

OPINION

Iowans are paying more thanks to Democrats' Inflation 'Enhancement' Act

BY GRASSLEY PRESS

One year after President Biden signed into law Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), U.S. Senate Budget Committee Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) issued the following statement on Aug. 16:



Sen. Chuck Grassley

"The most effective policymaking happens when legislators of different political ideologies work together on behalf of the American people. When congressional Democrats unilaterally moved a historically massive spending package through the legislative process last year — despite persistent pushback from their Republican colleagues — they and President Biden did Americans a disservice.

"Democrats named that package the 'Inflation Reduction Act,' I call it the 'Inflation Enhancement Act.' What matters is not the name, but how the bill impacts people. One year into implementation of the Inflation Enhancement Act, the consequences are real and painful: Iowans are paying more now to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads."

The IRA passed both chambers of Congress last year without a single Republican vote; in the Senate, it required a tie-breaking vote by the vice president.

Effects of the Inflation Enhancement Act

The Congressional Budget Office, the non-partisan agency that reports to Congress on the economic impact of federal budget decisions, in February cited the IRA as a contributor to "upward pressure on the prices of goods and services, causing inflation to be higher than it would be otherwise." Among other market factors, the IRA is squeezing Iowans' pocketbooks:

- The price of gas in the Des Moines area is up roughly 14 percent from this time last year.
- Housing costs and mortgage rates increased nationwide by approximately seven and two percent respectively. Moreover, interest rates have climbed to a 22-year high, putting the dream of homeownership out of reach for more and more Americans.
- Grocery prices rose 4.9 percent in the last 12 months.

President Biden last week lamented Democrats' decision to name the bill the "Inflation Reduction Act," admitting it "has less to do with reducing inflation than it does to do with dealing with providing for alternatives that generate economic growth." The IRA incentivizes those alternatives through green tax credits and subsidies that cost taxpayers, add hundreds of billions of dollars to the national debt, weaken American energy independence and do nothing to save families money on energy bills.

- IRA electric vehicle (EV) tax credits will further drive U.S. reliance on China, which dominates over 70 percent of global EV battery cell production capacity.
- IRA green credits are expected to primarily benefit rich families. By 2031, those earning below \$500,000 are projected to bear as much as two-thirds of the burden of the tax hikes included in the bill.
- Even with billions of dollars in IRA subsidies for green energy companies, permitting delays continue to prevent the construction of renewable and fossil fuel energy projects.

Magic Mike 6xl: Yokels in the Windy City

MICHAEL D. DAVIS | CORRESPONDENT

Alright, I've been putting this off for a while. I went to Chicago a few weeks ago.

I know what you're saying, "Hey, Mike, what the chestnuts? You don't travel unless there's a funeral, so who died?" The answer, my friend, is my sister's taste in music. Ya see she got these tickets to a Pink concert in the big city and me and my Ma tagged along.

Now, I ain't gonna go over the entire trip cause then we're gonna be here all day cause, frankly, I haven't quite recovered yet. I mean, I saw more people in the first five minutes than I've ever seen in Tama-Toledo. I could talk about being astounded by the Van Gogh exhibit at the Art Institute or the any of the thousand things that amazed me, but I'm not. I'm gonna talk about bein' a country yokel in the windy city.

Ya gotta understand that I've never really felt this before cause one, I've never been to the big city, and two, I've always lived in Toledo. I've never lived on a farm or anywhere that isn't thirty seconds away from Casey's. So, in Tama-Toledo here, I kind of feel like a "town" kid.

We weren't even in the city limits and a big low flying plane went by outside the window of the car and I said, "Did ya see how low that plane was? And it wasn't even a crop duster." So, we were off to a good start.

Skip to the hotel, we get our key cards and are directed to these tiny closet-like elevators. Ma and my sister decide to take the luggage up while I sit my fat butt on a bench across the way. They get into the elevator. I see them hit the button for our floor, seven, and I watch the number atop the doors. 1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...

The doors open, this guy gets off and I hear the voices of Ma and my sister. I asked them if they dropped off the luggage and they said not yet they didn't get to the floor. So, the elevator doors close again, and I watch the numbers again.

1...2...3...4...3...2...1...

A couple of women get off this time. I can still hear the voices of Ma and my Sister. Some guy gets on with them, and the doors close again. I'm still sitting there on the bench when another woman comes along and gets into the other elevator. I watch her as she swipes her room key at this thing in the elevator before hitting her floor. "Oh Lord," I think.

So, I call my sister. She answers somewhere around the tenth floor. She immediately starts chewing me out for calling her while she's on the elevator. When she's done, I inform her about using the key card to get to the proper floor, and they finally drop off the luggage. All in all, Ma and my sister rode the elevator for a good twenty minutes in Chicago.

