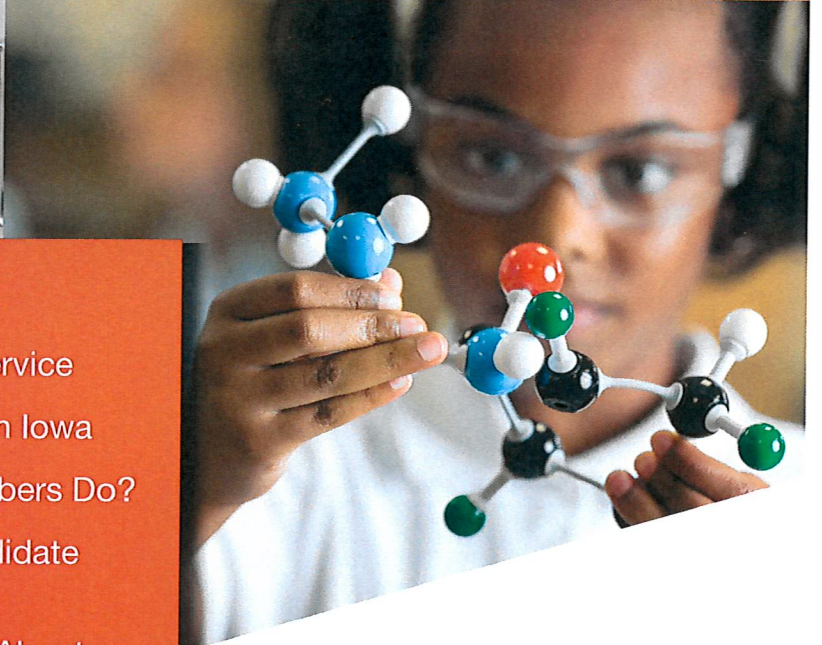


IASB's Guide for School Board Candidates - 2017



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www.ia-sb.org/elections





1

Rewards of School Board Service

Serving on a school board is a challenging job that requires leadership, vision and dedication. A school board member is entrusted with one of the most important responsibilities that can be assigned to a citizen: ensuring that Iowa schools help students reach high levels of educational achievement.

Serving on a school board is a crucial aspect of grassroots democracy. The school board is a uniquely American institution that represents a continuing commitment to local citizen decision making in education.

Experienced board members all across Iowa say that the rewards of service lie in meeting the needs of children and their communities.

**SERVING ON A SCHOOL BOARD
IS A CHALLENGING JOB THAT
REQUIRES LEADERSHIP, VISION
AND DEDICATION.**

Overview of School Boards in Iowa

School board members in Iowa are locally elected public officials. School districts are subdivisions of the state and most general laws regarding conduct of public officials and handling of public funds apply to members of the local board of education.

Nearly 1,900 men and women serve on local school boards for Iowa's 333 school districts. Iowa school boards govern the education of more than 483,000 students, while overseeing school budgets of \$5.6+ billion. Local school boards may have five or seven members.

School board service is a volunteer position. While school board members receive no pay, the reward is the satisfaction they receive from public service.



SERVICE



The image shows the exterior of a modern school building with a curved facade. Large, dark grey, three-dimensional letters spell out 'HIGH SCHOOL' across the top. The word 'TEAMWORK' is overlaid in a large, orange, sans-serif font across the upper right portion of the image. The building's facade is made of light-colored, rectangular panels. A small white circle with the number '3' is visible on the left side of the building's entrance area.

HIGH SCHOOL

TEAMWORK

3

What Do School Board Members Do?

The school board represents the citizens of the district in overseeing the public schools in each community. As the entity legally charged with governing a school district, each school board is responsible to its community to govern effectively. This obligation imposes some fundamental duties on the board.

An effective school board member recognizes that governing public schools requires teamwork and collaboration, accountability and transparency, future-focused decision-making, community engagement, and above all else, a commitment to student achievement.

