

Iowa

[2007 Report](#) and 2009-10 Update by Karen Wallace, Drake University Law Library

OFFICIAL STATUS X No change since the 2007 report	AUTHENTICATION X No change since the 2007 report
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Iowa online legal resources are not official.
Disclaimers on the Iowa judicial and legislative websites clearly state that these online resources are unofficial. Sections 2B.17(3) and 2B.17(5) of the Code of Iowa specify that the print official sources are the only authoritative versions of Iowa's session laws, codified statutes, and administrative rules. Rules 21.25 and 21.30 of the Iowa Court Rules designate West (Thomson West) as the publisher of the official opinions of the Iowa Supreme Court and Iowa Court of Appeals.

Iowa is not addressing the authentication of online legal resources.
Iowa offers some official agency materials online through the State Library, and much of the other Iowa legal information published on the Web is believed to be the same as the official, printed versions. However, there is no process in place to certify online materials as complete and unaltered.

Has the state eliminated the print publication of any of these titles in favor of online only since the 2007 report? No, there has been no change since the 2007 report.

Has the state enacted legislation guaranteeing the public's permanent access to state online government information since the 2007 report? Although there is no written statement on the site guaranteeing permanent public access to these sources, the intent is to continue adding new versions while maintaining, and perhaps even expanding, the archived versions.

Have courts in your state adopted a medium neutral citation system since the 2007 report? The state has not adopted a medium-neutral citation system.

Have there been any other significant changes to the 2007 state summary? There have been various changes related to the availability of materials (scope). These changes have been integrated into the text of the report.

Iowa does not certify as *official* or *authentic* its session laws or statutes on the Web. The Iowa General Assembly, through the Legislative Services Agency, offers no-fee access to *Iowa Acts* (the state session laws) from 1993 to current and the *Code of Iowa* from 1995 to current on its website (at <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/IowaLaw.html>). Although there is no written statement on the site guaranteeing permanent public access to these sources, the intent is to continue adding new versions while maintaining, and perhaps even expanding, the archived versions. In fact, in the last two years, not only have updates been added, but five additional years of archival coverage have been included for the session laws. The text of both the print and electronic sources is derived from the same database. However, the complex conversion process necessary to make the sources available on the Web may introduce errors. Staff spot-check the electronic documents and correct errors as they are discovered, but the *authenticity* of the online text is not guaranteed. Currently, the state is transitioning to a new underlying database. Plans are to complete this migration in 2009 and then explore authentication options.

Iowa also does not certify as *official* or *authentic* its regulations on the Web. The Iowa General Assembly, through the Legislative Services Agency, offers no-fee access to the *Iowa Administrative Bulletin* (September 24, 1997–current) on its website (at <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/IAC.html>). Beginning with the January 8, 2003 bulletin, these are offered only in a PDF version. The current version of the *Iowa Administrative Code* is also offered, without fee, in both PDF and RTF versions. With the exception of added hypertext navigation aids, the electronic documents are generated from the same data source as the print versions. In conversion to HTML errors may be introduced. However, the text is not formally certified as *authentic*. Also, in 2008 the state changed its distribution of the print *Iowa Administrative Code*, with official pages only being delivered to certain state offices, committee members, and the State Library. Other libraries now have the option of printing update pages themselves from the Web or purchasing the official pages directly from the commercial publisher.

Iowa also does not certify as *official* or *authentic* its high court and intermediate appellate court opinions on the Web. The Iowa judicial branch offers no-fee access to slip opinions of the Iowa Supreme Court (May 28, 1998–current) and Iowa Court of Appeals (January 28, 1998–current) on the judicial website (at <http://www.iowacourts.gov>). Opinions released before April 2006 and available in the archives are posted in Word format. Opinions released after April 2006 are posted to the website in PDF. There is no written statement on the website guaranteeing permanent public access to these sources, but that is the intent. The judicial branch also offers a free e-mail notification service for Supreme Court opinions, Court of Appeals opinions, press releases, and orders.

Court Web pages explicitly note that the electronic versions of the court opinions are not official. At the top of both its Supreme Court and Court of Appeals opinions index pages, the judiciary offers two differently worded notices conveying that the posted opinions are not final, published opinions. Both notices directly point the reader to the North Western Reporter for the courts' official published opinions. The state has not adopted a medium-neutral citation system. Likewise, the General Assembly offers a disclaimer, modified since 2007, on the *Iowa Law* index page that begins, "This Iowa General Assembly Web Site is generally NOT the source for official legal information" and directs the reader to "refer to the official printed publication" "[i]f information on this site may affect your legal rights." The same disclaimer is offered from the administrative code index page and another disclaimer appears at the very beginning of the code and session law pages.

Iowa is offering some official materials on the Web. Under section 256.56 of the *Code of Iowa*, the State Library cooperates with the State of Iowa Information Technology Enterprise (the state's IT department) to provide permanent public access to "documents intended for the general public produced by Iowa state agencies" via Iowa Publications Online (at <http://publications.iowa.gov/>). Most documents date from recent years, with the vast majority from the 2000s, although there are documents dating back as far as 1923. Currently there are over 8,000 documents in the collection, quadruple what there was in 2007. Once in the depository, items cannot be altered, although revised copies are accepted as additional holdings. The software used, ePrints, does not *authenticate* documents.

Unfortunately, the Electronic Records Committee, formed in January 2002 by the State Records Commission "to recommend and regularly review policies, guidelines, and best practices for the creation, maintenance, access, and long-term preservation or destruction of electronic records," still appears to be dormant. Its website (at <http://www.iowasrc.org/ERC/>) has not been updated since 2003.