Then there's this bit. Now, my Ma doesn't have the best eyes. I mean, she can see, and she can drive and all but eh, they are kind of Coke bottle like.

So we get settled in the hotel room. My Ma looks in the cabinet and sees a little coffeemaker, a microwave, and a minibar; and informs us of such. My sister runs off to her concert, and I start figuring out room service.

Me and Ma eat some supper and save a burger for my sister for after her concert. Around midnight, after what seemed like a million sirens had bellowed outside the window, my sister returns.

I say, "Hey, we got you a burger, there's a microwave in the cabinet." She says, "Sweet." She grabs the burger, leans down, opens the cabinet, and says, "Hey guys, this is a safe." Suffice to say we are still waiting for the burger to warm up.

As much as I'd like to completely blame my Ma's bad vision on this one, I gotta take some of the blame here. I had looked in the cabinet earlier in the night. But, hey ya see this big black thing with numbers, and a little display, and someone had said it was a microwave, and it's kind of in shadow.

So... uh, yeah, Chicago. Fun was had.

Lincoln Highway bridge at a crossroads

The iconic Lincoln Highway bridge here will have to be replaced in some manner, but the exact strategy has yet to be decided. The Tama City Council held a work session Monday to go over the options. A vote will be taken next Monday, August 21, on how to move forward.



Jeff Morrison

The tug-of-war between the 1915 bridge's status on the National Register of Historic Places and the need to have Fifth Street as a truck route has been complicated by the extremely bad condition of the concrete deck. The original rehabilitation plan is no longer feasible.

Council member Emily Babinat asked, "Basically at this point there's no way to keep the bridge functional and keep it historic at the same time?" Tim Monson of engineering firm Shuck-Britson said that was correct. Monson said that based on previous discussions with the council, "the thought of moving forward with something new was the preferred option."

"It's a historic bridge right now, and we're going to take that away," Monson said. Possibilities that were discussed included repairing as is, constructing a new bridge with or without the side rails, replacing the bridge with a box culvert, or bypassing it altogether.

Work on the bridge began April 15 but stopped soon afterward. Tama resident Charlie Betz wrote about the bad news in an April 25 Facebook post:

"The Lincoln Highway bridge is likely beyond repair. They removed 6 inches of blacktop off the bridge decking to get to the concrete bridge span. It was then they started finding trouble. The decking itself is 18 inch thick concrete and in a couple of the test sections they've dug down 12 inches and not found any good concrete."

The city council had expected the work to be completed in 90 days. Four

months later, the bridge remains unfinished and impassable, and there are concerns about the prolonged closure of the road.

Kelli Scott with Snyder & Associates said Monday that the city has probably spent around \$200,000 so far between engineering and construction. Moving forward requires choosing between state and federal funding. Either has a significant time frame. Federal funding would require proving that there are no feasible alternatives to replacement, including rehabilitation without affecting the historical integrity of the bridge. Scott said Snyder's recommendation was to get federal funding and modify the structure.

Council member Larry Thomas said something needed to be done fast, and asked about building a new road alongside Fifth Street, which would require property acquisition. Jerome Hatlewick with Shuck-Britson said existing funding could not be used for a reroute of Fifth Street and a reroute would stop any work on the bridge. In addition, he said, good concrete still would be needed in order to make the 1915 structure a pedestrian bridge.

Council members and engineers discussed the possibility of combining the best parts of the two rails to make one rail for display in the nearby roadside park. That would be more economically feasible than preserving both, Hatlewick said. Relocating the rails eliminates the possibility of using a \$50,000 grant from Prairie Rivers of Iowa via the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. The rails could be retained as part of a new bridge, but the pieces would need to be stored safely during construction.

Repairing the bridge with the existing abutments means the issue would have to be revisited in 20 years, Scott said. Tama Mayor Brian Hanus, who was sworn in last week, said that would be "just putting a Band-Aid on it, it's not fixing it. ... There's been too many Band-Aids." Re-

habilitation still means starting over with the entire process, a year at minimum, and reconstruction would likely take two years, Scott said.

The bridge is not wide enough for current standards. Trucks and farm machinery repeatedly have struck the rails. Council members discussed what the city could do to better block off the bridge and not have a significant drop-off in the roadbed at the site while waiting for any future work.

The last major rehabilitation of the bridge was in 1987. The current round of work was first discussed in 2014. Over the next five years, money was raised through donations from local residents and organizations, historic preservation groups, and the Department of Cultural Affairs, with the Iowa Department of Transportation committing to covering the remaining cost.