**GOVERNING PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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ACHIEVEMENT.**

Among other responsibilities, the work of a school board is:

- Ensuring creation of a shared vision, plans and goals for the district that reflects common values and core beliefs of the school community. The board must ensure that student learning and success are central to the focus of the district, monitor progress toward improvement efforts, and ensure accountability for student learning.
- Setting sound, written policy to clarify the board's intent for district direction, while also ensuring that board and district actions comply with state and federal laws.
- Hiring, setting goals for, and evaluating the superintendent as the chief executive officer (CEO) of the school district. The superintendent is responsible to lead and manage the district in compliance with written board policy.
- Overseeing employment processes for other school employees through policy. The superintendent as CEO is responsible for employee management, and brings hiring or termination recommendations to the board, subject to provisions of law.
- Monitoring and evaluating the financial health of the district, ensuring strong financial planning, approving an annual budget consistent with the district vision, receiving financial reports and ensuring an annual financial audit.
- Using ongoing, two-way communications and transparency to build trust and support among community, board, superintendent, staff, and students. School boards must meet in compliance with the Iowa open meetings law and make public records available under the Iowa open records law. Citizens are welcome at all school board meetings, except in a few legally specified circumstances.
- Acting as a corporate body. Individual school board members have no authority; the board only has authority through decisions made by majority votes during official board meetings.

While this list is not comprehensive, it illustrates the authority placed with school boards as the community's trustees of the public schools.



SERVING ON A SCHOOL BOARD IS A SIGNIFICANT RESPONSIBILITY THAT TAKES A COMMITMENT OF TIME AND ENERGY. MANY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS ALSO SAY IT IS ONE OF THE MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCES OF THEIR CIVIC LIVES.



COMMITMENT

Time Commitments of a School Board Member

The time commitment of serving on a school board will vary based on the community and the needs of the school district. If you are considering board service, talk with current or past board members and the superintendent for the best insights. Generally, you should expect:

- **A regular schedule of meetings.** The official work of the school board is carried out at its meetings. Most school boards meet at least once a month, with a growing number meeting twice a month.
- **Time spent outside of meetings.** You will spend time beyond board meetings reviewing board materials, as well as communicating with citizens as a locally elected official. To stay knowledgeable and accessible, many board members commit to attending a variety of school activities.
- **A commitment to your own learning.** To understand education trends and issues, legal requirements, and effective governing practices, Iowa school boards have access to board learning opportunities through the Iowa Association of School Boards. See p. 9 for more information.

Serving on a school board is a significant responsibility that takes a commitment of time and energy. Many school board members also say it is one of the most rewarding experiences of their civic lives.

How Do You Become a Candidate for the School Board?

School board members are elected by their local communities in an election held the second Tuesday of September in odd numbered years. They serve four-year terms and may be elected at large, from director districts or in several combinations of at-large and director districts, depending on the system locally adopted. The school board secretary will have materials to help you get started, including the auditor's school election calendar, nomination petition, and general information about school boards.

Any person who is a United States citizen, 18 years of age or older, a resident of the school district (and director district, if applicable) and is eligible to register to vote may become a candidate for the school board.

Nomination petitions for the office of school board member must be filed with the school board secretary not more than 64 nor less than 40 days prior to the regular election (see dates to the right). The process for filing nomination petitions is as follows:

- Request the original nomination petition from the school board secretary.
- Obtain the nomination signatures from eligible electors of the school district equal to at least one percent of the registered voters of the district or 50 eligible electors of the district, whichever is less, but at least 10 signatures. (If board members are elected by director district, rather than at-large, signers of the nomination petitions must reside in the same district as the candidate.) A person may sign nomination petitions for more than one candidate for the same office.
- Attach a notarized affidavit acknowledging the candidate's eligibility.
- File the petition with the school board secretary prior to 5 p.m. on the 40th day preceding the election.

Each candidate is assured a place on the ballot by successfully filing the completed nomination petition. A candidate's name may be withdrawn from the ballot after the completed petition is filed by submitting a written statement to that effect with the school board secretary more than 35 days before the election.

An individual may be elected as a write-in candidate. Space must be provided on the ballot for write-in candidates. The write-in candidate is not required to file a nomination petition.

2017 SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION DATES

July 10: First day to file nomination papers with the board secretary.

July 29: Vacancies or resignations on a school board occurring on or before today must be filled at the school board election.

August 3: Last day to file nomination papers. Deadline is 5 p.m.

August 4: Board secretary delivers nomination papers to county auditor. Deadline is 5 p.m.

August 8: Last day candidates may withdraw. Last day written objections to nomination papers or eligibility of candidates may be filed.

