



FIGHT CORPORATE MONOPOLIES

**CORPORATE POWER
MAP**



IOWA



As markets become increasingly consolidated, people lose choices about where they work and spend their money. Decades of lacking antitrust enforcement has left a few big corporate actors in charge of sector after sector of the economy -- giving these corporations massive political, economic, and societal power.

This document maps out the large corporations and consolidated industries in Iowa. It's a broad overview of the corporate actors that have amassed serious power, instances where taxpayer money has directly subsidized these giants, and some of the harms that these corporations have caused. Aside from being an educational resource, we hope these maps serve as a source for those fighting corporate power, whatever your role may be.

If you think we've missed something, please let us know at info@fightcorporatemonopolies.org

HOW TO USE THIS MAP AS A POLICY MAKER

Commit to work on behalf of your constituents and not corporations. The public overwhelmingly supports reining in large corporations. For an overview of popular anti-corporate and anti-corruption policy, please visit: www.fightcorporatepower.org. Many of the outlined policies would check corporate power at the state level.

Use local examples as talking points. Several of the corporations that are mapped out in this brief have harmed your constituents. Using local examples helps make anti-corporate policy real and tangible.

HOW TO USE THIS MAP AS AN ADVOCATE

See which elected officials the corporations in this report fund. To better understand how the corporations in this report may influence politics in your state, see which elected officials the corporations donate to. You can view campaign contributions to federal elected officials through the [FEC website](#) or [Open Secrets](#). For contributions to

statewide and local officials, check your elections commission or secretary of state's website.

Ask your electeds to rein in mentioned corporations. Call, write to, or meet with your elected officials to discuss how they're protecting workers, consumers, and small businesses. Oftentimes the corporations mentioned in the brief will spend money lobbying elected officials on behalf of legislation that benefits them. If this is happening where you live, demand that your electeds oppose the legislation.

Fight local subsidies to mentioned corporations. Oftentimes, local or state governments sign off on huge subsidies to massive corporations. You can read more about how to spot these deals and how to fight them in [this guide](#).

Table of Contents

Big Tech	3
Broadband	4
Hospitals and Health Insurance	5
Pharmaceuticals, PBMs, & Retail Pharmacies	6
Industrial Agriculture	8
Retail	10
Other Monopolists With Ties in Iowa	11

Big Tech

Amazon

Amazon has [four facilities](#) in Iowa and claims to have created over 2,500 jobs there as of September 2022. Amazon is notorious for [tracking employees' every movement](#) and penalizing them for "time off-task," which deprives workers of dignified bathroom breaks and other rest time. Amazon warehouse logs show an [injury rate nearly double the industry average](#) and triple the average for private companies overall. Workers must also sign non-compete clauses that trap them in an abusive relationship with Amazon. In the past few years Amazon has been guilty of [union busting](#) and firing whistleblowers who pointed out [consumer data misuse](#).

At least \$3.9 million has been [spent](#) by Iowa cities on infrastructure designed to serve Amazon facilities.

A [study](#) by the Economic Policy Institute found that when an Amazon warehouse is built, the "county [hosting the facility] gains roughly 30 percent more warehousing and storage jobs but no new net jobs overall, as the jobs created in warehousing and storage are likely offset by job losses in other industries.

Google & Facebook

Iowa [lost 71 percent of its local journalism jobs](#) from 2005 to 2020 as **Google** and **Facebook**'s dominance in online advertising undermined traditional news organizations worldwide. The state [lost 17 percent of its newspapers](#) from 2004 to 2019, with 47 weeklies and five dailies closing for good. The recent **GateHouse-Gannett** merger will affect more than a dozen newspapers in the state including its two largest dailies, the **Des Moines Register** and the **Iowa City Press-Citizen**.

Facebook has a data center in the Des Moines suburb of Altoona. The company recently [announced](#) that they expect this to be their largest data center by 2025. Facebook has another center just over the Nebraska border. Facebook subsidiary Siculus, Inc. received an [\\$18M subsidy](#) from Iowa.

Google has a data center in Council Bluffs and has received at least [\\$26M](#) in state and local subsidies in Iowa.

Apple

Apple claims to have 129 direct employees and 30 supplier firms in Iowa, including a 3M factory in Knoxville. It has received \$214 million in state subsidies. Apple is [building](#) a \$1.3 billion data center in Waukee.

Microsoft

Microsoft has built several data centers near Des Moines and received roughly \$220 million in state subsidies.

Broadband

Mediacom is the single largest internet service provider in Iowa.

