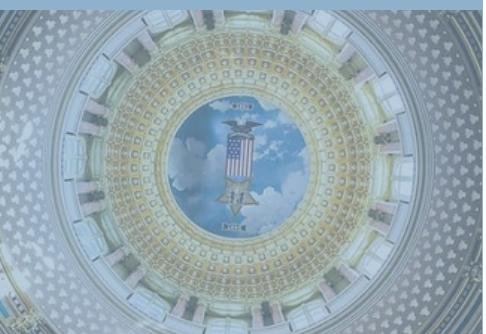
THE VOTER

OCTOBER 2026
VOLUME 825



LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF IOWA

**EMPOWERING VOTERS.
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.**

HIGHLIGHTS

CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A message from Linda Serra Hagedorn and Breanna Oxley
Page 2

2026 Midterms & Shoutout a Member!

Create your voting plan for the 2026 midterm election and shoutout a fellow member!
Page 3

Mark your calendar!

Please add these events to your calendar. There will be more information to come!
Page 4

Looking ahead and Mini-Grants

Learn more about the 2027 Legislative Priorities and check out the recipients for the mini-grants!
Page 5

Featuring our Chapter Highlight

Learn more about what's happening in the North Iowa Chapter! Page 6

CANCER IN IOWA ESSAY

Read through Linda Serra Hagedorn's Iowa's Cancer Rates Are Rising. What Can We Do?
Page 7-9

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook: League of Women Voters of Iowa

Instagram: lwviowa

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CO-PRESIDENTS

Linda Serra Hagedorn
Breanna Oxley

Shared Email:
lwvia.president@gmail.com

OFFICERS

Vice President:
Ashley Vanorny

Treasurer:
Susan Cornforth

Secretary:
Paula Vaughan

Nominating Committee Chair: Polly Horton

Ad Hoc Member:
Shannon Patrick

DIRECTORS

Marti Hurst
Teresa Bomhoff
Peg Lazio
Maureen White
Sue Wilson
Janet Boddicker Rampulla
Susan Van Woert
Courtney Kuenn
Carolyn Klaus
Holly Oppelt
Susan Bangert
Cherie Dargan
Terese Grant (Past President)
Martha Wolf

Co-President's Message – League of Women Voters of Iowa

Dear League of Women Voters of Iowa,

As we move into the final stretch before the upcoming election, we want to take a moment to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary work happening across our state. Iowa's local Leagues and members have been tireless in their commitment to empowering voters—registering new voters, hosting community events, answering questions, and ensuring that every eligible Iowan has the information they need to participate confidently in our democracy.

This is also the season for candidate forums, and our local Leagues have stepped up with professionalism and determination. Organizing forums is not easy work—it requires coordination, neutrality, patience, and a deep respect for the democratic process. Yet again, our members have and continue to delivered. YOU have created spaces where candidates can speak directly to voters and where voters can hear from those seeking to represent them. These forums embody the League's mission: informed participation, civil dialogue, and community engagement.

We also want to highlight the statewide effort around educating Iowans about Amendment 1. This proposed constitutional change has significant implications for our state's future, and the League has been steadfast in providing clear, nonpartisan information about why a **NO** vote is the right choice for Iowa. Our outreach has been broad and effective—radio, television, newspapers, community presentations, and conversations in living rooms and coffee shops across Iowa.

Several LWV members have written editorials and spoken on local radio and TV. In recent weeks, Linda has had the opportunity to speak directly to Iowans through several media outlets including *Iowa News Now* (KGAN TV Cedar Rapids) and *Iowa Public Radio's River to River* to discuss the importance of voting NO on Amendment 1. Guest editorials to the *Ames Tribune* and the *Iowa State Daily*, and a letter to the editor in the *Des Moines Register* helped broaden the reach of our message. These platforms have allowed us to share the League's perspective widely, but the heart of this work remains with you—our members—who continue to educate neighbors, colleagues, and communities with clarity and compassion.

As we look ahead, we feel immense gratitude. The League of Women Voters of Iowa is strong because of you—your dedication, your integrity, and your belief in the power of informed participation. Thank you for showing up, for doing the hard work, and for keeping our mission alive in every corner of the state. Let's carry this momentum forward. Together, we will help ensure that every Iowan's voice is heard and that our democracy remains vibrant, accessible, and resilient.