September 12: School Election Day

September 15: Election canvass of official vote totals.

Organizational Meeting: No date is legally specified for the organizational meeting. It is the local board's first regular meeting following the canvass of votes.

What Do You Need to Know About Campaigning?

Campaign Finance Disclosure Law

School board candidates must comply with the Iowa Ethics Campaign Finance Disclosure Laws (Chapter 68A and 68B). Candidates should be aware that failure to comply with these laws can result in fines and other penalties. The laws also apply to write-in candidates.

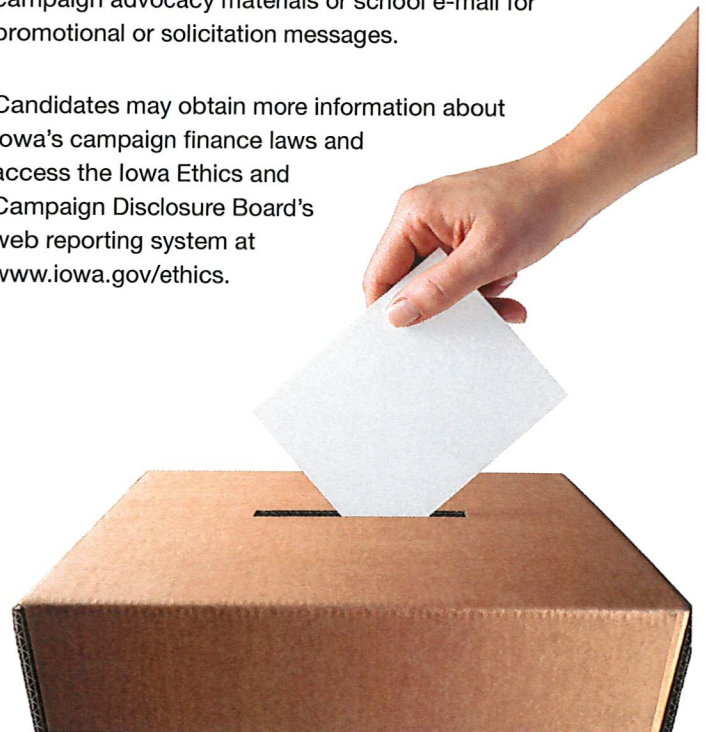
Important provisions of which school board candidates should be aware include:

- Candidates who receive contributions, make expenditures or incur debts in excess of \$1,000 (including personal funds) must form a committee and file reports. This holds true for such actions done by a committee on behalf of a candidate. The committee must file its statement of organization within 10 days of the \$1,000 threshold being crossed. Reports disclosing campaign transactions are due by 4:30 p.m. five days before the election, and on the 19th day of January. For committees that do not dissolve, they must also file reports on the 19th day of January of each year in which the candidate's name does not appear on the ballot. Contributions from relatives within the third degree of consanguinity and affinity must include a description of the relationship to the candidate.
- Every candidate who crosses the \$1,000 threshold is mandated by law to file his or her statement of organization and campaign disclosure reports electronically using the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board's web reporting system.
- Candidates are required to deposit all contributions within seven days of receipt in an account maintained by the candidate's committee in a financial institution. (Exception: a separate account need not be established if the candidate receives no funds from others and finances the campaign out of his or her own pocket; in this instance the candidate files reports to show expenditures from personal funds as

in-kind contributions from the candidate to the committee).

- Candidates may spend campaign funds only for campaign purposes, educational or other expenses associated with the duties of office or constituency services and may transfer funds only as provided in Iowa Code section 68A.303.
- Candidate committees that hire a consultant for services such as public relations, advertising, fund-raising or polling must provide information that identifies the consultant and the consultant's activities.
- Any printed political material must include the words "paid for by" and identification of the individuals, committee or organization which paid for the ad (includes newspapers, brochures, videos, posters, billboards, mailings and websites, but not items too small to include such credit, such as buttons or pens). Candidates who have not registered a committee must include their full names and addresses as part of the identification, or file form DR-SFA to use the shorter "paid for by" statement.
- School resources cannot be used to promote either candidates or ballot issues, including the use of school mail boxes for distribution of campaign advocacy materials or school e-mail for promotional or solicitation messages.