While the industry argues nearly everyone has high-speed internet access, that claim is based on defining high-speed as 25Mbps -- far shy of the 100Mbps speeds actually required to reliably engage with the modern internet. 39 percent of urban residents and 43 percent of rural Iowans have [only one 100Mbps provider available](#). Another 46 percent of urban residents and 29 percent of rural residents have just two provider choices.

According to a [new revised federal dataset on broadband access](#), roughly 470,000 Iowans-- roughly 15 percent of the state -- have no internet access at home at all. Nearly 365,000 residents live in the 33 counties where median download speeds are below 25 Mbps (the industry's definition of "high-speed"), and another 1.9 million live in the 58 counties with median download speeds between 25 and 50Mbps. No county in Iowa has median download speeds at or above the modern 100Mbps standard.

According to [research](#) by the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, slow broadband speeds in rural areas result in slow job and population growth, reduced home values, entrepreneurship, and innovation, and leads to higher unemployment rates.

Hospitals and Health Insurance

There are [three total insurers](#) on Iowa's Affordable Care Act exchange and [only two choices available](#) in the vast majority of the state (outside of its densest population centers). The [average price of the lowest-cost plans](#) is \$311 per month in 2021, slightly below the national average and lower than all but one of its neighboring states. The highest-tier "Gold" plans are \$443 per month, roughly 8 percent lower than the national average average and second-lowest in the region. Overall health care prices in Iowa rose by 17.7% from 2014 to 2018, [faster than the national average](#) of 15%.

- [Iowans' overall out-of-pocket medical costs are 17 percent higher than the national average](#), while those with employer-sponsored coverage pay about 14 percent more than average out of pocket.
- Iowa provides [only partial protection against "surprise billing,"](#) allowing the practice outside of emergency rooms.
- Roughly one in 12 Iowans have recently [forgone medical care due to costs](#). Nearly one in five rate as "highly burdened" on overall medical costs.
- Iowans' insurance costs are slightly below national averages in both raw-dollar and percent-of-income terms, according to [Commonwealth's 2017 report](#).

Roughly 60 percent of Iowa's total hospital beds are owned by just two chains, **UnityPoint** (29 percent) and **MercyOne** (27 percent). Some of MercyOne's hospitals are jointly owned with other Catholic healthcare providers, including CHI and Trinity. Once CHI's separate solely-owned hospital in Council Bluffs and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' hospital in Cedar Rapids are factored in, one in three hospital beds in Iowa are Catholic-operated. MercyOne is [soon to be acquired](#) by Michigan-based Trinity Health.

- UnityPoint has [shut down](#) dozens of hospital beds as COVID-19 hospitalizations decline.
- UnityPoint in 2019 announced plans to merge with South Dakota-based Sanford Health, but canceled the deal months later. Two years prior, it similarly considered then ditched a plan to absorb Mercy Iowa City, which later joined MercyOne instead.

- Ascension and Trinity have been documented [refusing to provide abortion services, tubal litigation, and other reproductive healthcare services](#).

Thanks to this duopoly, Iowa is home to two of the most concentrated local hospital markets in the country: The Quad Cities are the 32nd-most concentrated of 111 metro area markets analyzed by the Health Cost Institute, while Des Moines ranked 19th. Omaha, NE -- the closest major care market for much of southwestern Iowa -- was the 10th-most concentrated in the study. Concentration in hospitals is tied to [higher prices for patients](#) and [worse quality of care](#) after hospital acquisitions.

Private equity giant **Apollo** owns one hospital in Ottumwa. Private equity giants are notorious for taking extreme steps to maximize profits. Studies have shown that private equity owned hospitals and nursing homes have [worse patient outcomes](#), [worse compliance with care standards](#), and were among the first to cut healthcare practitioner pay and benefits when COVID-19 hit.

Though no rural Iowa hospitals have outright closed in recent decades, [nearly three dozen have shuttered their maternity wards](#). Rural Iowans [now often face hour-long drives each way](#) to access delivery rooms and pre- and post-natal obstetrics.

Pharmaceuticals, Pharmaceutical Benefits Management Firms (PBMs), &

Retail Pharmacies

Iowa lacks meaningful authority over pharmacy benefit management corporations (PBMs) operating in the private insurance market. A 2014 law mandating pricing transparency was [struck down by a federal appeals court](#) in 2017. Lawmakers revived the policy in 2019 with [a bill](#) requiring PBMs to file annual reports with the state insurance commissioner. Gov. Kim Reynolds signed the measure later that year. State Rep. Brian Best also introduced [PBM reform proposals aimed at the industry's treatment of retail pharmacists](#), but his broader bill died in committee after passing the House.

Iowa takes a tougher line with the PBMs that operate in its Medicaid system. It was [as of 2019](#) one of just 11 to prohibit PBMs from spread-pricing in Medicaid. Prescription benefits are carved into the state's managed care agreement for administering the program.

