LEECOMM: Dispatchers recognized during Public Safety Week • See page 4

PEN CITY CURRENT It's Black & White and Read all over

Wednesday, April 16, 2025 | 9 pages | Volume 9 • Issue 74

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Grassley steady in FM



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Lee County resident Mary Jo Reisberg poses a question on refugees and immigration to U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley Tuesday at his town hall in Fort Madison.

TOWN HALL: Crowd gets antsy with Sen. Chuck Grassley on immigration, more

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A spillover crowd greeted U.S. Sen. Charles Grassley Tuesday afternoon at the Fort Madison City Hall, but took the annual stop in Lee County as a chance to vent their frustrations with current administration policies.

More than 100 people were admitted into the city's Council Chambers while about 30 more stood outside the door and even shouted questions in over those standing in the doorway.

The group peppered Grassley with questions ranging from the current tariff climate, to veterans' support, welfare benefits,

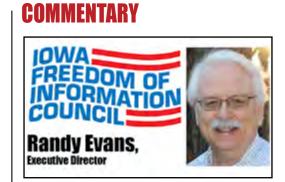
and immigration.

Several attendees repeatedly shouted to Grassley to answer questions. For slightly more than an hour, Grassley remained even-handed standing throughout the session and just one time leaned on a chair between attendees to listen to a question.

Lee County Democratic Chairwoman Mary Jo Reisberg pressed Grassley on the Trump Administration's position on immigrants.

Reisberg said, as a Sunday school teacher, she prays for refu-

See GRASSLEY, page 7



Free speech includes right to criticize government

A constitutional showdown taking shape in southern Iowa's Decatur County could put taxpayers on the hook financially to defend the county's efforts to silence a critic of public officials there.

The Institute for Justice, a national nonprofit law firm, wrote Decatur County Attorney Alan Wilson last week expressing its concerns about Wilson's recent threat to Rita Audlehelm that she could be sued for defamation for her comments in a letter to the editor published in the Leon Journal-Reporter.

The institute said Wilson's actions show why the Iowa Legislature needs to pass House File 472 or its Senate companion, Senate File 47. These bills create an expedited means for defendants in frivolous libel lawsuits to get those cases dismissed before spending tens of thousands of dollars defending themselves for speech protected by the Constitution's First Amendment.

"Americans have a right to criticize their government without facing frivolous lawsuits from elected officials," Brian Morris, an attorney for the institute, said in a statement.

COUNTY NEWS

Danville Telecom buys out SIREPA broadband lease

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Danville Telecom has bought out a lease agreement with Southeast Iowa Regional and Economic Port Authority, which could lead to quicker expansion of broadband in Lee County.

The move gives the telecommunications company ownership of the new broadband infrastructure that was built with funds from Lee County's America Rescue Plan Act authorization, state grant funding, and private funding. Lee County granted SIREPA close to \$2 million to be used as a trigger for funding from the state to build a redundant loop system between Argyle and Keokuk that is now a catalyst for future development. The loop also

See BUYOUT, page 4

"Rita exemplifies what America stands for," he said. "She cares deeply about her community; she's engaged, and she expresses her concerns thoughtfully through her speech. In response, the county has tried to silence Rita through baseless and frivolous threats.

"That's the work of kings, not elected officials," Morris added.

The institute's media release quoted com-

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Showers likely, 72° F/ 61° F 🛛 🐲
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. 3 20 30 52 62, Powerball: 1 Power Play: 3

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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

MARTIN E. MARTINEZ

Martin Efren Martinez, 65 years, of Mediapolis, Iowa was found deceased in his home on Friday, April 11, 2025. He was born January 10, 1960 in California, a son of Frank and Aurelia (Salazar) Martinez. He married Lisa Yager, they had two children,



MARTINEZ

Cory and Chantel. They later divorced. He later married Becky Faeth. They later divorced. He was graduate of Fort Madison High School, and lived most of his

life in southeast Iowa. He worked at the Walmart Distribution Center, retiring after 25 years. He enjoyed NASCAR racing and gardening, but he loved fishing.

