

# OPINION

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THE BLOOMFIELD DEMOCRAT 5A

## EDITORIAL

### DC Schools implement exemplary approach to decision on 4-day week

Every now and then an institution must make a life-changing decision that directly affects those involved plus sends ripple effects throughout the entire community.

The Davis County School Board is facing such a decision now as it contemplates whether to change the traditional five-day school week to a four-day week.

The administrators and school board members could proceed by simply studying the issue and making the decision in board meetings open to the public.

Fortunately, the Davis County Schools have chosen a different route — a route that is exemplary in its openness with multiple opportunities to receive feedback from the entire community.

A citizens' study committee of parents, community leaders, teachers, non-certified school staff, and others was formed to view three Zoom panel discussions involving area schools that are operating on a four-day schedule. The discussions focused on the "nuts and bolts" of a four-day week, the impact on student achievement and well-being, and the Feb. 1 session will take a look at the impact on families and businesses.

Fortunately, the Zoom panel discussions are open to the public, and anyone may go to the school's website and log into the discussion at their convenience.

Links to educational resources on the topic are available on the website as well.

Town Hall meetings open to everyone are scheduled for Feb. 15, 6-7 p.m.; Feb. 23, 10-11 a.m.; and March 2, 6-7 p.m. as the school gathers community input.

Following the March 2 Town Hall, the study committee will make a recommendation to the DC School Board and the board will make the final decision on March 20.

Administrators, staff, and board members have put a lot of work into educating and seeking input from the community before the final decision is made.

Community members should respond by studying both sides of the issue, talking with committee members, and letting administrators and board members know how they feel.

This is how decisions should be made when they affect a large number of people. This is a model worthy of being followed by all institutions, public or private.

This model educates the public on the issues, respects and values the opinions and input of the public, and — in the long run — minimizes conflict within the community.

This is the democratic process at work!



## STRAY THOUGHTS

### Elections, not caucuses, should be the focus

By Randy Evans

Not that she asked, but I have some advice for Rita Hart, the new chair of the Iowa Democratic Party.

Yes, Hart is an experienced practitioner of politics. She was twice elected to the Iowa Senate. She was the Democrats' lieutenant governor candidate on the ticket with Fred Hubbell in 2018. And two years ago, she came within an eyelash — six votes — of winning a seat in Congress. She also is a former teacher and still farms with her husband near the Clinton County town of Wheatland.

Normally, I would trust the judgment of someone with her credentials on what her priorities should be as the Iowa Democrats' top state leader. But this is the Iowa Democratic Party, and too many party activists, along with civic boosters and journalists, cling to the belief that the process of choosing presidential nominees absolutely and without question must begin in Iowa.

The pressure will be on Hart to try to reverse the decision made late last year by the Democratic National Committee to reshuffle the party's nomination calendar. The decision removed Iowa's precinct caucuses as the lead-off event in the presidential selection process every four years.

But Hart should not waste even one minute trying to undo what has been done. The caucuses had long been unwieldy and failed to let all Democrats engage in the presidential nominating process.

Instead, Hart should focus on a much more important task — getting the Iowa party, and its candidates, back into shape to wage effective campaigns for seats in the Legislature, in courthouses across Iowa, for top elective offices in state government, and for seats in the U.S. House and Senate.

The Iowa Democratic Party is a shadow of what it once was. After the beat-down in last November's elections, the Republicans occupy all the U.S. Senate and U.S. House seats from Iowa, all but one of the statewide elective offices, and two-thirds of the members of the Iowa House and Iowa Senate have Rs after their names.

The picture for Democrats was not so bleak in the 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century. Remember when Democrats Tom Vilsack and Chet Culver served as governor from 1999 through 2010? Have you forgotten that period from 2007 to 2011 when the party had a "trifecta" in state government, meaning it held the governor's office and a majority of seats in both the Iowa House and the Iowa Senate?

Even after the trifecta ended, do you remember when the Democratic Party had a majority in the Iowa Senate, giving Democrats a voice that Republicans could not ignore when shaping proposals in front of the Legislature from 2011 to 2016?

Yes, many people have enjoyed the state's time in the national spotlight every four years, when presidential wannabes crisscross the state asking people to support them in the Democrats' precinct caucuses. We enjoy seeing our cafes and coffee shops on national television as presidential candidates, and TV news celebrities, speak with folks about the next election. Our hometown pride kicks in when presidential candidates speak to crowds in local school gymnasiums where our kids play basketball.

