

**Pieces of Iowa's Past  
This Month:  
Examining the Firsts:  
The Seventy-first General Assembly  
April 2026**

*Pieces of Iowa's Past*, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides monthly, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All italicized text/block quotes in this document are taken directly from historical publications with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

## **Examining the Firsts: The Seventy-first General Assembly**

This year's *Pieces of Iowa's Past* articles will briefly examine the work of the First, Eleventh, Twenty-first, Thirty-first, Forty-first, Fifty-first, Sixty-first, Seventy-first and Eighty-first General Assemblies or observe interesting events that happened during those years.

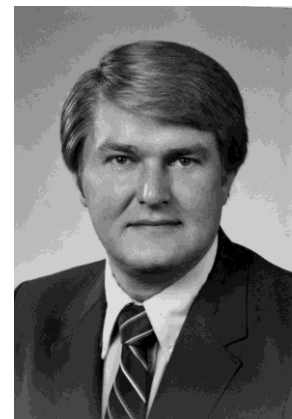
The first year of the Seventy-first General Assembly ran from January 14, 1985, to May 4, 1985, a 111-day session, while its second year ran from January 13, 1986, to May 2, 1986, a 110-day session.



[Governor Terry Branstad](#)



[Lieutenant Governor  
Robert T. Anderson](#)



[Speaker Donald D. Avenson](#)

The 1985 General Assembly includes 12 rookies in the House and six in the Senate. Fully half of the House members have been in office less than two complete terms.

Rank-and-file lawmakers will be paid \$14,600 a year, a \$900 raise voted by the past Legislature, for the session that is expected to run until early May.

Des Moines Register. January 14, 1985.

The Senate was comprised of 21 Republicans and 29 Democrats led by Robert T. Anderson as President of the Senate. Speaker of the House, Donald D. Avenson, presided over the 40 Republicans and 60 Democrats of the House of Representatives. The governor of Iowa in 1985 and 1986 was Terry Branstad.

## Iowa Lottery



In the mid-1980s, Iowa was dealing with strained state revenues due to the economic downturn of the 1980s Farm Crisis. While still in his first term, Governor Terry Branstad focused on economic recovery, rural support, and institutional reforms. One indirect result of the crisis was the introduction of gambling in Iowa to raise revenue for the state.

On November 7, 1972, Iowa voters approved an [amendment](#) to the state constitution that repealed the longstanding prohibition against lotteries and the sale of lottery tickets. This paved the way for horse and greyhound racing in 1983 and the lottery in 1985.

After a governor veto of a state lottery twice before, [House File 225](#) was signed into law in a ceremony held live during the evening news on the steps of the Iowa State Capitol on April 18, 1985, making Iowa the nineteenth state to pass lottery legislation.



Governor Terry Branstad signs the Lottery Bill into law on April 18, 1985.  
Photo courtesy of [Lottery Fact Book](#).

Lottery sales began on August 22, 1985, with a kickoff celebration at the Iowa State Fair. Free tickets were given to the first 5,000 people to enter the Iowa State Fair. There and at seven other ceremonies around the state, at noon, the first tickets were scratched. Tickets around the state immediately sold out. \$85.7 million in lottery sales were earned in its first fiscal year and lottery proceeds to the state topped \$27 million.

<p>In Larchwood, a town of 701 people in the northwest corner of the state, four retailers sold out all of their 3,000 total tickets in two hours.</p> <p>The most tickets sold in a single day were reported not in a huge supermarket, but in Richardson's Jewelers, a Des Moines jewelry store. "We sold</p>	<p>1,000 the first hour, 1,000 the second hour. We thought that 1,000 would last for a couple of days," said owner Norman Richardson, who sold well over 3,000 tickets. Drawn by his home-made signs, customers at one point were lined up 100 deep.</p> <p><b>Anxious Buyers</b></p> <p>A middle-aged woman rushed into the store after Richardson's tickets were sold out, saying, "OK, I'm ready. It's not every day that a little old lady like me goes gambling." Told of the temporary sell-out, she swooned: "Oh no! I think I'm going to hyperventilate."</p> <p>The main kick-off ceremony at the State Fairgrounds was all but washed away by rains that made Thursday the wettest day of the year to date.</p> <p>Waiting in the driving rain for one of the 5,000 free tickets handed out at the fairgrounds' main gate, salesman Earl Adamson looked skyward at the lightning and deadpanned: "Hmm. I</p>	<p><i>This story was written with reports from Register Staff Writers John Carlson in Cedar Rapids, Jack Hovelson in Waterloo, Tom Knudson in Iowa City, Tom O'Donnell in Fort Dodge, William Ryberg in Davenport and Charles Bullard, David Elbert, Gary Heinlein, Blair Kamin and Paul Leavitt in Des Moines.</i></p>
<p><b>REPEAT OF A SELL-OUT!</b></p> <p><b>DONVIER®</b></p> <p><b>ICE CREAM MAKER</b></p> <p>No ice—No salt—No Electricity Also makes sherbet Pint and Quart size</p> <p><b>EMPERED KITCHEN SHOP</b></p> <p>534-35th St. (35th &amp; Ingersoll) Des Moines • 274-3024</p>	<p>heard that your chances of winning this thing are more than the chance of getting hit by lightning. And here we all are standing by a tree in a storm."</p>	

Des Moines Register. August 23, 1985.

Since the state lottery's start in 1985, its players have won more than \$6.2 billion in prizes while the lottery has raised more than \$2.5 billion for state programs that benefit all Iowans.

At first, lottery proceeds were dedicated to the Iowa Plan, a long-term economic development program. It was divided into four basic areas: a Jobs Now program designed to put people to work, government construction programs, community and economic betterment, and educational and agricultural research. Today, lottery proceeds help Iowa veterans and their families through the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund; help the families of Iowa peace officers, firefighters and corrections employees who have died in the

line of duty; and provide help for a variety of significant projects through the state General Fund.



To celebrate its 40th anniversary, the Iowa Lottery introduced a throwback version of its very first game. Iowa Lottery.

On August 14, 2025, the Iowa Lottery captured a Guinness World Records title for the most scratch tickets scratched simultaneously during a special event at the Iowa State Fair to celebrate the lottery's 40th anniversary. Iowans numbering 1,380 gathered to scratch revamped tickets of the state lottery's first scratch game that was first offered for sale at the 1985 Iowa State Fair.



The Iowa Lottery captured a Guinness World Records title for the most scratch tickets scratched simultaneously. Photo courtesy of [Lottery Fact Book](#).