Martin is survived by two children: Cory Martinez and Chantel

Martinez (Jeremy Chamberlin) all of Fort Madison; three grandchildren: Arius, Braelynn, and Chayde Chamberlin; four brothers: Timothy Martinez, Andrew Martinez, Dan Martinez, and Jerry Martinez; and nine sisters: Miriam Pix, Martha Lees, Cynthia Krogmeier, Lucinda Holmes, Francine Buneta, Camille Libby, Vivian Martinez, Rita Martinez, and Carmelita Martinez. He was preceded in death by his parents and two siblings, Marcel and Darius Martinez.

His body has been cremated. Services will be held at a later date. Barr Memorial Chapel is honored to serve the Martinez family and an online guest book may be found at www.barrmemorialchapel.com.

Pen City Current obituary policy

Pen City Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes. Reposting of obituaries due to changes can only be requested by the submitting funeral home and will be assessed a \$15 reposting fee

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KAREN E. HOGAN

Karen Elizabeth Hogan, 71 years, of Niota, Illinois died Tuesday, April 15, 2025 at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City, Iowa. She was born April 20, 1953 at Fort Madison, Iowa, a daughter of Harold and Mary B.



(Schulte) Laughlin. On February 11, 1984, she married Roger Hogan at the St. Mary and Joseph Catholic Church, Fort Madison, Iowa.

Karen graduated from Aquinas High School in 1971. Following graduation, she worked as a lab technician at Sacred Heart Hospital and then Sheaffer Pen for 25 years until its closure. She then transitioned to Winegard, until her retirement in 2014. Karen

HOGAN

enjoyed cheering on the Hawkeyes, woodworking, playing cards and entertaining her family and friends. She was a member of the Holy Family Parish, Fort Madison, Iowa and previously attended Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Nauvoo, Illinois.

Karen is survived by her husband, Roger Hogan, of Niota, Illinois; daughters: Katie (James) Boyles, of Fort Madison, Iowa and Jessica (Max) Gnann, of Niota, Illinois; grandchildren: Anastasia, Claudia, Maria, Ambrose, Victoria, Edith and Fulton Boyles; sister, Cindy (Earl) Leffler, of Fort Madison, Iowa; brother, Larry (Kathleen) Laughlin, of Evans, Georgia; niece, Michelle Leffler, of Fort Madison, Iowa; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Robert (Nikki) Hogan, of Donnellson, Iowa, Jake (Sandy) Hogan, of Niota, Illinois, Karen Simpson, of Fort Madison, Iowa, Nancy (Craig) Todd, of Dallas City, Illinois, Julie (Larry) Holmes, of Montrose, Iowa and Denise (Bryan) Allen, of Niota, Illinois and several nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, one brother, Michael Laughlin and one grandson, Linus Boyles.

Karen will continue to live on not just in our hearts, but in our card games, a cold beer, a bon fire and hay ride, a good prank, a pint of salsa and most especially in the laughter of her grandchildren.

A Rosary will be recited at 4:00 pm Monday, April 21, 2025 at the Barr Memorial Chapel, Fort Madison. Visitation will follow and continue until 6:30 pm Monday evening at the funeral home. Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10:30 am Tuesday, April 22, 2025 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Holy Family Parish, with Rev. Gary Beckman and Rev. Tony Trosley as Con-Celebrants. Burial will be at the Sacred Heart Cemetery, Fort Madison. In lieu of flowers, a memorial has been established for Birthright of Keokuk and HTC Taps, contributions may be left at the Barr Memorial Chapel or at the church during services. Barr Memorial Chapel is honored to serve the Karen Hogan family and an online guest book may be found at <u>www.barrmemorialchapel.com</u>.





