

Domain

From A1

Reynolds also argued – as did critics of the bill during legislative debate – that because the bill applied to all hazardous liquid pipelines, it would have created “uncertainty” for energy infrastructure projects in Iowa, including for oil, gas and fertilizer pipelines that heat homes and power farms.

“While I share the bill’s goal of protecting landowners, good policy should draw clear, careful lines. This bill doesn’t,” Reynolds said in her statement. “It combines valid concerns with vague legal standards and sweeping mandates that reach far beyond their intended targets.”

House File 639 would have, among other provisions:

- Defined in state law what constitutes public good for the use of eminent domain.

- Required hazardous liquid pipeline companies to carry a certain amount of insurance and restore damaged farmland.

- Prohibited renewal of a CO2 pipeline project after 25 years.

- Placed constraints on when and how pipeline companies can file lawsuits against landowners.

- Required Iowa Utilities Commission members to attend hearings on pipeline projects.

In her veto, Reynolds said she will ask the IUC to require all commissioners be present for live testimony and ensure that at least one commissioner attends each informational meeting. Reynolds also pledged to work with lawmakers “to strengthen landowner protections, modernize permitting, and respect private property.”

Grassley: Override veto

A statement from Grassley’s office said the bill “would have been monumental in protecting Iowa landowners’ rights from the threat of eminent domain.”

The statement said Grassley has sent a request to all legislators, asking them to sign a petition to reconvene the Iowa Legislature in special session to override Reynolds’ veto.

“This veto is a major setback for Iowa,” Grassley said. “It is a setback not only for landowners who have been fighting across Iowa, but for the work the House of Representatives has put in for four years to get legislation like House File 639 passed.

“We will not stop fighting and stand firm on our commitment until landowners in Iowa are protected against eminent domain for private gain.”

A special session of the Legislature, as detailed in Article 3 of the Iowa Constitution, can be called only by the governor or by a petition signed by two-thirds of the members of each legislative chamber.

That makes a special session unlikely, given the 21 Senate Republicans who voted against the bill. Assuming all 21 oppose a special session to override the veto, there would not be enough senators to get the 34 votes needed in that chamber.

In a statement, Iowa Senate Majority Leader Jack Whitver, a Republican from Grimes, said he supports Reynolds’ veto and that he expects a majority of Senate Republicans would not support a special session to override the veto. Whitver and most other Senate Republican leaders were among the 21 in their caucus who voted against House File 639. Thirteen Senate Republicans voted for it.

“Based on the votes on that bill in the Iowa Senate, a significant majority of our caucus supports a better policy to protect landowner rights,” Whitver said in his statement. “I expect that majority of our caucus would not be interested in any attempt to override her veto.”

Veto upsets House GOP

Beyond Grassley’s call for a special session to override Reynolds’ veto, reaction from Iowa House Republicans showed how passionately lawmakers felt about the bill and the topic.

Iowa Rep. Bobby Kaufmann, a Republican from Wilton, compared Reynolds’ veto to her endorsement of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis for the Republican presidential nomination after she previously told Donald Trump she did not plan to endorse prior to the 2024 Iowa caucuses.

“I didn’t think it was possible for her to make a bigger mistake than lying to Donald Trump about the caucus endorsement, but clearly this is her ‘Hold my beer’ moment,” Kaufmann said. “I vow to work to kill every single piece of legislation that has her name on it. Her days of legislating, as far as I’m personally concerned, are over.”

In an interview with Radio Iowa, Kaufmann referred to Reynolds as “Bruce Rastetter’s errand girl,” referring to the Summit Carbon Solutions owner.

Iowa Rep. Steve Holt, a Republican from Denison, posted on his social media that he was “profoundly disappointed” by Reynolds’ veto. Holt is among a



MAYA MARCHEL HOFF, LEE-GAZETTE DES MOINES BUREAU

Iowa Rep. Charley Thomson, R-Charles City, celebrates with Iowa landowners and activists after the Iowa Senate passed eminent domain restrictions at the Iowa Capitol in Des Moines on May 12.

group of House Republicans that has been most actively involved in crafting and advancing eminent domain legislation over the past four years.

“During discussions with the governor’s office after the bill’s passage, I told them we could look at tightening language in the next legislative session to address any economic concerns they had, as long as proposed changes did not diminish protections for landowners currently fighting against eminent domain for the CO2 pipeline,” Holt wrote. “Yet, today the governor has chosen to ignore landowners, the vast majority of the Legislature, the Republican Party (of Iowa) platform and the Iowa Constitution by choosing the economic development argument of special interests.”

In his post, Holt said he supports the movement to reconvene the Iowa Legislature and override Reynolds’ veto.

“The governor’s lack of leadership on this issue for the last three years, during which time she could have offered her own suggestions but did not, and now her veto, has placed our once disciplined and principled Republican Party into conflict and confusion, leaving voters to doubt our commitment to uphold the Constitution we took an oath to defend,” Holt wrote.

Iowa House and Senate Democrats also issued statements criticizing Reynolds’ veto.

Support for veto

A statement from the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association called House File 639 “flawed legislation” and claimed the bill was “widely” opposed by farmer organizations, trade unions, energy producers, and renewable fuels producers.

Governor Reynolds for having the conviction to stand up for rural jobs and preserve opportunities for future generations of Iowa farmers,” Growth Energy CEO Emily Skor said in the statement. “We look forward to working with our elected leaders to find a balanced policy solution that allows our industry to remain competitive and protects the billions of additional dollars these projects could deliver for farmers in Iowa and across the heartland.”