Candidates may obtain more information about Iowa's campaign finance laws and access the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board's web reporting system at www.iowa.gov/ethics.



Conflict of Interest and Gifts

Board members, as elected public officials, are duty-bound to serve the public interest. Yet, as private citizens, they may also participate in outside employment and activities. The most critical conflict of public versus private interest in decision making arises in financial transactions—the spending of public funds. School board members must comply with the conflict of interest laws in Iowa Code.

Statutes remove certain potential conflicts of interest by excluding a board member from:

- Receiving compensation from the school district for one or more contracts for the purchase of goods or services which benefit a board member unless the benefit to the board member does not exceed \$2,500 in a fiscal year or the contract is publicly bid.
- Appointing a relative within the third degree to a paying position, except a teaching position, unless it was first approved by the board.
- Being an agent for a textbook or school supply company involved in a transaction with a staff or board member of your own school district.
- Being a statewide elected official or a state legislator.

The law does not prohibit a spouse or other family member of a school district employee from running for the board.

Generally, Iowa law prohibits school board members and candidates from accepting gifts and honoraria from people who may be financially affected by actions of the school board. Candidates are advised to inquire about the current status of restrictions or reporting requirements at the time of the election by contacting the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board. (See 68B.22, Iowa Code.)

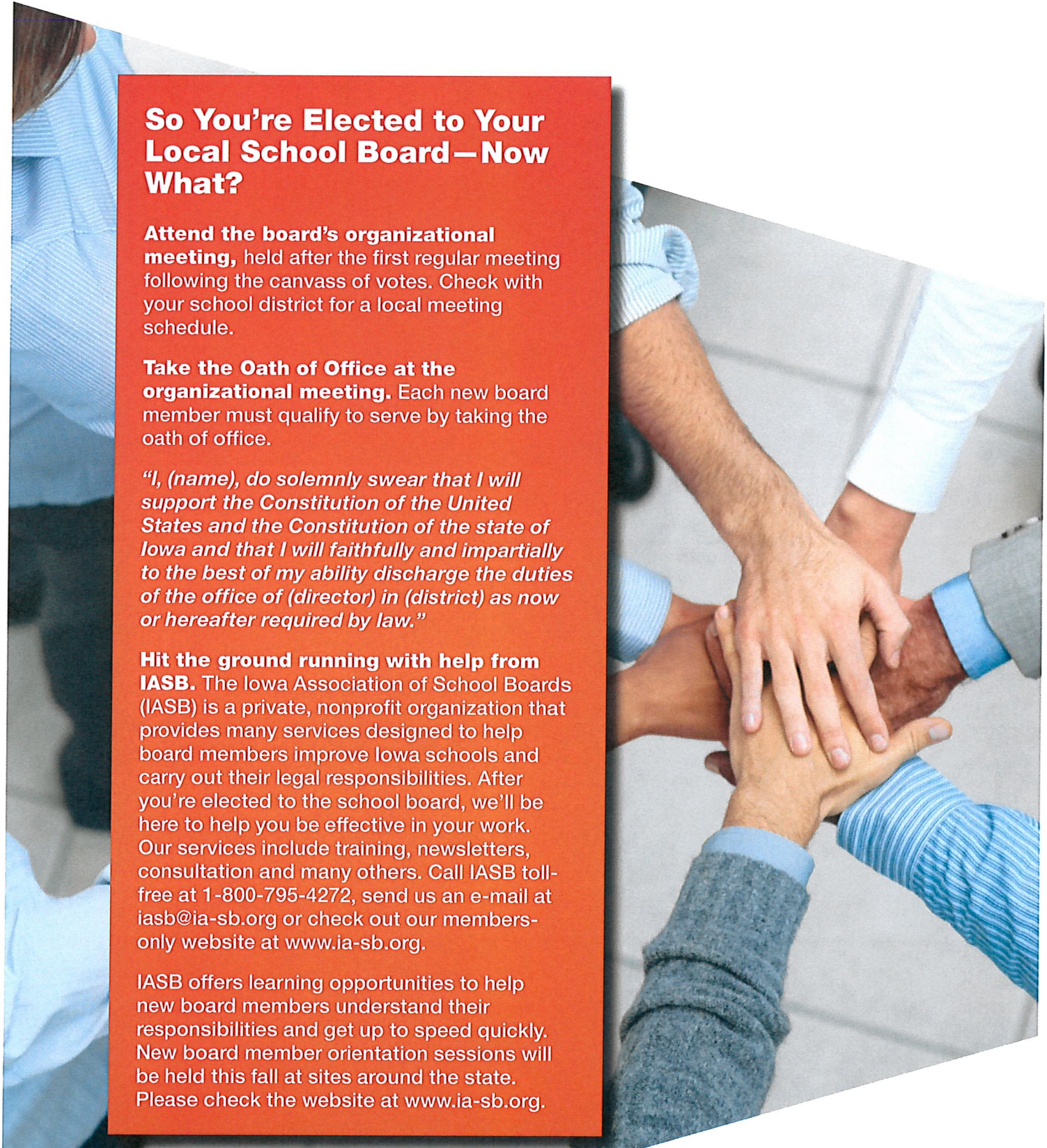
ETHICS



SIX TIPS FOR CAMPAIGNING

IASB recommends the following tips for all school board candidates as they campaign for election:

- 1. Attend school board meetings.** Watching the current board in action will help you begin to understand the practicalities of school board operations and learn more about issues in your district. Board agendas and virtually all materials before the board are public documents; reviewing them can build your understanding.
- 2. Ask questions.** The district superintendent, board secretary, business manager and current board members can help you understand district issues.
- 3. Be proactive in helping the community understand your views.** Help citizens understand what you stand for by speaking at candidate forums, talking with reporters, stating your views in campaign materials, and using other forums.
- 4. Carefully consider your campaign promises.** As an individual, a board member has no authority. It's only when a majority of the board takes action through a vote that the board's authority is exercised.
- 5. When campaigning for the board, state your position on issues** but avoid making promises that you alone cannot keep.