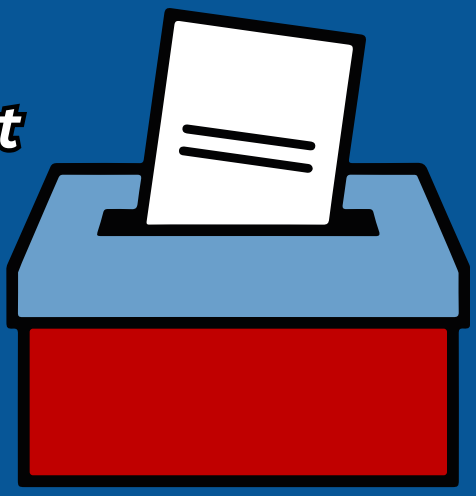
In League,
Linda Serra Hagedorn
Breanna Oxley

lwvia.president@gmail.com

2026 Midterms

"Talk is cheap, voting is free; take it to the polls."
Nanette L. Avery

To find out what will be on your ballot in this upcoming election, click the ballot box!



Please click the link below to locate your polling place on November 3, 2026. Polling Place Locator

Check out our Sioux City's recorded forum by clicking the link below!

Sioux City LWV Forum on YouTube

Give a Shoutout to a Fellow Member!

Do you know someone who has gone above and beyond? Has a fellow member volunteered their time, supported others, or made a meaningful impact in our community? We'd love to hear their story.

Email us your Member Shoutout with a few sentences about why they deserve recognition. Throughout the year, we'll feature selected shoutouts in our newsletter and on social media to celebrate the incredible people who make our organization stronger. Send your shoutouts to: lwviowa@gmail.com

Mark your Calendar!

More information coming soon.



LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF IOWA

Join Us!

Defending Democracy & State Convention

LWVIA State Convention | June 5, 2027
The LWV of Iowa State Convention brings appointed delegates from local Leagues together to shape the organization's priorities and future. It will take place Saturday, June 5, in Des Moines Downtown and is not open to the public. Delegate representation is based on local League membership as of February 1, 2027. Local Leagues are encouraged to begin collecting items for their silent auction baskets.

Defending Democracy Dinner | June 4, 2027
Join LWVIA for its annual Defending Democracy fundraiser on Friday, June 4, from 5–8 p.m. at Allora Cafe in Des Moines. The evening features former Iowa First Lady Christie Vilsack as speaker and the presentation of the Defending Democracy Award. Please click on the nomination link below to view and print the form! The dinner is open to those who are not attending the convention. If you cannot attend, please consider donating to support LWVIA's statewide work.

Nomination form for the Defending Democracy Award

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF IOWA

2027 Legislative Priorities

VOTING

Promote equal access to voting and ensure all votes are counted. Adopt automatic voter registration. Promote open primary elections. Pass a constitutional amendment allowing Iowans with felony convictions to vote after time served.

GOVERNANCE

Demand government accountability and transparency by requiring all amendments and bills discussed in committee to be available to the public prior to a vote. Encourage direct citizen participation by requiring virtual legislative committees and subcommittees. Demand timely processing of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Address the budget deficit while protecting human services and public education.

EDUCATION

Provide oversight and track public funds being used for non-public schools. Require any non-public school receiving public funds to meet the same standards as public schools. Fully fund public schools. Continue to expand access to affordable childcare. Restore statewide special education and disability services.

HEALTH

Guarantee access to health care, support rural hospitals, address Iowa's high cancer rates, protect reproductive rights, improve access to behavioral health services, and ensure Medicaid services are comprehensive and available. Health care policies should support scienced-based decisions and encourage broad access to immunizations.

WATER

Prioritize, protect and improve Iowa water quality and quantity. Ensure sustainable management of water resources. Enact policies that safeguard clean water and address challenges of health risks, pollution, overuse and climate change.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ban assault rifles and military-grade weapons for civilian use, enact background checks on all gun sales, close gun show loopholes, expand public awareness of gun safety locks, repeal Iowa's "stand your ground" law, and oppose laws that allow carrying guns on school grounds. Increase education on human trafficking. Support immigration policies that uphold fundamental human rights and promote family unity.

