

# THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Summer 2018

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A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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## Prairie Dog's Summer Reading List 2018

**Difficult Women** by Roxane Gay  
The most versatile and prolific writer alive today. These short stories are as funny, brutal, wise, and challenging as her essays, memoirs, New York Times columns, novels, and tweets.

**The Dog Lover Unit: Lessons in Courage from the World's K9 Cops**  
by Rachel Rose

Picture a short, soft-spoken Canadian poet accustomed to living with little white dogs named Fluffy. Now see her allowing herself to be attacked by a large, snarling German shepherd learning to be a police dog. Rose turns what could have been a piece of superficial journalism about heroic cops and their canine companions into an adventurous, insightful, and deeply personal exploration of fear, regrets, loss, America's gun culture, women in a predominately male profession, and law enforcement in other countries including France, where the dogs are always muzzled (the French haven't forgotten that Nazis used dogs to round up Jews). Her account of job-shadowing an Iowa City police officer and his dog is particularly compelling and surprising.

**Have Dog, Will Travel** by Stephen Kuusisto

Poet and former University of Iowa creative writing teacher Kuusisto, nearly blind since birth and taught

by his parents that it was somehow shameful and best kept hidden, at age 38 decides to get a guide dog. As lyrical as his first book, *Planet of the Blind*, this account of the opening of an entirely new world thanks to a yellow lab also deals with societal attitudes toward blindness, the terminology associated with disabilities, and the history of guide dogs (dating back to soldiers blinded by gas during World War II).



**The Negro Motorist Green Book**  
by Victor Hugo Green

This travel guide for Black Americans became popular during the years of the Great Migration, when millions of Black Americans took to the highways, venturing mostly from the rural South to the North and Midwest in search of jobs and a respite from racial terrorism. Its annual editions were widely used even in the late 60s, helping to pass the word about motels, restaurants, stores, and gas stations not hostile to

people traveling to find work or to visit families who had already made the move, a move that didn't always result in the safety and security they sought. Reprints of the originals are now available, offering a small but vivid glimpse into the hatred so many citizens endured and coped with, in our lifetimes, in the Land of the Free.

**The Hate You Give** by Angie Thomas  
Like John Green, Thomas stretches the boundaries of Young Adult fiction, giving us a poignant portrayal of teen-agers in crisis. Here the crisis is especially relevant and powerful: teen-aged Starr Carter's best friend is shot and killed by police. Readers of all ages and colors will be touched, and perhaps moved to action, by the racial injustices experienced by high school students and how they respond. Equally intense is the juggling act Starr performs every day, balancing her life in a poor neighborhood with her life in an upscale, mostly white prep school.

**The Rise of a Prairie Statesman: The Life and Times of George McGovern**  
by Thomas Knock

32 years before Karl Rove swift-boated John Kerry, Richard Nixon successfully painted WWII bomber pilot George McGovern as an amnesty-loving peacenik, sending

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# Hope and Pray for Democratic Victories in Iowa

**U**nder its current leadership, the Democratic Party of Iowa has lost control of both houses of the legislature and the governor's office. It is difficult to overstate the damage that has been done to the people of Iowa by the Republicans. If they keep control of the governor's office and legislature next November, they can add the judiciary to their list of conquests. When that happens, things will get even worse--much worse.

Here is how Democrats can take back control of the state. It is not enough to "flip" the state by raising money for Democrats. In addition to the essential task of raising enough money for campaigns, political parties must have something to say as well as money to spend. Here is what Democrats should say between now and November in order to address the concerns of Iowans.

## 1. Campaign Finance Reform.

Many Iowans, including independents and Republicans, regard the political system as rigged by a corporate financed electoral system. Democratic candidates for legislature and state-wide office should make it clear that they will accept no campaign contributions from corporations or from corporate political action committees--no exceptions. Democrats who have accepted corporate and corporate PAC contributions should give them back. Successful Democrats around the country have done just that. A candidate must have enough money to run an election, but money alone does not win Elections. Who you stand for, and who you stand with, also matters. As Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez said after her (58-43) primary victory over an establishment Democratic incumbent, we need

a machine, but we also need a movement. (She was, depending on which account you read, outspent 10-1 or 18-1).