- 6. Encourage voter participation.** Strong voter turnout is more than a grassroots campaign strategy. Voter participation in school board elections helps engage citizens and create a strong bond between the public and the public schools.



So You're Elected to Your Local School Board—Now What?

Attend the board's organizational meeting, held after the first regular meeting following the canvass of votes. Check with your school district for a local meeting schedule.

Take the Oath of Office at the organizational meeting. Each new board member must qualify to serve by taking the oath of office.

"I, (name), do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of Iowa and that I will faithfully and impartially to the best of my ability discharge the duties of the office of (director) in (district) as now or hereafter required by law."

Hit the ground running with help from IASB. The Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) is a private, nonprofit organization that provides many services designed to help board members improve Iowa schools and carry out their legal responsibilities. After you're elected to the school board, we'll be here to help you be effective in your work. Our services include training, newsletters, consultation and many others. Call IASB toll-free at 1-800-795-4272, send us an e-mail at iasb@ia-sb.org or check out our members-only website at www.ia-sb.org.

IASB offers learning opportunities to help new board members understand their responsibilities and get up to speed quickly. New board member orientation sessions will be held this fall at sites around the state. Please check the website at www.ia-sb.org.

WELCOME

**AFTER YOU'RE ELECTED
TO THE SCHOOL BOARD,
WE'LL BE HERE TO HELP
YOU BE EFFECTIVE IN
YOUR WORK**

Additional Resources

IASB thanks the Iowa Secretary of State's Office and the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board for their cooperation in making this information available.

IASB offers additional school board candidate resources, including:

- School Board Elections FAQs
- Iowa Ethics & Campaign Disclosure Board Candidate Guide
- Prospective Candidate Video
- Link to Iowa Secretary of State's School Elections Webpage
- And more!

Resources are also available through the Secretary of State's Office at www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/electioninfo/SchoolElections.html or the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board at www.iowa.gov/ethics/.

Other brochures of interest to school board candidates are available from the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board. Subjects covered include:

Political Advertising Disclaimers

Permitted & Prohibited Corporate Activity

Independent Expenditures/In-Kind Contributions

Duties of a Committee Treasurer

Civil Penalties

Out-of-State Contributions

Prohibitions in Use of Public Funds for Political Purposes

Guidelines for Campaign Fundraising

Contact the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure board at:
510 E. 12th, Ste. 1A
Des Moines, IA 50309
Phone (515) 281-4028 or
(515) 281-4104
Fax (515) 281-4073



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