LWVIA Awards 2026 Voter Engagement Mini-Grants

The League of Women Voters of Iowa is pleased to announce the recipients of 2026 Voter Engagement Mini-Grants. These grants support local league projects that promote voting, facilitate voter registration, and provide nonpartisan voter education in preparation for the 2026 election cycle.

Congratulations to the following grant recipients:

- **LWV Ames & Story County** – Voter Registration and Outreach
- **League of Women Voters of Sioux City** – Voter Education
- **LWV Linn County** – Your Voice! Your Vote! Voter Registration in Linn County
- **League of Women Voters of Southeast Iowa** – Purged Voters
- **LWV Metropolitan Des Moines** – Increasing LWV Recognition

The funded projects were selected through a competitive review process and demonstrated strong potential to engage Iowa voters, increase voter participation, and advance the League's mission of empowering voters and defending democracy. Congratulations to these leagues for their innovative work and commitment to strengthening civic engagement across Iowa.

Chapter Highlight: North Iowa

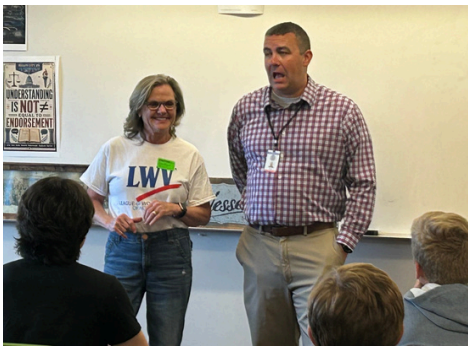
By: Susan Bangert, President

League of Women Voters, North Iowa, was activated in 2022. Dr. Deborah Turner, 20th president of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS), helped get the group started. She was Board President of LWVUS from June 2022 and served until her passing in January of 2024. Many members of our chapter knew her personally since she was born and raised in Mason City, returning to practice medicine after medical school. Dr. Turner was an inspiration to our club in addition to leaving a legacy of medical excellence, advocacy, and community service.

Since our founding, we've held numerous candidate forums, meet-and-greets, informational meetings, and conducted voter registration efforts at many community events, helping get people registered to vote. This past year, we have decided to focus on voter registration, host candidate forums, and provide reliable information for voters.



This spring we experimented with social media, making a TikTok video of two Suggragettes, Edith and Clara, who came back from the past to make sure that people are voting. We appreciate our younger members who are tech-savvy and who developed and produced our "movie".



During the summer, we worked registering voters at Farmers Markets and community outdoor events in the area, also handing out informational pamphlets on the names of elected officials. With a membership of 25 members, we are fortunate to have dedicated volunteers helping us meet our goals.

We are especially pleased with our voter registration efforts last month at Mason City High School and Newman Catholic High School, where we teamed up with County Auditor Adam Wedmore, who explained the entire voting process with instructional handouts, sample ballots, precinct maps, and information on the upcoming election. Featured in the newspaper registering voters, over 90 students took advantage of this opportunity to register to vote (students who are 17 can register, with their registration recorded automatically on their 18th birthday)



Iowa's Cancer Rates Are Rising. What Can We Do?

By: Linda Serra Hagedorn, Ph.D.

Iowa is moving in the wrong direction on cancer. While cancer rates are stable or falling in most of the country, Iowa now has the second-highest rate of new cancer diagnoses in the nation, behind only Kentucky, and is one of just a few states where that rate is still climbing (Iowa Cancer Registry, 2026). For many Iowa families, this is not an abstract statistic. It is a parent, a neighbor, a friend, or a fellow League member. It is for this reason, that the 2027 Lobby Day (February 22), will emphasize the need for increased action to abate the rising cancer rate in our state. We offer this report in preparation for our statewide emphasis.

The Numbers

The Iowa Cancer Registry, housed at the University of Iowa College of Public Health, tracks every cancer diagnosed among Iowa residents. Its 2026 Cancer in Iowa report estimates that:

- **21,700** Iowans will be diagnosed with cancer this year, about 500 more than the previous year's estimate.
- **6,400** Iowans will die from cancer this year, with lung cancer accounting for nearly a quarter of those deaths.
- **About 175,290** cancer survivors are now living in Iowa, a reminder that earlier detection and better treatment are saving lives.
- Young Iowans: adults ages 20 to 39 have the second-highest cancer rate among young adults in the nation.