## 2. Student Debt.

Young Iowans are burdened with a serious problem--they can't afford to repay their student loans and can't afford to get mortgages because of their student debt burden. If you don't believe me, ask them. One thing that Iowa Democrats could do about this--and it is affordable--is make grades 13 and 14 tuition free, just like grades 11 and 12. Young Iowans pay directly about 75 million dollars a year in community college tuition. With its multi-billion dollar budget, the state could easily make community colleges tuition free. That's what Democrats should propose if we want to make Iowa a better place to live and win elections.

## 3. Job Skills.

Employers in Iowa are crying out for employees with skills. Young people are facing a low wage economy with little job security. Democrats could address both issues by eliminating tuition at community colleges (see above). Iowans in the job market with low wage jobs, student debt, and family obligations on their hands could go back to school part time, and get the skills needed for a better job, without worrying about further college debt. It is often difficult for prosperous liberals to believe that community college tuition is a deterrent, but they are entirely wrong. Free tuition at community colleges is a win-win situation that the state of Iowa can afford.

## 4. Health Care Insecurity.

Iowans are facing chronic insecurity about access to health care. For many

middle class Iowans Obamacare is unaffordable, and for many working people in Iowa Medicaid is inaccessible. It is a welfare program with all that implies. Who in Iowa is doing something about this issue? The Farm Bureau, a branch of the Republican Party, which is offering their members an insurance plan outside of the unaffordable Obamacare plans. It is not a very good plan, but it is affordable, and it is not means-tested (i.e. not welfare). Democrats should come up with a non-means tested state health insurance plan available to working people. If the Farm Bureau can do it, the Democratic Party can do it.

Here is the path to an electoral majority. Address the issues that Iowans care about, and they will vote for you. Democrats are counting on winning back control of the Iowa government on a simple swing of the pendulum. They are campaigning only on issues that reliable Democratic voters care about, i.e. improving Medicaid (which enrolls only one out of seven Iowans), restoring collective bargaining rights, and re-funding Planned Parenthood.

Every voter who cares about these issues is already planning to vote Democratic in November. These are all good ideas, but taken together, they do not look like a recipe for an electoral majority. Given the Democratic Party's unwillingness to address the issues many Iowans care about, it looks like we will be required to do more than simply hope for a Democratic electoral majority. We should also pray for one. ✂

—Jeff Cox

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# God-given Rights

Childhood 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations were magical. We packed up the family station wagon and headed to the park with: a large, brown grocery bag spotted with grease strains from the warm buttery homemade popcorn inside; a large jug of ice cold lemonade that would make clinking sounds as the ice cubes hit the glass sides; and a scratchy old wool blanket to stretch out on under the stars. We eagerly waited in anticipation of the first whistling rocket shooting into the sky followed by an exploding array of brilliant color. A fire truck always stood ready in the distance where the fireworks were being launched, just in case a fiery accident should occur. Back in the day it was considered a needed and desired public service. Fireworks were magical, but potentially dangerous. Regulation was viewed as a positive addition to these festivities, not as a restriction on personal freedom.

But times change. Today Iowans have been given the much coveted freedom to purchase and ignite fireworks during a limited time every year, thanks to the curious priorities set by the Iowa Legislature. The legalized sale of explosive devices in Iowa began in 2017. Our neighbors went crazy last July. You could cut the chemical smoke cloud circling around everyone's homes with the proverbial knife. One unfortunate asthmatic had to take to her bed due to chest pain, shortness of breath and dizziness. But it didn't kill her and she only missed out on one productive day of her life. What is that compared to the God-given right of each and every Iowan to buy and ignite explosive devices?