Evolution of debate

The issue of property rights and eminent domain has percolated in the Iowa Legislature for the past four years, ever since three carbon capture pipeline projects were proposed to cross parts of the state. Since then, only the Summit Carbon Solutions project remains.

Regulators on the Iowa Utilities Commission approved a permit for the Iowa section, including granting Summit eminent domain powers. But regulators said construction cannot begin in Iowa until the Dakotas also have approved it.

North Dakota has. But Summit has faced challenges in South Dakota, which recently passed a law banning the use of eminent domain for the project. And South Dakota regulators have twice rejected permits, though Summit says it will try again with a new route.

Summit, in June 2024, said 75% of Iowa landowners on the project’s proposed route had signed voluntary easements, and that the company was working to increase that number.

The Iowa House, which has passed eminent domain and pipeline legislation in past years, passed two more this year: House File 639 and House File 943, which would have simply prohibited the use of eminent domain for hazardous liquid pipelines on agricultural land.

Toward the end of the 2025 legislative session, a dozen Republican senators signed a pledge to withhold their support for budget bills until House File 639 was called up in the Senate for debate and a vote. They got their wish in the final week of the session, and the floor debate was spirited and at times heated.

The bill passed the Iowa Senate on a 27-22 vote, with 13 Republicans voting for it and 21 against; 14 of the 15 Democrats present for the vote also supported the bill. It had previously passed the Iowa House, on March 26, with broad, bipartisan support on an 85-10 vote.

Ban

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Republicans have argued that the center is needed in order to ensure a diversity of ideological thought at the University of Iowa and have noted that ISU and UNI already have similar entities. Democrats in the Senate argued the center is unnecessary because the school’s staff and curriculum already ensure diverse viewpoints are heard.

House File 437 passed the House and Senate on party-line votes with Republicans supporting and Democrats opposed.

\$1.5M to UNI for tuition program vetoed

Reynolds, though, nixed \$1.5 million for the University of Northern Iowa to support a program offering in-state tuition to students from bordering states as a line item veto in the budget bill.

The governor, in her veto mes-

sage, said while she supports the program, she’s opposed to providing ongoing funding for the effort.

“UNI initially requested \$3 million in one-time funding to jumpstart a program that would thereafter be self-sustaining, but this bill provides \$1.5 million with an expectation of ongoing funding,” Reynolds said. “The contours of the program are also unclear as it relates to existing out-of-state students. I look forward to working with UNI next year to further develop the details of the program and see it launched.”

Psilocybin rescheduling

Reynolds vetoed House File 383, which would allow synthetic psilocybin prescriptions in Iowa if the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approves the substance.

Psilocybin, a naturally occurring hallucinogenic compound found in certain species of mushroom, is listed as a Schedule I substance under the Controlled Substances Act. In the past few years, the U.S. Food and Drug Adminis-

tration has been studying the effects that synthetic psilocybin has on post-traumatic stress disorder. In 2024, the FDA rejected MDMA treatment for the disorder.

The bill was passed with broad bipartisan support in both chambers, but Reynolds said the bill “surrenders state authority to make an informed determination about classification to federal officials at the FDA” and Iowa should let the federal government make a determination before rescheduling the substance.

“The scientific evidence has shown that there is a high potential for abuse, it has an increased likelihood of causing severe psychological and physical dependence, and there is a lack of acceptable medical uses,” Reynolds said in a statement Wednesday. “This decision is not a dismissal of the emerging science or the sincere advocacy behind this legislation. Rather, it is a call for a more deliberate and Iowa-centric approach – one that engages state and federal partners, provides

time to review any clinical studies and federal changes, and builds a framework for any future therapeutic access that is clear, safe, equitable, and medically sound.”

Backers of the legislation argued that psilocybin can be used to help treat PTSD for veterans who experience trauma from their time in service.

Other bills signed

On Wednesday, Reynolds also signed:

- HF 516: A bill requiring 80% of those admitted to the University of Iowa’s medical and dentistry colleges to be Iowa residents or students at Iowa colleges. It would also require the medical program to offer medical residency interviews to any applicant with Iowa ties who is working in a high-need field.

- HF 330: Would expand insurance coverage for the treatment of autism spectrum disorders.

- HF 190: A bill for an act relating to the administration of the

statewide summative assessment of student progress to students of online schools by school districts, accredited nonpublic schools, and charter schools.

- HF 783: Implementing requirements related to organizations that sponsor or administer extracurricular interscholastic athletics, including the creation of a conference realignment committee.

- HF 1039: Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund budget

- HF 1044: Administration and regulation budget

- SF 626: Federal block grants.

- SF 628: Transportation budget.

- SF 644: Justice systems budget.

- SF 645: Economic development budget.

- SF 646: Agriculture and natural resources budget.

- SF 648: Judicial branch budget.

Gazette Des Moines Bureau Chief Erin Murphy contributed to this story.

THE COURIER

Published by The Courier
6915 Chancellor Drive, Suite B,
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
ISSN 155-5771

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Customer Service Hours:
Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Weekends and Holidays: Closed

Circulation: 291-1444 or at wfcourier.com and select “Customer Services”

Call toll-free: 800-798-1730

Main office: 291-1400 or 800-798-1717

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Newsroom: 319-291-1439

Lifestyles and Community: 319-291-1429
Sports: 319-291-1521

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The Courier (USPS: 669020), a Lee Enterprises Newspaper, is published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 6915 CHANCELLOR DR STE 2, CEDAR FALLS, IA 50613. Periodicals Postage Paid at Waterloo, IA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to 500 E 3RD ST, DAVENPORT, IA 52801.

PRICING

The Courier is a Lee Enterprises Newspaper and is published online daily, and three days per week in print (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday).

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