Three bids for work on the bridge in October 2021 came in between double and quadruple the original estimate of \$150,000. The first round was invalidated and the second had no bidders, the Tama-Toledo News-Chronicle said in February 2022.

The third round of bidding was shifted from the local to the state level as a federal-aid swap application. The DOT included the bridge project in its October 2022 letting. Boulder Contracting had the lowest bid in that round, at \$349,040, and the others were substantially higher.

Due to the bridge's inclusion in 1978 on the National Register of Historic Places as a transportation structure, there are many restrictions on the type and scope of work that can be done while preserving that status. Babinat pointed out that any change to the bridge's footprint would endanger its place on the register.

However, Babinat also said later in the meeting, "We're out of duct tape."

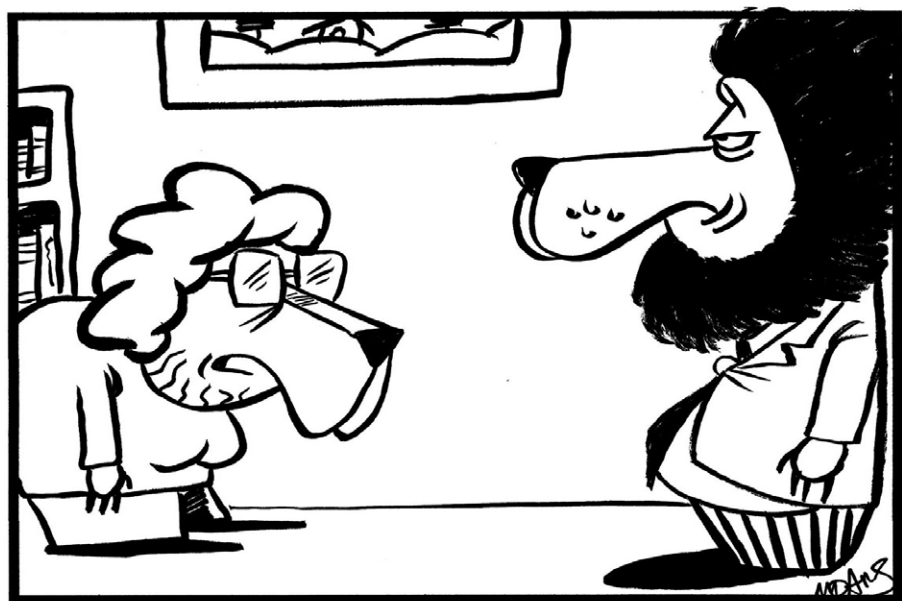
Jeff Morrison is the writer behind the website "Iowa Highway Ends." He grew up in Traer and now lives in Cedar Rapids.

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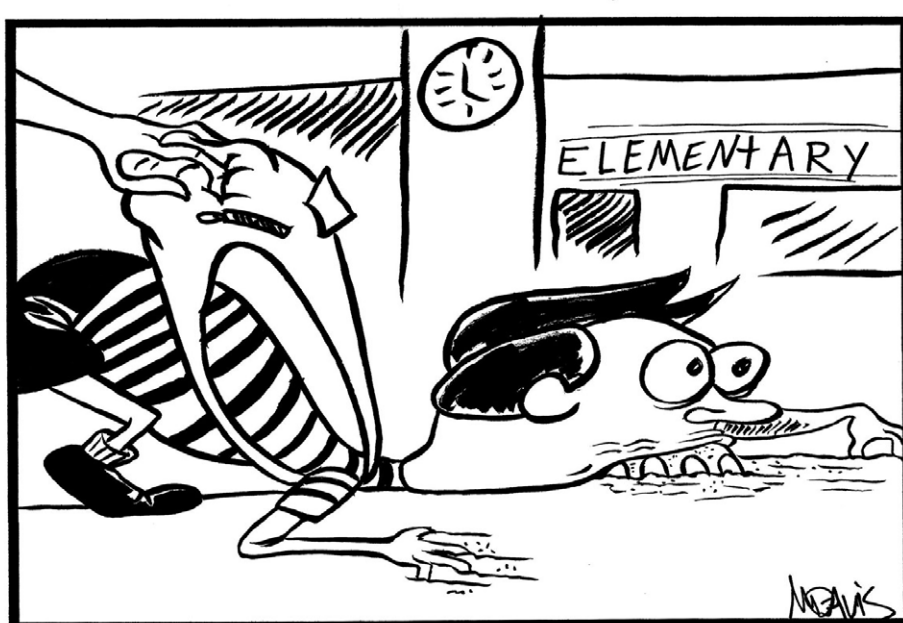
BY MICHAEL D. DAVIS



"Could ya pick up a carcass for dinner on your way home?"

LOCAL LUNACY

by Michael D. Davis



Local kids head back to school

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