

7/24/13 - Remarks of Sue Dinsdale, Executive Director, Iowa Citizen Action Network and Education Foundation at the Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans Convention

Iowa Citizen Action Network uses three strategies to advance its mission and vision.

1. Working on issue campaigns to win concrete changes in public policy, and electoral campaigns to elect progressive leaders to public office.
2. Working to build the progressive movement by increasing the skills, capacity, diversity, strength, connections and mutual trust of progressive individuals and organizations.
3. Providing a place where progressives in Iowa can develop a shared understanding of progressive worldview, what needs to change, and strategies for advancing that analysis in our work.

In Washington, DC and Des Moines, Iowa – Our Future is at Stake! And ICAN is continuing our work – speaking up for the 99% who can't afford a high priced lobbyist, yet who have a stake in what is going on both at the Federal and State levels.

- **working in coalition** with a wide range of organizations to meet with our state insurance commissioner, legislators, the US Department of Health and Human Services, community leaders and other interested parties on the education and implementation of the Affordable Care Act.
- **working with our organizing project, The Iowa Main Street Alliance** to make sure the true voice of small business is heard on all issues, including being invited by the White House to bring small business owners to the President's visit to Iowa and having members of congress invite our business leaders to speak at their roundtables.
- **staffing and working with the Coalition for a Better Iowa** to bring a perspective to Iowa's budget surplus, reminding the Governor that he must take the lead in protecting vital public services and recognizing our state's strengths and weaknesses, that cutting revenue is not the answer: strengthening communities is the key and this is accomplished by maintaining adequate funding for programs such as education, health care and public safety.
- **Working with allies to ensure that everyone gets their day in court.** We know that courts without judges deny Americans their access to justice! So we are committed to fighting for fair and impartial justices on our Federal Courts. Every issue ICAN works on, from health care to environmental issues to energy policies, is affected by the civil justice system. In the current political climate, it is more important than ever to keep up the fight for the right of citizens to protect themselves through the courts. Our country faces a judicial crisis with federal courts across the nation in desperate need of judges to fill empty courtrooms. While senators play politics with judicial nominations, well-qualified nominees wait to be seated, cases go unheard, and a growing number of Americans find it increasingly difficult to assert their legal and constitutional rights.

At the State level we are at work with our partners and friends keeping Iowa positioned for a prosperous and competitive future. With our state's fiscal house in order, we were able to fight for strategic public investments in education, health care,

transportation, natural resources and human services that make our state a desirable place to live and create a healthy climate for economic growth. During the 2013 Legislative Session, despite roadblocks thrown up by conservatives in the Iowa House and Governor Branstad, we were able to score major victories. They include:

- **Doubling the Earned Income Tax Credit EITC for Iowa's low wage working families.** Over the past several years, ICAN has worked with other organizations to increase the EITC - a credit based on "earned income" meaning recipients must work to receive it. The EITC makes a huge difference in the lives of working Iowa families by recognizing the special financial responsibilities of raising children and it puts money into the local economy. Prior to this session, the credit - which is tied to the federal EITC - was 7% of the federal credit. With broad bipartisan support this year, the EITC was raised to 14%.
- **Working in coalition with several organizations, we were able to secure a compromise on Medicaid Expansion.** Undoubtedly, our biggest achievement of the session was the passage of Medicaid expansion. ICAN spearheaded a multifaceted fight by working in coalition to form the Healthiest Iowa Initiative. We were able to take our case for Medicaid Expansion statewide, making media stops and holding rallies in Davenport, Mason City, Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Ames, Waterloo, and Ottumwa. We did not stop there though, we took our message to the Capitol delivering petitions and laying out the reason why Medicaid expansion was the only option.

Looking ahead to 2014 -we will continue to shine a light on the corporate handout that was passed this year. It has been noted as the largest tax cut in Iowa's history with its historic size equaled only by the size of its massive handouts to corporations like WalMart and McDonalds. THEY don't need government subsidies, yet special interests prevailed and the cost to Iowans is more than a just a chunk of the state's General Fund. County and City Governments will be hit hardest leaving local governments with few avenues to fund vital services leading to cuts for everyday citizens.

We will continue to make sure the voices of every day Iowans are heard by following key legislation to ensure that our voting rights are not infringed upon; that our tax dollars are used to the best possible advantage and that more cuts are not made that will devastate education, small business owners, retirees, the working poor, that all people are created equal... the list goes on and on...

At the Federal level we continue to fight for OUR vision of prosperity for working families and the middle-class. It's OUR future - our nation's future and our family's future - that's at stake - not millionaires and CEO campaign contributors. So we are fighting for a path to prosperity for working families and the middle class. We are fighting for fair taxes; no benefit cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid; protecting vital programs for our families; and creating good jobs for America - building a 21st Century infrastructure, putting teachers and firefighters, caregivers and young people to work. We know that's how we can rev up the middle-class engine and move our economy forward.

As we move forward, we continue to honor our history of over 34 years of creating social change in Iowa and across the nation.

To reshape the conversation around progressive themes and values is a big undertaking, so what we've come up by talking to our members and affiliates is a set of common values. They are:

Every person has inherent human worth.

We are all in this together.

We all benefit from decisions which serve the common good.

Government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

So what can we do? We can all work together around a coherent set of values and principles and goals shared by a broader movement.

We are not asking anyone to change the issue focus of their work or to develop a common agenda or platform. Instead, we just want to repeat and reinforce the same central themes and by building them up, we will begin to change the mainstream conversation.

So why do we do these things? Not because we've been hungry, or homeless, or have a gay or lesbian family member, or had a case before the federal courts, or because we are here as an undocumented immigrant, or because we are living on social security.... We do it because it is the RIGHT thing to do. We truly believe that every person has inherent human worth; We are all in this together; We all benefit from decisions which serve the common good; and Government of the people, by the people.