But the Democratic caucuses have gotten more complicated since they began 50 years ago. It takes huge amounts of time and money to prepare for these events.

That is why some Democrats who are blue through and through make the case that the time party leaders and thousands of volunteers spend organizing and holding the caucuses would better be spent identifying, recruiting and prepping good Democrats to win offices in Iowa.

Hart's time would be better spent listening to Democrats in rural areas who believe the party's message has become too divisive for a state that has long tended to occupy the middle of the road.

She should worry more about helping independents and Democrats understand that the extreme messages they hear from candidates from both parties on the East Coast and West Coast are not messages coming from the lips of her party's candidates in Iowa.

And Hart can be successful if she marshals the armies of volunteers behind the caucuses in a couple thousand precincts and gets them to turn their attention, instead, to get-out-the-vote efforts on behalf of Democratic candidates.

It will be up to Hart to lead the way. Otherwise, her tenure as party chair will be as brief as her predecessors, and Democratic voters will be as despondent as they have been in recent elections.

There were signs last week that Hart may need more encouragement on what her priorities should be as state party chair. The Iowa Capital Dispatch reported that she said in a Q&A session with southwest Iowa Democrats a week ago, "We've got to continue to fight that fight for the first-in-the-nation status."

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### The message from Gov. Reynolds and the GOP: Transparency is for suckers

Column by Kathie Obradovich, Iowa Capital Dispatch

Transparency is for suckers.

That's the message, loud and clear, from Gov. Kim Reynolds and her Republican enablers in the Legislature.

I'd suspect that this was another, particularly idiotic manifestation of the transphobia that has infected Republican officeholders the past few years. But no, Reynolds and GOP lawmakers are insisting on "transparency" through various priority bills in the Legislature while keeping the public in the dark. Everybody loves transparency — as long as it required of other people.

Reynolds' recent interview with Amanda Rooker of KCCI-TV made that abundantly clear. Rooker asked Reynolds about the so-called "transparency" measures she is proposing for public schools. These may include ideas proposed in the past, like requiring teachers to post their lesson plans online or school libraries posting every title on their shelves.

Rooker asked if Reynolds would also seek to impose those rules on private schools that receive taxpayer funds from her education savings account proposal. Reynolds stammered.

"Well, you know they're held to — you know, most of this would deal with public schools, would public schools right now. So you know, they — it would just be public schools."

That last phrase is the actual answer. Only public schools would have to post course details and library titles and whatever else the governor and GOP lawmakers can think of to demand from public schools.

Why not private schools? If we're going to dedicate hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to give parents a "choice" on where to send their kids, shouldn't that be an informed choice?

Reynolds says parents can figure that out for themselves.

"But again, it's the parent that's going to be making that decision. So if they feel that the school doesn't meet their expectations, or what they're looking for, then they're not going to transfer their child there," she said. "So I'm going to trust parents to do the research, to, you know, to make the decision of what environment is best for their children."

Speaking of those taxpayer dollars that will be going to possibly secretive private schools, Reynolds said she is planning to hire a private company to handle the transfer of state money to parents and oversee how that money is spent. Lawmakers will not be informed about how that would be done and what company would be in charge until after the legislation has passed.

And speaking of taxpayer money, House Speaker Pat Grassley told reporters last week that the House doesn't need to send the school scholarship bill through the Appropriations Committee to examine the spending. Why not? Because House Republicans have talked about the cost. Among themselves. In secret.

"I will tell you that, I probably talk so much about appropriations matters in caucus, I probably drive them nuts how much time we do spend on that," Grassley said. "We take this very seriously, whenever we look at any sort of investment like this, and there has been significant time not only since we got to session, but leading up to session on what potential proposals would look like. So it's not like we just started yesterday having that conversation."

None of those conversations were in public, however. Neither the governor nor legislators discussed details of the current, vastly expanded, scholarship plan during the campaign. Republican and Democratic "caucus" meetings are held behind closed doors.

The Senate did hold an appropriations committee meeting last week, but decided to push forward with the bill without a nonpartisan fiscal analysis. The chambers could send the bill to the governor's desk as early as this week, without giving Iowans time to absorb the details.

Then, they'll move on to talking about transparency for public school teachers, tax assessors, universities and all those other suckers.

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