Charles Vandenberg, Editor

(319).371.1670 Charles.V@PenCityCurrent.com

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Lee K. Vandenberg, Sales Manager

(319).371.4125 Lee.V@PenCityCurrent.com

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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

FRANK H. SANDERS

Frank Henry Sanders, 90 of Keokuk, IA passed away peacefully on Monday, April 14, 2025 at his home.

He was born April 6, 1935 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Keokuk, IA the son of Wells Frank and Gladys May Wilson Sanders.



Frank was a man of deep faith, steady work ethic, and boundless heart, Frank was cherished by all who knew him.

SANDERS

Frank was raised on his family's farm outside of Kahoka, Missouri, where he learned the value of hard work and simple living. He attended a one-room schoolhouse through the 8th grade and graduated from Kahoka High School in 1953, where he played basketball and was active in FFA.

That same year, he began his service in the National Guard, proudly dedicating nine years of his life and spending two weeks each summer at National Guard camp.

Frank was a gifted musician with a love for old-time music. He played guitar, banjo, harmonica, and even the spoons. For a time, he played in a small band and continued to fill his home with music throughout his life, singing and playing for the joy of his family.

One of the greatest chapters of Frank's life began when he met Frances. They married just 19 days after meeting—a bold and beautiful beginning to a marriage that would last over 50 years. Their love was strong, enduring, and a true inspiration to everyone who knew them.

A true entrepreneur, Frank owned and operated Southeast Iowa Aluminum and Brass Foundry for many years, only retiring at the remarkable age of 87. His hands shaped not only metal, but a legacy of dedication and craftsmanship.

Faith was a cornerstone of Frank's life. He was an active member of the Alexandria Presbyterian Church and placed his full trust in God.

Outside of work and worship, Frank's favorite place to be was by the water. An avid fisherman, he passed his love of fishing on to his family, often catching enough to host memorable fish fries surrounded by friends and loved ones.

Though small in stature, Frank had a giant heart. His kindness, sense of humor, and steadfast friendship left an impact that will not be forgotten. If you were lucky enough to call him a friend, you were truly blessed.

He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by his children, Laura (Sanders) Townsley and her husband Jeff,

Teresa (Sanders) Nichols and her husband Scott, Frank Sanders Jr. and his wife Holly. His grandchildren, Patricia, Cheryl, Shauna, Cammi, Cael, Miley, Shawn, Ann and Leanne, 20 great grandchildren and 3 great-great grandchildren. He is also survived by his siblings, ,Beverly Joan (Keith) Cannon, Pearl (Bonnie) Sanders, Linda (Don) Walker and a sister-in-law, Liz Sanders.

Frank was preceded in death by his wife, Frances Sanders, siblings, Ike Sanders, two, half-sisters, Mary Patton and Garnet Smith and a grandson, Ethan Nichols.

A joint memorial service will be held for Frank and Frances at 11 a.m., Saturday, April 19, 2025 at the Alexandria Presbyterian Church in Alexandria, MO.

Memorials may be made to the Alexandria Presbyterian Church.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at <u>www.vigenmemorialhome.com</u>.



Lunch Specials March 31 - April 4 11am - 1pm

Monday, March 31st Chicken Fajitas, Spanish Rice

OBITUARIES

SHERRY L. CROWELL

Sherry Lynn Sue Crowell 22, of Keokuk, IA passed away Sunday, April 13, 2025 as a result of a tragic car accident in Carthage, IL.

She was born April 2, 2003 in Keokuk, IA, the daughter of Christopher and



Sherry Lynn was a smile personified and walking sunshine. Sherry would smile and make jokes with a wall if needed, to make her family and friends happy. Sherry enjoyed hanging out with family and friends. Like every Keokuk kid, Sherry enjoyed going down to the river and hanging out. Sherry had a love for children and often was the go-to babysitter for her family and

CROWELL

friends. Sherry was a graduate of Keokuk High School's class of

2021. Sherry decided to take time off from school to spend with family and friends. At a young age, Sherry developed a love for putting together puzzles. Sherry loved the outdoors and being outside with her family, whether it was mushroom hunting, fishing or going to yard sales with her Grandma Diana. Sherry had a close relationship with her siblings and grandparents. She doted on her nephew, Tylor and loved spending time with him.

