



PRESS RELEASE

**State of Iowa
Office of Ombudsman**

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Ombudsman Releases FY2021 Annual Report

Office of Ombudsman
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DES MOINES – Citizen complaints and information requests to Iowa’s good-government watchdog increased for the seventh straight year in fiscal year 2021, topping the 6,000 mark for the first time in the office’s history.

The Iowa Office of Ombudsman received 502 more complaints in FY2021 than the year before, a 9 percent increase. In terms of raw numbers, the largest increases came from inmates of state prisons and county jails, but significant new numbers were also associated with unemployment claims and city governments. Calls to the Ombudsman have risen 52 percent since FY2014.

Statistical breakdowns and trends are featured in the Ombudsman’s 2021 annual report, which was released Wednesday. The report also includes summaries of 29 select cases handled by the office’s assistants and an interview of outgoing Ombudsman Kristie Hirschman, who retired in August 2021.

Acting Ombudsman Bert Dalmer said that many of the complaints the office receives trace back to miscommunications or misunderstandings between citizens and government employees.

“I am convinced that many complaints could be prevented if officials took an extra minute or two to explain themselves,” Dalmer said. “Government must understand that part of its job is being transparent and having conversations with the people they work for. That’s how you maintain trust and confidence.”

The Ombudsman is a legislative office that considers complaints from citizens who believe that a state or local government agency has acted unfairly, unreasonably, inefficiently or contrary to law, rule or policy. The Ombudsman has the authority to investigate complaints, but more often tries to resolve disagreements informally and cooperatively. The office’s 11 assistants are impartial and objective in their reviews of complaints.

The Ombudsman’s FY2021 report (and past reports) can be found online at www.legis.iowa.gov/Ombudsman.

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