Other Iowans do not seem to share this belief. Concerns are raised for:

veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); pets suffering anxiety; idiots with serious burns and lost body parts from using these products; and of course, cranky old people like us whose bedtime is 9:00 pm or earlier and just don't want to be forced to endure firecrackers, bottle rockets, bombs bursting in air, and other noise-making devices that sever fingers annually on Independence Day.

Many cities in Iowa decided to ban the use of the goods sold in their respective communities. Ordinances were passed to act as deterrents for igniting these devices. According to Cedar Rapids television station KCRG (TV9), Iowa City handed out the most citations, with 16 issued in a 2-day period from July 3-5. "That's out of 67 complaints." Law enforcement officers will tell you that they need to catch offenders "red-handed." The current practice is to give a verbal warning and move on. But does this practice send the message, especially to young people that laws don't need to be respected or obeyed? When law enforcement entities determine which laws should be enforced and prosecuted, lawmakers are effectively neutered. Lawmakers can create laws, but they have little to no power over the enforcement of these laws.

Lobbyists for law enforcement continually seek enhanced penalties for offenses that are classified as simple or serious misdemeanors. They regularly use the argument that it's not worth an officer's time to arrest someone for a crime that takes more time filling out paperwork than the offender will spend in court or behind bars. And yet how much paperwork is involved in writing a citation for illegally using explosive

devices? The police in the City of Des Moines reported over 500 calls for fireworks, carrying potential revenue of over \$300,000, but not one citation was written.

Another problem with leaving the enforcement of our laws to individual discretion is it leads to discrimination and unequal application. Profiling is tied to this approach. Although supporters of profiling will spin scientific reasoning for profiling suspects, why, then, will a police officer or deputy sheriff pull a car over being driven by a young black man because a tail light is out or license plate is improperly illuminated? Do black men who don't replace their tail lights regularly commit more violent crimes?

Another law ripe of unequal application is Stand Your Ground, another priority of our astute legislators. This law allows you to defend yourself, perhaps lethally, if you feel threatened. The county you live in and how your county attorney feels about this law will very much determine its application. This July holiday season young people have been having a heyday driving around our neighborhood throwing firecrackers out the window at us old folks doing yardwork. It sounds just like a gun being fired. So by law, do we have the right to pull out our Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum and fire back at the perceived threat to our lives? It's interesting that the legislature doesn't appreciate the irony of working on school safety plans for mass shootings, when they've worked so hard to put explosive devices in everybody's hands. The philosophy is that if we all have explosive devices we can either shoot or detonate them at each other. It's supposed to work as a deterrent.

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him to one of the worst presidential defeats in history and leaving him with the reputation of being too liberal and too far left to be taken seriously. The truth is that McGovern was a principled progressive and a skilled politician whose life may hold lessons for today's Democratic Party. From predicting that President Truman's red-baiting of Henry Wallace in 1948 would ultimately backfire on Democrats, to rebuilding the state party in South Dakota in the 50s, to running the international Food for Peace program under President Kennedy, to his immediate diagnosis of the conflict in Vietnam as a civil war, not a Communist plot, McGovern was always practical, competent, and right. His lifelong vision could inspire alternative strategies badly needed by today's Democrats.

**Americanah**

*by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*  
It's a long way from Nigeria to New Jersey, especially for a young woman determined to finish college. A timely tale of an immigrant experiencing racism for the first time, complicated by her relationship with a man who loses his visa after 9/11, only to become a wealthy developer back home.

**Bluebird, Bluebird** *by Attica Locke*

A Texas thriller packed with bizarre characters, family secrets, small-town backstabbing, and country blues on the jukebox. "There were things you just didn't do in Lark, Texas."

**Double Bind: Women on Ambition**

*edited by Robin Romm*

Men are ambitious, women are aggressive - hence the title of this lively collection of essays assembled by Romm, a former Iowa City resident and author of *The Mercy Papers*. From Alaskan dog-musher Blair Braverman to actress Molly Ringwald to Iowa Writers' Workshop director Samantha Chang, each tells a complex story, sometimes angry and ambivalent but always honest and engaging.