Iowa's high ranking is not limited to one type of cancer. Iowa ranks first in the nation for non-Hodgkin lymphoma and leukemia, second for melanoma, and in the top ten for uterine, bladder, and kidney cancers (Des Moines Register, 2026). Nearly half of Iowa's counties have cancer rates higher than Louisiana's heavily industrialized "Cancer Alley."

A Long-Term Look

Thirty years of federal data show how the trend has shifted. Through the 1990s and 2000s, Iowa's age-adjusted cancer rate held fairly steady at roughly 470 to 500 new cases per 100,000 people. Since 2013, however, the rate has risen about 0.7 percent per year, reaching 512 per 100,000 in 2023 (National Cancer Institute, State Cancer Profiles). The dip in 2020 reflects missed screenings and delayed diagnoses during the COVID-19 pandemic, not a true decline.

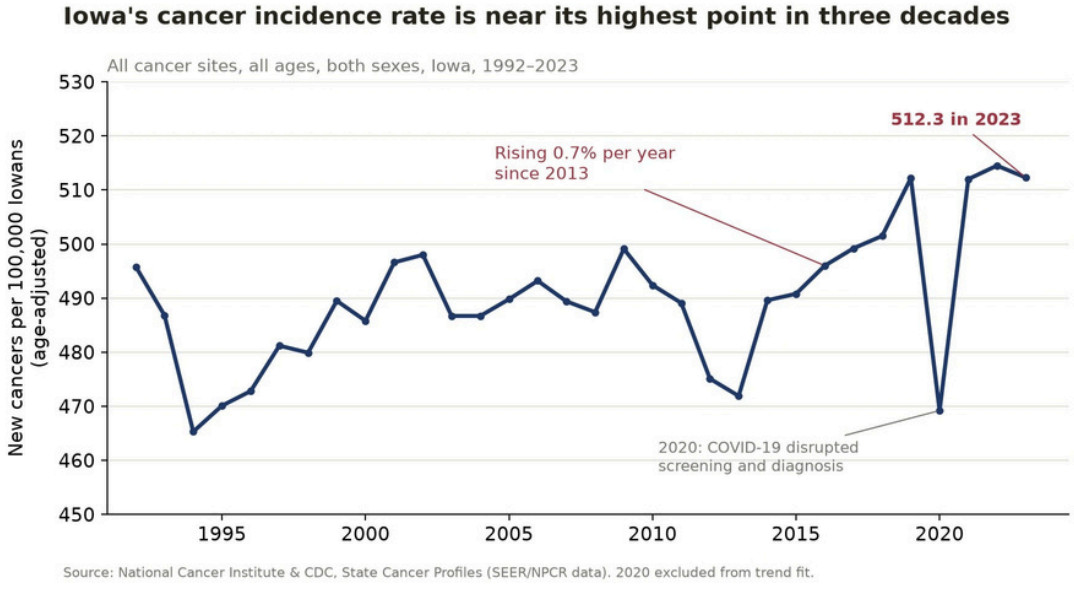


Figure 1. Age-adjusted cancer incidence in Iowa, 1992–2023. "Age-adjusted" means the rate accounts for Iowa's older population, so the rise is not simply because Iowans are getting older.

The raw number of new cases has grown even faster. In 2015 the Registry projected 16,900 new cancers; for 2026 it projects 21,700, an increase of about 28 percent. Part of that growth reflects an aging and growing population, which is why the age-adjusted rate in Figure 1 is the better measure of whether risk itself is increasing.

