

Legislative Newsletter

June 7, 2020



After nearly 10 weeks of suspension, the Iowa General Assembly returned to the Capitol Wednesday amid continuing COVID-19 concerns and anti-racism protests.

It appears upon the gavel in, the clock started where it left off on March 15: the next three days were the second funnel. A curfew in Polk County on the first night and not completing the debate calendars pushed some items off to the side. The chambers typically gavelled in around 9 a.m. and held committee meetings in the chambers. Around 3 p.m., committee work would wrap up for caucuses and then ensuing debate.

The Governor also started the clock where it left off, signing several bills which had been in the 72-hour signing window:

House File 2477: Agricultural experiences bill, which will prohibit counties from requiring an agricultural experience activity from getting a special use or similar permit if the experience is on land used for farming.

House File 2512: Agricultural exemption on county zoning.

Senate File 2196: Cell Tower Siting Act repeal in 2025.

Senate File 2259: This allows fire departments, EMS agencies and law enforcement agencies to donate used equipment to another organization.

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Bills waiting for the Governor's signature

Senate File 2403: This is the ethanol and biodiesel tax bill, which imposes a 30-cent tax on ethanol blends under E-15 when current ethanol taxation provisions change, and imposes a tax on E-15 and higher blends of up to 6 cents, based on distribution percentage.

Senate File 2191: After several sessions of working with other stakeholder groups and lawmakers, an agreement has finally been reached on prisoner medical expenses. This bill deems that a prisoner has the primary responsibility for costs for medical aid while in jail or a holding facility, and requires the government ask about the prisoner's insurance at the time of intake and requires a hospital or medical provider to ask about insurance at the time of admission. The hospital/provider must attempt to bill the prisoner's insurance before requesting payment from the city or county.

House File 2502: This bill was contentious. It essentially prohibits local governments from requiring shooting ranges from complying with any conditions stricter than state law, although these conditions don't currently exist in state law. It also prohibits cities and counties from enacting ordinances, resolutions or other motions or policies regulating the storage of weapons and ammo and makes any such ordinances void. Finally, the bill allows local governments to prohibit weapons in a facility but only if the facility has screening and armed guards, which may not be possible in all applicable facilities.

House File 2310: Regulations on moving hay. This bill strikes certain annual permits on moving hay in excess of width and height restrictions without an emergency or special need. The bill also increases, width, length and height restrictions for vehicles moving hay.

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Senate File 2261: This bill pertains to telehealth behavioral services in schools. It received bipartisan support, and includes a House amendment that screenings may be sent to healthcare providers, although it's not a requirement.

House committees passed: **Senate File 2368**, which bans local governments from passing ordinances that allow a landlord from refusing to accept federal housing vouchers and voids any already adopted ordinances. This passed mostly on party lines, 12-9.

In other Senate committee work, the following bills were passed:

House File 2192: telehealth reimbursement rates. Under this bill, these reimbursements must be made at the same rate as in-person services as of January 2021. For reimbursement, the telehealth procedures must be performed in real-time. (passed 8-5)

House File 2486: The county seals bill has undergone extensive changes. It started with striking the requirement that a county seal include the word "Treasurer." In the Senate, it has been heavily amended. It adds several changes to voting, including (but certainly not limited to): limiting the Sec. of State from making emergency changes more than 21 days outside of an election; allows the Legislature or Executive Council to block emergency declarations; blocks reducing the number of polling places by more than 35 percent and prohibits the SoS from making changes in federal elections; the bill also proposes new requirements pertaining to voter ID for early voting and prohibits county auditors from using a voting database to fill in missing details from an absentee ballot; prohibits the SoS from mailing out absentee ballot requests without a written request in the event of an emergency; and would make a voter's registration inactive after that voter misses a general election. **Copies of the amendment were not on the Legislative website; a floor copy was sent to UCC members last Friday.** (passed 10-5)

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Budgets are anticipated to be started the week of June 8 however, the Legislature will not meet Monday. It is also not immediately known if some of these funnel-proof bills which still need floor action will be debated or not.

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