**The Power to Heal: Civil Rights, Medicare, and the Struggle to Transform America's Health Care System** *by David Barton Smith*

Smith documents how Medicare transformed America and became the most successful desegregation program in our history, all in 200 pages that read like a novel. Thank you Lyndon Johnson, no thank you Richard Daley.

**Sing, Unburied, Sing** *by Jessica Ward*

If a book as beautiful and affecting as Ward's second novel can still be written, there is hope for our country.



-Prairie Dog

**God-given Rights**

*Continued from Page 3*

Since the city police refuse to enforce the ordinance against explosive devices, we will just have to become proactive. This year there was no toxic chemical cloud surrounding our home. We just had explosions on three sides of our house starting at 8:30 pm and who knows when it ended? We eventually passed out from shell shock. Maybe next year we'll pop some popcorn, squeeze fresh lemonade and head to a park where maybe a friendly fireman will be there for nostalgia's sake. If our home burns down while we're gone, so be it. It sure beats standing our ground. ✨

-Stephanie Fawkes-Lee  
covers the patriotism  
beat for The Prairie  
Progressive

*"[Relocation] was saving the lives of refugees. People would say you might not get re-elected. I would say I can make more money if I don't get re-elected."*

-Former Iowa Governor Bob Ray

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# Kaufmann Watch

It's no secret Rep. Bobby Kaufmann follows the Republican Party line on most major votes.

He voted like an automaton for one egregious bill after another during the 87<sup>th</sup> Iowa General Assembly. Once Republicans held majorities in the Iowa House and Senate, in addition to the Governor's office, they had their way with legislative output. Kaufmann was right there in the gang. He is and has been a partisan Republican since being first elected.

In 2013, as soon as Kaufmann joined the legislature, he co-sponsored HJR 1, a bill to amend the Iowa Constitution to incorporate existing right to work law.

Right to work is part of who we are as Iowans. Even Governor Chet Culver couldn't reverse right to work when he had Democratic majorities in both chambers of the legislature. We don't need a constitutional amendment for right to work to exist in Iowa. Kaufmann and the gang went one further in the bill, prohibiting collection of union dues or deduction of union dues from a person's pay as a prerequisite for employment. HJR 1 didn't pass. It continued a divide between Iowa Democrats and Republicans, one that prevents bipartisanship and continues today.

Over the years, Kaufmann has seen few Republican bills he didn't like. He voted with Republicans on radical Chapter 20 revisions regarding collective bargaining, for the embryonic heartbeat bill, and more.

This year he's running for a fourth term. Kaufmann downplays his extremism in newspaper articles and community forums by omitting his conformance with the Republican playbook.

Last winter Kaufmann held a town hall-style meeting in Solon, Iowa.

His mislead-by-omission approach became evident.


At the meeting he was surprisingly focused on the House, not Republicans in general. For example, a Republican asked a question about Senate passage of the embryonic heartbeat bill. It was news to Kaufmann. His take was the heartbeat bill was unlikely to get 50 votes in the House because Republican members believe when it is struck down by the courts it will be done in a way that makes it difficult to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, which was their endgame. As we now know, through the sausage-making process of legislating, House Republicans were able to get 51 votes including Kaufmann's.

Kaufmann meets with city councils, boards of supervisors, and a host of community organizations each year, such talks enabled by incumbency. He appears on the fund raising circuit with the two Republican U.S. Senators. No doubt he learned these tricks from his father, Jeff Kaufmann, the 45<sup>th</sup> president's most devout Iowa believer.