Sherry Lynn is survived by her mother, Lilly Crowell, two brothers, Todd Crowell and Bryce Crowell, one sister, Courtney (RJ) Bryant and one nephew, Tylor Crowell, all of Keokuk. She is also survived by one uncle, Daniel (Jackie) Crowell and family of Kahoka, MO, grandfather, Bennie Crowell of Keokuk and grandmother, Annie Vermeesch of Keokuk, and numerous great aunts, great uncles and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her father, Christopher Crowell, step mother, Jessica Crowell, grandmother, Diana Crowell and grandfather, Earl Vermeesch.

Sherry Lynn was loved by so many and has left her family with cherished memories of her short life.

A funeral service will be held at 5 p.m. Friday, April 18, 2025 at the Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk, IA with Pastor Steve Hendricksmeyer officiating.

Visitation will be held one hour prior to the service, Friday, from 4-5 p.m., at the funeral home with family meeting with friends at that time.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.



Tuesday, April 1st

Minit Steak, Mashed Potatoes, Corn

Wednesday, April 2nd Grilled Pork Loin, Cheese Potatoes, Baked Beans

Thursday, April 3rd Fried Chicken Dinners

Friday, April 4th Fish & Shrimp Dinners

From the Front

Broadband expansion could come quicker with buyout

BUYOUT - Continued from Page 1

allows for Danville Telecom to reroute service in the event of service interruptions.

The infrastructure has extensive capacity and other telecommunication companies can lease space on it and not have to create their own infrastructure. This has already generated plans for an additional \$30 million in broadband expansion in the county through companies like Mediacom and Mediapolis Telephone. Those two companies, specifically, have applied for additional federal funding to begin work in and around the county.

Danville Telecom was also able to run broadband to about 120 addresses in the Wever area as part of the project with SIREPA.

SIREPA will be paid a total of about \$400,000 in the lease buyout. The original agreement had Danville Telecom paying lease payments to SIREPA as the owner of the infrastructure, for the next 10 years. One of those payments, about \$30,000, had already been made.

The funding will be used for future broadband and economic development

efforts in Lee County.

Lee County Supervisor Garry Seyb sits ex officio on the SIREPA board and said this project in total will be the catalyst for rapid expansion of internet service in the county. He said the buyout allows Danville Telecom to move freely with regard to leases with other companies. If the lease were allowed to progress SIRE-PA, as owners of the infrastructure, would have had to vote on all transactions taking place through Danville Telecom.

"We're gonna start looking like some of the other counties now with lines laid everywhere and that's a good thing," he said.

Lee County Chairwoman Denise Fraise said she found that interesting because people were complaining that the county was only getting 120 addresses for their \$2 million.

"Look what you've got started," she said.

Seyb agreed that the county took some heat over that but he said the real story is not the 100 some people that got it.

"Everybody got in and we got this done, and now you're seeing that rapid expansion."













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Classifieds/Public Notices

PEN CITY CURRENT CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICE PROCEEDINGS FORT MADISON CITY COUNCIL 4/1/2025

The Fort Madison City Council held a Special Meeting at 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at City Hall, 811 Avenue E. Mayor Mohrfeld presided with Council Members Thele, Roller, Sparrow, Gray, Yager and Emmett present. Council Member Andrews arrived at 5:05 P.M.