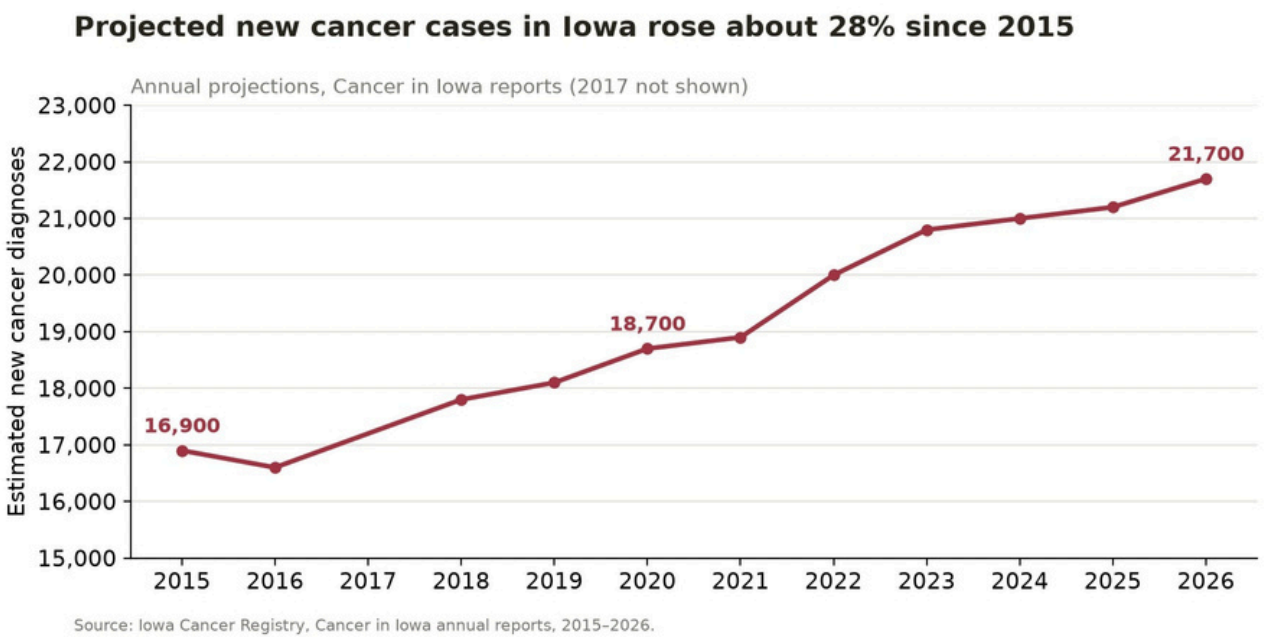


Figure 2. Projected new cancer diagnoses in Iowa by year, from the Iowa Cancer Registry's annual reports.

Who Is Studying the Problem

IowaHHSand theUniversityof Iowa. In 2025, at Governor Reynolds' request, the Legislature appropriated $1 million for the Key Drivers of Cancer in Iowa study, a partnership between the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and the UI College of Public Health. The Year 1 report, released September 29, 2026, found that behavioral and demographic factors such as smoking, binge drinking, obesity, insurance coverage, and radon explained about 76 percent of Iowa's excess cases across five common cancers: lung, prostate, breast, colorectal, and melanoma (Iowa Capital Dispatch via KCRG).

That headline number deserves a closer look. Across all cancer types, Iowa averaged about 2,001 more diagnoses per year than expected from 2018 to 2022. The study explains roughly 35 percent of those excess cases; about 65 percent were either outside the analysis or not explained by the factors studied. Nitrate in drinking water, pesticides, and PFAS were not included in Phase 1. Researchers say environmental factors will be examined in Phase 2, which may still be a year away, and that this work is harder because the data are "not as readily available" (Des Moines Register, 2026).

The Iowa Cancer Registry. Registry director Dr. Mary Charlton, a UI epidemiology professor, has noted that Iowa lacks a long-term record of where people have lived and what water they drank, which makes environmental exposures hard to study. Researchers have also told lawmakers that Iowa does not collect statewide pesticide-use data and that the private wells used by an estimated 300,000 Iowans are unregulated (Iowa Public Radio; KCRG).

The Iowa Environmental Council and The Harkin Institute. Their March 2026 report, Environmental Risk Factors and Iowa's Cancer Crisis, reviewed the scientific literature and found that Iowa's five most common cancers have documented links to environmental risks, including pesticides (especially glyphosate, acetochlor, and atrazine), nitrate, PFAS, and radon. Together with the Iowa Farmers Union, the groups held 16 listening sessions with more than 550 Iowans, who said they lacked information about environmental risks.

Others in the field. The UI Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination studies nitrate and health; the long-running Agricultural Health Study has followed Iowa farm families since 1993; and the Iowa Cancer Consortium, a coalition of about 700 members, coordinates the statewide Iowa Cancer Plan.

What the Experts Recommend

The researchersdo notallemphasize the same causes, but their recommendations overlap more than they conflict.