Faced with increased Democratic activism, Kaufmann is shoring up support in precincts that went for Trump in 2016. For example, Big Grove Precinct went for Trump by four points (46 votes). A significant issue there is the ban on Lake Macbride of boat motors over 10 horse power during the summer boating season. During the 2018 session Kaufmann was able to kill the perennial bill to lift the ban. In late June, the Lake Macbride Conservancy announced Rep. Kaufmann will be touring the lake with members. It's partly for information and experience, but also to develop relationships with key influencers in the group.

As the campaign continues through summer it is important to remind friends and neighbors Bobby Kaufmann is a Republican. Period. ✂

—Paul Deaton is Senior Solon Correspondent for the Prairie Progressive



## CALENDAR

**July 18-20**  
Freedom School 360  
Old Brick, Iowa City  
midwesttelegraph@gmail.com

**July 21 and 28**  
Americans with Disabilities Act  
Anniversary Celebrations  
Iowa City, Cedar Rapids,  
Des Moines

**Aug 19, 1953**  
CIA-led coup ousted  
Mossadegh in Iran

**Sept 11, 1973**  
CIA-led coup in Chile killed  
President Allende in Chile

**Sept 12, 1998**  
Matthew Shephard died

**Sept 14, 1923**  
Governor of Oklahoma  
declared martial law due to  
KKK terrorism

**Sept 15, 1963**  
16th St. Baptist Church  
bombed in Birmingham, AL

**Sept 16**  
Progress Iowa Corn Feed  
Bondurant  
info@progressiowa.org

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# The Iowa Legislature at Work

**T**hese bad bills went into effect July 1, 2018.

SF359 – Ban all abortions after detection of fetal heartbeat (approximately six weeks)

SF481 – Mandated cooperation with ICE on informal detainee requests – so-called “anti-sanctuary city” bill

SF512 – Promise future funding for voluntary clean water practices, but no guarantee of funding, no watershed approach, and no measuring of or accountability for results

SF2117 – More mid-year budget cuts to our community colleges, our universities, vocational rehabilitation, courts, corrections, public health, human services, aging services, and natural resources

SF2311 – Impose 2% cap on utility energy efficiency programs, slashing investment by over \$100 million/year

SF2349 – Allow certain agricultural organizations to provide non-insurance health

plans that are allowed to discriminate  
SF2415 – Continued most cuts to our community colleges, our universities, and vocational rehabilitation; did not restore additional mid-year cut to Iowa Flood Center (total cut of \$328,778)

SF2416 – Only \$50,000 restored toward nursing home inspections (ongoing cut from FY16 of \$357,351)

SF2417 – Increase sales tax collections by over \$130 million a year; reduce income tax revenue by over \$400 million a year which will cause further budget cuts; slash income taxes for million-dollar incomes by average of \$18,773 in 2019, while average cut for earners making \$40,000 is \$92.

SF2418 – Continued 2017 cuts to hospital reimbursement and made Broadlawns and University of Iowa Hospitals pay non-federal share of graduate medical education (\$8.1M); addictive disorder funding (substance abuse treatment) has been cut \$3.7 million, with an ongoing cut of \$2.5M each year

HJR2009 – Constitutional amendment for broader gun rights; no gun regulation unless passes “strict scrutiny”

HF2230 – Shortchanged public school students with 1% funding growth (second lowest in history)

HF2253 – Ban use of lease-purchase agreements by cities and counties that prefer local companies or labor

HF2372 – County districts must use LSA to draw map; for Linn & Polk, 2/3 vote required to elect county-wide

HF2491 – Additional cuts to REAP (\$2 million) and DNR; no restoration of DNR floodplain program

HF2492 – Corrections funding: \$16.3 million in total cuts in 2017-18; ongoing cut of \$3.3M

HF2495 – Judicial Branch funding: \$7.6 million in total cuts in 2017-18, ongoing cut is \$1.1M

HF2502 – End commercial property tax rollback for new wind energy developments ✂

–State Senator Rob Hogg, Cedar Rapids

*I love when I read something that  
feels like the writer has taken a blade  
to my chest and cut my heart out.  
–Roxane Gay*