At 5:00 P.M., Mohrfeld opened the public hearing concerning the Proposed Property Tax Levy for FY 2025/2026. The Proposed Tax Levy of \$18.24 reflects a \$0.03 decrease from FY 2024/2025. During public comments, Kathleen Nelson requested clarification on the County-mailed tax notice and the property assessment process: Tracy Jordan expressed frustration over the increase in her property's assessed value; and Barb Asay stated, residents in disagreement with their assessed property's value may petition to the Lee County Assessors Board of Review by April 30, 2025. With no further oral or written comments, Mohrfeld closed the public hearing at 5:21 P.M. On motion, Council adopted Resolution No. 2025-31 approving the Proposed Property Tax Levy for Fiscal Year 2025/2026.

The meeting adjourned at 5:22 P.M.

/s/ Matt J. Mohrfeld,

PUBLIC NOTICES Mayor Achievement Day

ATTEST: /s/ Justina M. Cullen, City Clerk

PUBLIC NOTICE PROCEEDINGS FORT MADISON CITY COUNCIL 4/1/2025

At 5:30 P.M., Council met in regular session on Tuesday, April 1, 2025. Mayor Mohrfeld presided with Council Members Thele, Roller, Sparrow, Gray, Yager, Andrews and Emmett present.

Scouting America, Troop #19 of Denmark, Iowa presented the colors and led the pledge of allegiance.

Mohrfeld proclaimed April 3, 2025, and every first Thursday in April hereafter, as Junior Achievement Day in the City of Fort Madison.

On motion, Council approved the Consent Agenda: Minutes of 3/18/2025; Liquor License Renewals: Casa Jalisco, LLC, LULAC Council 304, and Walgreens #11759; New Liquor License: River Rocks Bar & Grill; Claims dated 3/26/2025, Library Claims; and Payroll of 3/21/2025.

Fort Madison Tourism Director Chi Eastin shared insights from the 2025 Iowa Tourism Conference, highlighting agritourism trends, the "Give it Time" travel theme, and efforts to track visitor data through the Arrivalist program.

On motion, Council approved Special Event Permits for the Downtown Summer Markets, and Cinco de Mayo Celebration, and waived the associated fees.

On motion. Council approved the second reading of an ordinance rezoning property known as Ridgewood Addition from R-1, Single-Family Dwelling District to R-4, Single-Family Dwelling District. On motion, Council approved Resolution No. 2025-32, setting public hearing for 5:30 P.M. on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, concerning the Final Budget for Fiscal Year 2025/2026. On motion, Council adopted Resolution No. 2025-33, authorizing the Mayor's signature on a contract with Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission for administration of the

Surface Transportation Block Grant for the Avenue L 20th – 30th Street PCC Overlay Project. On motion. Council adopted Resolution No. 2025-34, approving the Mayor's signature on the required **Civil Rights documents** for the Community Development Block Grant related to the 10th Street Sewer Separation Project, including: Residential Anti-displacement and **Relocation Assistance**



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Classifieds/Public Notices



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Plan, Procurement Policy, Certification of Compliance CDBG Procurement Standards, Excessive Force Policy, Equal Opportunity Policy Statement, Code of Conduct, Affirmative Fair Housing Policy, and Signature Authorization for Alternative Signature

Signature.				
EXPENDITURES		PAYROLL 3/21/2025		
General	\$25,137.53	General		
Special Rev.	19,705.07	Employee Benefits		
Road Use	6,543.31	Road Use		
Debt	0.00	Water		
Capital	2,031.93	Sewer		
Water	40,139.71	Solid Waste		
Sewer	28,505.39	Airport		
Sld Waste, IWC	2,283.50	Storm Water		
SW Utility	440.00	\$3		
	\$124,786.44			

Mayor

REVENUES

General	\$31,653.54
Special Rev.	310,616.60
Road Use	93,801.63
Debt	1,751.67
Capital	15,928.15
Water	355,223.26
Sewer	316,358.47
Sld Waste, IWC	93,875.59
SW Utility	19,639.11
	\$1,238,848.02