Corporate pharmacies control [70 percent](#) of Iowa's retail prescriptions market by sales volume.

- 66 percent of all retail pharmacies in Iowa are in chain drug stores, supermarkets, or big-box retailers.
- **CVS** and **Walgreens** alone run 18 percent of all retail pharmacies in the state.
- Roughly 82 percent of the state's community retail pharmacists work for corporate chains.

Iowans face a corporate monopoly on pharmacy retail that endangers their health. Pharmacists at these corporate chains [report](#) being placed under tremendous time pressure that leads them to make errors in serving patients. Respondents to some surveys in other states describe store policies that lead to drug-dispensing errors that put patients at risk. At least one described a requirement to upsell patients on unnecessary medications and chain drugstore promotional programs.

These corporate pharmacy retailers built their monopoly [through years of unchecked mergers & acquisitions](#). CVS made at least four major retail-pharmacy acquisitions from 2004 to 2018, including numerous **Schnucks** locations in the midwest and hundreds of **Eckerds**, **Albertsons**, and **Target** pharmacies nationwide. Walgreens made several acquisitions, though none with a clear direct impact in Iowa.

Industrial Agriculture

Monopolization in industrial agriculture has an enormous effect on Iowa, given the state's economic reliance on farming. It is the nation's largest producer of pork and eggs.

The meatpacking industry is controlled by a handful of companies, each with significant processing and/or feedlot operations in Iowa. **Tyson Foods** has eight production plants around the state, including two each in Waterloo and Council Bluffs. It had little footprint in the state before 2001, when it [purchased IBP for \\$3.2 billion](#). **JBS** has four production facilities in the state, including two in Ottumwa. **Cargill** has 11 facilities in the state, including three in Davenport and two in Cedar Rapids, and two others just across the Nebraska border. **Marfrig**-owned **National Beef/Iowa Premium** has a slaughterhouse in Tama. **Smithfield** has at least nine facilities in the state. **Perdue** manufactures dairy cow feed in Earlville.

JBS, Tyson, Marfrig, and Cargill -- the "Big Four" beef packers -- control 73 percent of the beef market in the U.S. JBS and Tyson alone control 35 percent of the pork market. Tyson, JBS, and Perdue control 45 percent of the poultry market.

- JBS is [facing](#) a wrongful death lawsuit after an Iowa employee died from COVID-19. In 2022, they [agreed](#) to pay a \$52.5 million settlement over allegations that it fixed prices in the market for beef.
- Tyson Foods has had [47 acquisitions](#) since 1995 and has numerous factory worker complaints, including a points-based punishment system that pressures employees to work mandatory overtime.

Meatpacking corporations and hog barons have enormous sway in state politics. They have in recent years [chased critical regulators out of office](#) and persuaded legislative allies to gut the state's workers' compensation system. Tyson Foods was the prime mover behind efforts to weaken the workers-comp rules, going so far as to found a non-profit trade association to lobby for its desired changes.

[Research](#) suggests that when agricultural production is controlled by only a few large farms, profits are more likely to be pulled out of the community, instead of circulating within it.

Corteva, a spin-off of Dow Chemical that has at least 10 locations in Iowa. **Monsanto** had 21 locations across the state at the time **Bayer** absorbed it. **Syngenta** has at least 15 facilities in Iowa. These three firms today control 53 percent of the global market for agrochemicals and 48 percent of the global seed market.

Fertilizer, manure, and pesticide runoff from large-scale farming operations in the state [routinely impair local drinking water](#). The state's water quality issues are often blamed on [the rise of "concentrated animal feeding operations" \(CAFOs\)](#), a relatively modern approach to mass-scale livestock production. There are roughly 4,000 large CAFOs in the state today, up from about 800 in the early 1990s.

The state in 2012 gave a quarter-billion-dollar subsidy to Egyptian fertilizer producer **Orascom Group** (d/b/a OCI-NV and Iowa Fertilizer Company) to build an industrial-scale fertilizer factory in Wever. In 2015, Orascom Group and Iowa Fertilizer were issued [penalties](#) for violating the Clean Water Act

Dominant farm equipment manufacturer **John Deere** has [nine factories in Iowa](#). John Deere has [announced](#) that it'll be closing its Ottumwa factory and moving all of the jobs to Mexico.

Retail

Iowa once had 36 **Sears** and **K-Mart** locations. After a private equity bust-out of the two retailers engineered by hedge fund owner Eddie Lampert drove the chains into bankruptcy, all but eight of Iowa's Sears and K-Mart stores closed. Lampert and his investors made hundreds of millions off of the deal.

