering their education. Recipients of this \$1,000 scholarship award are recognized as having exemplary scholastic achievements, an active role in agriculture, as well as pursuing a four-year degree in the industry. The student must also have a parent or guardian that holds a membership with an Iowa Institute member cooperative.

A long-term CEO of Farmland Industries and strong supporter of continuing education and cooperatives, Kenneth Nielsen and his wife, Ellen, established an endowment with the National FFA Organization for this scholarship. The Iowa Institute is proud to be able to continue the program again this year. Four individuals were chosen to receive this scholarship based on their previous accomplishments, and we are sure there will be many more proud moments for these students in their bright futures.



**Shane Helm** A 2017 Nielsen Scholarship recipient and recent high school graduate, Shane Helm, is the son of Doug and Stacy Helm of Montezuma, Iowa. Shane was involved in Montezuma’s FFA chapter during school, and he plans to attend Iowa State University, pursuing a degree in Ag Business, with the intention of becoming a farmer. Shane’s family is a member of Heartland Co-op, West Des Moines.



**Amy Johnson** Amy Johnson has also been chosen as one of the recipients for this year’s scholarship. Amy is the daughter of Rodney and Carol Johnson of Cambridge, Illinois. She was a part of the Galva FFA chapter. Heading to Western Illinois University this fall, Amy will be majoring in Ag Business. Upon college graduation, she plans on becoming an account manager. Amy’s family is a member of River Valley Cooperative, Davenport.



**Jacob Schultz** Also receiving the Nielsen Cooperative Scholarship is Jacob Schultz of Melvin, Iowa. The son of Ty and Kari Schultz, Jacob participated in the Sibley-Ocheyedan FFA chapter. With a plan to become an agronomist, Jacob will continue his education at Iowa State University, pursuing an Agronomy and Crop Science degree. Jacob’s family is a member of Farmers Cooperative Society, Sioux Center.



**Emma Olson** Emma Olson, daughter of Ole and Diana Olson of Grand Mound, Iowa, is another young individual who received this year’s scholarship. Emma was a member of the Calamus-Wheatland FFA chapter at her high school. She plans to pursue an Ag Business degree at Iowa State University this fall and hopes to become a loan officer following graduation. Emma’s family is a member of River Valley Cooperative, Davenport.

# Honorable Service

Veteran, Leader & Cooperative Steward is on a Mission to Serve Members

Growing up in eastern Tennessee on a tobacco farm, Charlie Dunn never would have guessed that his experiences would lead him to Greenfield, Iowa as Farmers Electric Cooperative's General Manager. Now, he couldn't picture his life any other way.

Charlie joined the military following high school graduation and was requested for active military duty in Operation Desert Storm during his first week of college classes. He served in the 82nd Airborne Division as an airborne infantryman. After completing his mission, Charlie had every intention of starting college again the following year, but then he began a temporary job for an electric cooperative in Mountain City, Tennessee. He started out by cutting right-of-ways, reading meters and serving as a lineman. Although he envisioned this opportunity as short-term, Charlie soon became attached. He decided to put education on the back-burner and pursue a full-time job with the cooperative. Luckily, his father got word from one of the cooperative's board members that there was an open position, and Charlie jumped at the opportunity. Thoroughly enjoying his job and being part of the electric cooperative, he would later serve as the Director of Member Services.

Charlie also went on to receive a bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree over the years, as well as serve in Iraq from July 2005 to August 2006, later making the honorable decision to leave the Reserves and help his wife raise their three children.

When Charlie's wife took early retirement and the youngest child left for college, Charlie decided to turn back to cooperatives and pursue a management position. Looking across the country for

openings, he became aware of a position at Farmers Electric Cooperative in Greenfield, Iowa. When visiting Iowa for the very first time in April 2014 to interview and meet the board, he recalled, "I really liked the area and the people. I felt it would be a good fit." Charlie is now in his third year as the General Manager for Farmers Electric Cooperative.

With a cooperative mission to supply affordable, reliable and safe electricity to members, Charlie concentrates on employee development and relies on having a highly trained, knowledgeable workforce. "Our ultimate goal is to keep the lights on, and do it safely," he stated.

Betterment of the cooperative is also a top priority. Technology has allowed for advancement in the recent years, especially when it comes to efficiencies. "When I read meters during my first job at a co-op, each meter reader went out to every home and wrote down the usage on a notepad," Charlie said. "Now we have advanced metering technology that allows two-way communication with members' meters instead of sending readers out." This process is more convenient for both employees and members alike. Not only does this system provide usage amounts, but it can also alert the cooperative when a meter is without power, instead of having to wait for a call from members.

Charlie's past experiences and acquired discipline have made him a great fit for Farmers Electric Cooperative and a leader among electric cooperatives. With 26 years of experience in this industry, he is happy to advocate for these organizations. "I'm a strong supporter of the cooperative business model," Charlie mentioned. "We are a not-for-profit business where our mission isn't to sell the most electricity. We strive to do the best for our members and make their life better."



**Charlie Dunn,**  
Farmers Electric  
Cooperative

## Valuable Workshop Speakers Announced

It's that time of year again! The Iowa Institute is happy to announce the 2017 Summer Workshop which will be held on June 15 at the Monsanto Learning Center in Huxley. The agenda is full of knowledgeable speakers, excellent

presentations and plenty of time for networking and discussion. Board members and cooperative staff surely do not want to miss this event! The four speakers listed below will be presenting throughout the day's event.

**John Power (LSC International)** - Agronomy Department Challenges  
**Chad Pregracke (Living Lands and Water)** - Making a Difference for Our Land and Water  
**Dennis Inman (Land O'Lakes)** - Who Moved My Grain  
**Dr. Wendong Zhang (Iowa State University)** - China's Influence on Iowa's Ag Economy

More information can be found on the Iowa Institute for Cooperative's website. Be sure to register for this event by June 12.

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## 2017-2018 Calendar of Events

Plan to attend the following events provided by IIC. Participation of board members and management teams are highly encouraged!

<b>June 15 - Summer Workshop</b> <i>Monsanto Learning Center, Huxley</i>	<b>Jan 10 - Winter Workshop</b> <i>Buena Vista University, Storm Lake</i>
<b>July 6 - Cooperative Intern Day</b> <i>Monsanto Learning Center, Huxley</i>	<b>Jan 11 - Winter Workshop</b> <i>The Hilton Garden Inn, Cedar Falls</i>
<b>July 11 - Board Officer Workshop</b> <i>Holiday Inn, Ames</i>	<b>Jan 30 &amp; 31 - Director Cert. Program (Phases 1 &amp; 2)</b> <i>Kings Pointe Resort, Storm Lake</i>
<b>Nov 21 - IIC Annual Meeting</b> <i>Scheman Building, ISU Center, Ames</i>	<b>Feb 1 &amp; 2 - Director Cert. Program (Phases 3 &amp; 4)</b> <i>The Hilton Garden Inn, Cedar Falls</i>
<b>Dec 6 - Grain Accounting Workshop</b> <i>Triton Cafe, Fort Dodge</i>	<b>Feb 13 &amp; 14 - Board Presidents Training</b> <i>Courtyard at the Marriott, Ankeny</i>
<b>Dec 12 &amp; 13 - Mid Manager Program</b> <i>Holiday Inn, Ames</i>	<b>Feb 28 &amp; March 1 - Mid Manager Program</b> <i>Holiday Inn, Ames</i>
<b>Jan 9 - Iowa Legislature Welcome Back Reception</b>	

To find details on speakers, times and registration information for these events, visit the Events section of the IIC website.