● **Prevention and screening.** State Medical Director Dr. Robert Kruse urges Iowans to limit alcohol and tobacco, protect skin from UV exposure, and test homes for radon. He also points to roughly $240 million in federal Rural Health Transformation funds expected over five years for cancer prevention, screening, and treatment.

● **Policy that supports healthy choices.** Dr. Charlton has said progress will likely require a combination of approaches, including a higher tobacco tax, radon awareness and mitigation, and policies that make healthy choices easier.

● **Environmental safeguards.** The Iowa Environmental Council and Harkin Institute call for reevaluating nitrate drinking-water standards, expanding real-time water-quality monitoring, greater transparency on manure application, support for private well testing, and protecting the independence of university researchers while increasing research on environmental risk factors.

As Dr. Kruse put it: "Our responsibility is to act where the evidence is strong, while continuing to investigate where questions remain. And those two things are not in conflict."

A Call to Action for League Members

The League of Women Voters has long worked to protect public health and to ensure that Iowans have the facts they need. The League's national natural resources position supports controlling pollution to protect public health and safe drinking water, and the League of Women Voters of Iowa has followed water-quality legislation for decades. Cancer has also become a major issue in this fall's campaigns. With Election Day on November 3, here is what we can do:

● **Attend the LWVIA Lobby Day.** Join the League and others to bring these issues to our legislators.

● **Ask candidates where they stand.** At candidate forums ask every candidate the same questions:

How would you reduce Iowa's cancer rate? Will you support full funding for Phase 2 environmental research and expand it to all cancer types? How would you improve water-quality monitoring?

● **Press for complete, transparent research.** Urge legislators to fund the environmental phase of the cancer study, collect statewide pesticide-use data, support private well testing, and make research findings public and independent.

● **Watch the Legislature.** Follow cancer-related and water-quality bills in the 2027 session through the League's bill tracker, and be ready to contact legislators or testify.

● **Protect our own households.** Test your home for radon, keep up with recommended screenings, test your private well if you have one, and encourage friends and family to do the same.

Iowa's cancer rate did not rise overnight, and it will not fall overnight. But informed voters, asking good questions and insisting on good data, can help make sure Iowa takes the steps the evidence supports.

Sources

1. Iowa Cancer Registry, 2026 Cancer in Iowa report. https://shri.public-health.uiowa.edu/2026/03/13/2026-cancer-in-iowa-report/
2. National Cancer Institute, State Cancer Profiles: Iowa historical trends. https://statecancerprofiles.cancer.gov/historicaltrend/index.php?statefips=19&race=00&sex=0&datatype=1&ruralurban=0&age=001&cancer=001&output=4
3. IowaCancer Registry, Cancer in Iowa annual reports (2015–2026). https://shri.public-health.uiowa.edu/cancer-data/reports/iowa-cancer-reports/
4. IowaCapital Dispatch via KCRG, Sept. 30, 2026. https://www.kcrg.com/2026/09/30/researchers-say-demographics-behavioral-risks-account-much-iowas-high-cance r-rates/
5. DesMoines Register via Yahoo News, Oct. 1, 2026. https://www.yahoo.com/news/us/articles/hundreds-iowa-cancer-cases-remain-101143300.html
6. IowaPublic Radio, Mar. 13, 2026. https://www.iowapublicradio.org/health/2026-03-13/annual-report-finds-iowa-cancer-rates-remain-some-of-the-hig hest-in-the-nation
7. Iowa HHS, KeyDrivers of Cancer in Iowa. https://hhs.iowa.gov/health-prevention/cancer
8. Iowa Environmental Council, report announcement. https://www.iaenvironment.org/newsroom/council-news/new-report-finds-ties-between-the-most-common-cancers-in-iowa-and-environmental-risk-factors
9. Iowa Environmental Council, recommendations presentation, July 2026. https://gllc.csgmidwest.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2026/07/2026-07-24_Cancer-and-NitratesIEC-Slides.pdf
10. UI Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination, Cancer in Iowa. https://cheec.uiowa.edu/cancer-iowa
11. Iowa Cancer Consortium, Iowa Cancer Plan.
12. League of Women Voters of the U.S., Natural Resources position. https://my.lwv.org/lwvus/position/natural-resources
13. Reuters, Sept.29, 2026. https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/iowa-soaring-cancer-rates-emerge-key-midterms-iss ue-2026-09-29/