Dollar General, **Family Dollar**, and **Dollar Tree** operate more than 400 locations across Iowa, though an exact figure is hard to come by given disparities in sources. The

Institute for Local Self-Reliance counted roughly [1 store for every 10,000 residents](#) as of 2017, for a total in the mid-200s. Today, Dollar General alone has 290 Iowa stores, and the other two chains list a combined 116 Iowa locations on their websites (which frequently under-represent the brands' actual presence).

These corporations' expansion overlaps with a hollowing-out of local grocery stores in rural areas nationwide. The typical dollar-store customer earns less than \$40,000 per year; Dollar General and Dollar Tree have a combined market cap of nearly \$50 billion. The business model of this industry sector causes **both economic and social harm** to the areas it targets.

- Dollar stores' charge far higher per-unit prices for staple goods than even high-end traditional retailers. Milk at a dollar store [can cost more per gallon](#) than at high-end luxury chains like Whole Foods.
- Dollar stores destroy locally-owned retailers then extract local wealth to faraway investors and executives. Because Dollar General is owned by the private equity firm KKR and has a lower-income customer base than even Walmart, its business model strips income out of Iowa and into high-net-worth investors' pockets. Family Dollar and Dollar Tree also siphon profits out of state to the large professional investors that are the primary shareholders of these corporations. Surrounding communities generally lose locally-owned businesses and the associated revenue and economic stability independent retailers provide. The average dollar-store retailer employs roughly half as many people as the average locally-owned grocery.
- Dollar-store corporations have also been criticized as [magnets for violent crime](#) in urban-area storefronts.

Real Estate

Housing prices have [increased by over ten percent](#) in Iowa over the last year. Part of this price increase can be attributed to the role of private investors, who in 2021 [bought 18 percent of Iowa homes sold](#).

Out-of-state private equity firms, like **Havenpark Capital Partners**, have been [buying up dozens of mobile home parks](#) across the state and rapidly increasing rents. In 2022, Iowa [passed a law](#) increasing protections for mobile home park residents, requiring landlords to provide water and utilities, and to give tenants longer notice before raising rents or refusing to renew a lease.

Other Monopolists with Ties in Iowa

Aerospace engineering and manufacturing giant **Rockwell Collins** was founded in Cedar Rapids in the 1930s. Known today as Collins Aerospace, it is now a subsidiary of leading defense contractor **Raytheon** following a series of mergers. Rockwell Collins itself absorbed B/E Aerospace in 2017, was bought six months later by **United Technologies Corp.**, and then folded into present-day Raytheon two years later when UTC and Raytheon merged. Collins' core operations in Iowa were left intact after the merger and it is still the second-largest employer in the state.

Whirlpool maintains one significant manufacturing facility in the state, but has largely been a destructive economic force for Iowans. The monopoly appliance maker bought out Newton-based **Maytag** in 2006 in a deal that briefly gave it the largest market share of any of its global competitors (it has slipped to third since). Whirlpool almost immediately shuttered Maytag's Iowa facilities, which had been the core of the Newton area's economic life since the late 1800s. Thousands were laid off just before the Great Recession.

Leading renewable-energy manufacturers have significant operations in Iowa. Newton is today home to significant manufacturing facilities for leading firms in the renewable energy sector. **TPI Composites**, which claims to control 18 percent of the worldwide market for wind turbine blades, has large production facilities in the old Maytag buildings in Newton. In 2021, TPI [laid off over 700 workers](#) that built wind turbine blades. **Siemens-Gamesa**, the fifth-largest wind turbine producer in the world, has a factory in Fort Madison. (Siemens itself has multiple other production sites in the state outside its wind turbines partnership with Spanish firm Gamesa.)

Des Moines-based **Principal Financial Group** is one of the 15 largest life insurance firms in the country and ranks in the top 50 overall investment firms by assets under management. It is the state's second-largest employer, primarily through its corporate headquarters in downtown Des Moines. It recently absorbed Wells Fargo's retirement management business for \$1.2 billion. [Paul Singer's Elliott Management recently bought into Principal](#), setting up shareholder fights over how the company balances focus between its life insurance and retirement business lines.

Cedar Rapids-based **CRST** is the [21st-largest](#) trucking company in the country. Though not on its face a monopolized industry, market concentration is deceptively high in trucking. Just 50 firms out of hundreds of thousands of registered haulers control a combined 40 percent of the overall market.

Pella is one of the five largest producers of windows and doors in the world. It was founded in Pella, IA in 1925 and is today the state's 9th-largest employer. It is one of only seven firms in the industry to report annual revenues higher than \$1 billion, [according to](#) a trade paper's rankings.

Winnebago is the third-largest largest recreational vehicle manufacturer by revenue and remains headquartered in Forest City.