PAYROLL 3/21/2025

		ISM BUREA, APRIL	COMPANY, HEAT	DERS	RIAL SERVICE 1,598.56
GENERAL	\$ 220,254.95	SUBSIDY 6,666.66	6,013.81	TOTAL115,543.16	OVERDRIVE, INC, EB-
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	\$ 8,074.31	FORT MADISON WATER	MIGUEL LANDEROS,	GENERAL 22,923.31	OOK/AUDIO BOOKS
ROAD USE	\$ 28,490.29	DEPT, WATER 35.94	NUISANCE 1,885.00	SPECIAL REVENUES	
WATER	\$ 31,558.40	GREAT WESTERN SUP-	MOBILE COMMUNICA-		PETTY CASH - SARAH
SEWER	\$ 33,655.49	PLY CO, JANITORIAL	TIONS AMERICA, RADIO	ROAD USE 6,543.31	CLENDINENG, FILTER
SOLID WASTE	\$ 17,162.96	SUPPLIES 101.33	SUPPLIES 212.75	CAPITAL PROJECTS	
AIRPORT	\$ 838.58	HOENIG TREE SERVICE	MUNICIPAL SUPPLY		THE HAWK EYE, 12
STORM WATER	<u>\$ 2,738.96</u>	INC, TREE REMOVAL	INC., METERS/LIDS	WATER 40,139.71	MONTH RENEWAL
	\$ 342,773.94			WASTEWATER	
CLAIMS 4/1/2025	VICES, PATCHES	HOTOP FABRICATION,	NAPA AUTO PARTS,		TOTAL 9,243.28
		REBUILD GEARBOX	AUTO PARTS 609.71	SOLID WASTE 2,283.50	GENERAL 2,214.22
ABC CAR WASH, VEHI-	BJ 'S PERFORMANCE,		POEPPING STONE &	AIRPORT	SPECIAL REVENUES
CLE DETAIL	VEH MAINT 2,246.77	HUFFMAN WELDING &	BACH, PROF FEE	STORM WATER 440.00	
ACCESS LEASING SYS-	BOUND TREE MEDICAL	MACHINE FAB; MISC		TOTAL115,543.16	TOTAL 9,243.28
TEM, PRINTER LEASE	LLC, MED SUPPLIES	COMM 1,147.39	POSTMASTER, FORT		
		HUMBURD AUTO SER-	MADISON, POST-	LIBRARY CLAIMS -	Place your ad
ACCESS SYSTEMS,	BROZENES HYDRAULIC	VICE, REPLACE TIRES	AGE-WATER BILLS/	MARCH 2025	riace your au
COMPUTER/IT LEASE	SERVICE, REPLACE		PAST DUES 2,418.87		
6,411.38	CYLINDERS 665.00	IDEAL READY MIX COM-	QUADIENT LEASING	AMAZON CAPITAL SER-	online 24/7
AMAZON CAPITAL SER-	BURLINGTON MUNI	PANY, CONCRETE @	USA, INC., POSTAGE	VICES, BAGS/STABILIZ-	
		,	, _,		

On motion, Council WATER, BACTERIA approved the Proposed SAMPLE 170.00 Budget for Fiscal Year CITY OF FORT MADI-2025/2026. SON, LEACHATE DIS-The meeting adjourned CHARGE 1,645.50 CODY POTTHAST, at 6:28 P.M. /s/ Matt J. Mohrfeld, TRAINING 100.57 COMMUNITY HEATING ATTEST: /s/ Justina M. & COOLING, FURNACE Cullen, City Clerk 220,254.95 8,074.31 28,490.29 31,558.40 33,655.49 17,162.96 838.58 2,738.96 342,773.94

DATA SUPPORT COM-PANY, LAB SUPPLIES **DODD PRINTING &** STATIONERY, OFFICE SUPPLIES 57.01 DOUDS STONE, LLC, ROADSTONE 1,710.22 **DUNKIN GARAGE &** TOWING, VEHICLE MAINTENANCE ... 150.00 ENDRESS+HAUSER, **INC., FLOW METER EUROFINS ENVIRON-**MENT TESTING, PROF FEES 706.20 FLOORCRAFTERS, CLEANING 160.00 FORT MADISON TOUR-ISM BUREA APRIL

23/L.....2,967.50 **IDEXX DISTRIBUTION**, INC., KITS 387.03 INDUSTRIAL ELECTRIC MOTORS, BEARINGS/ SWITCH 1,284.18 JIM BAIER INC., REPAIR KIMBALL MIDWEST, HEX NUTS/WASHERS KIRKWOOD COMM. COLLEGE, TRAINING KYLE KNEPP, CLOTH-ING REIMB...... 299.59 LYNCH DALLAS, P.C., PROF FEE...... 3,268.20 MACQUEEN EQUIP-MENT, FLOW TEST MADISON TURF & TIM-**BER, BLADES/PARTS** MCFARLAND, OFFICE CHAIRS 732.00 MICROBAC LABORATO-**RIES LLC, PROF FEES** MIDAMERICAN ENERGY COMPANY HEAT

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ER SHEETS 209.78 BAKER & TAYLOR, SHELF MATERIAL **BLACKSTONE PUBLISH-ING, SHELF MATERIAL** CENGAGE LEARNING INC./GALE, SHELF MA-TERIAL 159.84 CENTER POINT LARGE PRINT, SHELF MATERI-DEMCO, BOOK JACK-ETS..... 62.31 EXCEL IT SERVICES, CLOUD BACKUP/SECU-RITY 51.93 KANOPY, INC., PLAY CREDITS..... 42.00 **KEMPKERS TRUE VAL-**UE, ICE MELT 34.98 MEDIACOM BUSINESS, PHONE/INTERNET MIDAMERICAN ENERGY COMPANY, HEAT MOWEN CLEANING SERVICE LLC, JANITO-RIAL SERVICE 1 598 56 2 9 0 8 2 6

PUBLIC NOTICES

FinishYourDiploma.org

Find free adult education classes to finish high school.



From the Front

Grassley makes swing through southeast Iowa

GRASSLEY - Continued from Page 1

gees looking for a better life in America, one that is now harder and harder for them to find.

Grassley said this country continues to welcome refugees and immigrants as long as they come into the country legally and do what they are supposed to do as citizens.

"We welcome refugees at legal status," he said to groans from the audience.

"Right now we're not," Reisberg said. "These changes have been taking place and that's what concerns me. It hurts me."

The crowd also pushed Grassley on helping get a Maryland father mistakenly deported to an El Salvadoran prison returned home.

"Are you gonna bring that man back from El Salvador," one man yelled over the crowd.

Others said the U.S. Supreme Court said he should not have been sent to the Cegot prison in that country without due process.

"Every person, not citizen, person in the United States has due process," one attendee said.

"That's been violated by this oligarchy administration and we would like to know what you, as someone who should rein in this dictator, are going to do. Why won't you do your job, Senator?"

Grassley said El Salvadoran dictator Nayib Bukele doesn't answer to the U.S. Supreme Court and he is the one refusing to send Kilmar Abrego Garcia back to the U.S.

Grassley was deft in his discussion about tariffs and a 2017 federal tax law that is about to sunset that would result "in the largest increase in taxes in U.S. history," if current tax proposals aren't put in place.

The senator met with media following the town hall and said this is the most emotional time he's seen since 2017 when President Barack Obama's appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court Merrick Garland wasn't put up for a vote and held over for the next administration. He said 2009 with ObamaCare was also very electrified.

The national Republican party had discouraged officials from holding town hall forums, but Grassley has been one of the few that has pushed ahead. Grassley attributed the emotional tone of recent town halls to the Trump Administration.

"Yes, absolutely. In 2017 we were 20,000 mailings behind and now we're at about 35,000. Took a long time to catch up."

Grassley then headed north to the Greater Burlington Partnership where he discussed tariffs again with business and industry leaders there.

Burlington City Manager Chad Bird asked Grassley specifically about rumors of Congress wanting to do away with tax exempt municipal bonds. Bird said he had heard rumblings of the move as a way to generate revenue

Efforts to silence critics is spreading

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ments I made in a recent column on Wilson's dispute with Audlehelm.

"Democracies falter when citizens lose interest or cannot ask questions, seek answers, and make comment without fearing government reprisal against them," I wrote in February. "When an elected official pursues a taxpayer for her fair comment and criticism, it seems like a strange way to protect and defend the Constitution."

Audlehelm is not the first Iowan government officials have confronted for using First Amendment rights. The Institute for Justice also represents Noah Petersen, who was arrested and prosecuted for speaking during a Newton City Council meeting to criticize the mayor and police department about actions of a specific police officer and the police department's overall treatment of Newton residents.

Petersen faced two criminal charges of "disrupting a lawful assembly." At trial, a magistrate found him not guilty, writing in the verdict Petersen had a constitutional right to voice his concerns during the public comment period at the city council meeting.

Petersen then sued the mayor, police chief and city for violating his civil rights for retaliating against him because of his comments to the council.

Petersen's and Audlehelm's cases shine the spotlight on the broader issue of government trying to silence people who disagree with actions or comments of government officials.

In his letter to Wilson, Morris reminded the county attorney of the U.S. Supreme Court's finding in the landmark New York Times v. Sullivan case in 1964: An indispensable principle of free speech guaranteed by the First amendment is that "debate of public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open, and that it may well include vehement, caustic, and sometimes unpleasantly sharp attacks on government and public officials."

Audlehelm regularly attends meetings of the Decatur County Board of Supervisors. She objected in her recent letter to the editor to the absence of Supervisor Steve Fulkerson from the courthouse in Leon for 16 of 17 supervisors' meetings since September 30, 2024.

Morris told Wilson that if county officials are unhappy with Audlehelm's commentary, the solution is for the county to provide more public discussion, not less. By live-streaming the supervisors' meetings and archiving those recordings, the board would ensure the people of Decatur County have ready access to what occurred at the meetings and would not be as reliant on Audlehelm's summaries of those meetings.

Morris formally asked Wilson to retract his letter and publicly acknowledge that Audlehelm has a First Amendment right to criticize the board of supervisors through letters to the local newspapers.

Recent efforts to silence critics of government officials or to punish media outlets, academic institutions and attorneys reach beyond the Decatur County Courthouse and Newton City Hall.

These efforts include the president's executive orders aimed at punishing law firms and individual lawyers who represented his adversaries or were involved in investigations of him before he was re-elected last year.

The efforts also include denying the Associated Press, the world's largest source of news, from covering news events in the Oval Office or on Air Force One until the AP adopts the White House's renaming of the Gulf of Mexico to Gulf of America.

The president's efforts to intimidate colleges and universities with his threats or actions to withhold federal research grants because he dislikes internal decisions the schools made show another way officials can retaliate.

The president's efforts hit closer to home, too, when he sued the Des Moines Register and pollster J. Ann Selzer for the Iowa Poll findings a few days before the 2024 elections. Although he won the election and carried Iowa by a wide margin, the president accuses the newspaper and Selzer of consumer fraud because the poll's findings did not match the eventual outcome of Iowa voting.

Morris, the Institute for Justice attorney, made comments in his letter to the Decatur County attorney that also apply to the president of the United States:

"Like everyone here in America, Ms. Audlehelm has views on governance that are shared by some and disliked by others. Thankfully, the First Amendment stands ready to protect our right to disagree with our elected officials.

"... That freedom to dissent is what separates America from totalitarian regimes elsewhere in the world. But that core First Amendment tenet becomes compromised when elected officials feel empowered to silence and intimidate critics through the threat of baseless lawsuits."

Randy Evans can be reached at <u>DMRevans2810@</u> <u>gmail.com</u>.





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