

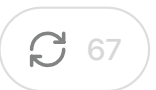
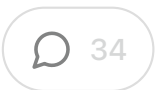
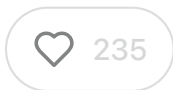
Iowa Legislature Votes to Strip Trans People From Civil Rights Protections

The bill will now go to the Governor for a final signature, and will mark the first state to strip any group from a civil rights act.



MIRA LAZINE

FEB 27, 2025



[Iowa State Legislature Protest - Source: Used with permission, Ryan Fae](#)

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Today, both chambers of the Iowa Legislature passed [SF 418](#), a bill that strips transgender people of protections under the state's Civil Rights Act, effectively legalizing discrimination against them statewide. The legislation, which originated as [HSB 242](#) in a subcommittee of the Iowa House Judiciary Committee, was split into two identical bills, [HF 583](#) and [SF 418](#). After both passed their respective chambers, the House version was merged into SF 418.

Both versions of the bill passed along party lines—33-15 in the Senate and 60-15 in the House. The legislation now heads to Republican Governor Kim Reynolds' desk, where she is widely expected to sign it into law, given her track record of approving numerous anti-trans bills in recent years. However, she has not yet publicly indicated her decision. The bill is projected to reach her desk by Thursday evening or Friday morning. If signed, Iowa will become the first state in American history to remove a protected class from its Civil Rights Act, setting a dangerous precedent for broader rollbacks of anti-discrimination protections.

Rep. Steven Holt, a longtime opponent of transgender rights who spearheaded the legislation, told [Iowa Public Radio](#) ahead of the legislative votes that the bill's purpose is to prevent courts from striking down future laws targeting transgender people. "This isn't greenlighting discrimination at all," Holt claimed, ignoring the fact that the bill explicitly erases transgender people from legal recognition and the [extended discrimination](#) they already face. "It is protecting everyone's rights, most particularly women, whose rights are being destroyed in their sports and in their changing facilities as a result of this elevated class status." His argument directly contradicted a statement from Schultz to [The Hill](#), where he admitted that Iowa had to choose

between protecting sex or gender identity, but not both. "We had to pick one or the other and not go halfway," Schultz said, making clear that the bill is about exclusion, not neutrality.

The text of the bill is heavily influenced by the Women's Bill of Rights, a measure drafted by the trans-exclusionary radical feminist organization [Independent Voice](#). This group has played a key role in shaping dozens of anti-trans bills in years, according to [a list](#) compiled by legislative researcher Liz H. Salia. The Women's Bill of Rights also served as the basis for a separate anti-trans bill introduced last year by [Governor Kim Reynolds](#).

While the hearing took place, protesters filled the halls of the Iowa State Capitol holding signs warning that the bill "will kill" and chanting that the public "will be divided." Independent journalist Ryan Fae [shared live updates on BlueSky](#), an anonymous source for safety. Security guards who spoke to the [Des Moines Register](#) estimated that over 1,500 protesters were inside the Capitol, with an additional entering at some point throughout the day.

Iowa activist Jennifer Rose also provided real-time coverage on [BlueSky](#), documenting statements from lawmakers during the House and Senate hearings. She reported after the House vote concluded, [protesters erupted in a mass shout](#) of "NO," while in the Senate, demonstrators gathered in the balcony, accusing Republican legislators [being Nazis](#).

A protester at the Capitol, granted anonymity for safety reasons, told *Erin in the Morning*, "It obviously serves a significant threat to the livelihoods of any trans person in the state, but if the protest today was any evidence, I'm sure we won't go down quietly. The showing today from the trans community and allies was astounding. I'm new to Iowa here, but despite the circumstances we're facing, I'm so proud of our community for being so strong and coming together like this. I wouldn't be surprised if we were the only community in the country like this."

if a lot of people flee the state (and I don't blame them), but the people staying going to fight hard."

Cathryn Oakley, the Human Rights Campaign senior director of legal policy, said in a statement given to *Erin in the Morning*: "Across the country, the A people have been clear: everyone, no matter who they are or how they identify deserves the same freedoms and protections under the law. But this bill aims to do what no other state has done – pull civil rights protections out from under trans people. For years, anti-equality forces have used state legislatures as their lab for the very assaults on freedom that are taking shape in Washington now. And they continue to test out new attacks, using LGBTQ+ people as a punching bag. We will continue to be expanding freedoms and reinforcing protections for all people, not passing laws that strip people of their humanity. This bill is shameful and underscores what right-wing hopes is the next chapter in their quest for control and power."

Becky Tayler, the executive director of Iowa Safe Schools, said in a statement given to *Erin in the Morning*, "Today, the Iowa Legislature has taken the step to legalize discrimination against trans Iowans. Make no mistake - this bill will ultimately strip every protected class in the Iowa Civil Rights Act. By adding "separate but equal" doctrine into Iowa code, our lawmakers have taken our state back to the 1890s. Instead of making history for protecting all Iowans - the Iowa Legislature has made our state the first to revoke civil rights from an entire class of citizens. This is a shameful day in the history of our state and Iowa Safe Schools will continue to fight for trans and nonbinary Iowans."

One Iowa Executive Director, Max Mowitz, condemned the bill in a statement given to *Erin in the Morning*. "Governor Reynolds stands at a crossroads. We urge her to uphold Iowa's values of inclusion over discrimination by vetoing this bill. Signing it would put Iowa on the wrong side of history. If she allows this bill to become law, it will effectively make it legal to discriminate against transgender Iowans in nearly

aspect of life — where they live, where they work, and where they go to school would send a devastating message that transgender Iowans are not worthy of the same rights, dignity, and protections as their neighbors. No one should have to live in fear of being denied housing, fired from their job, or excluded from public life simply because of who they are. Transgender Iowans are part of every community in this state — in our families, our workplaces, our schools, our places of worship. They deserve the same safety, stability, and opportunity as anyone else. If this bill becomes law, it will cause real harm, making daily life harder and more uncertain for countless Iowans who simply want to live openly and authentically. History will not look kindly on such a betrayal of civil rights.”

Transgender Rep. Aime Wichtendahl (D-Hiawatha) delivered powerful words condemning the bill and anti-trans discrimination **just at the end** of the hearing. “It pains me to be here today. It pains me to see how the rights of an entire group can be so quickly and easily discarded. It pains me to hear the slander, and the lies leveled at the trans community — my community — my friends, and my family who just want to live their lives, to be themselves and to live free of fear. This is not the Iowa that I have known.”

Watch her powerful speech here (at 2:07):

House floor debates bill to repeal civil rights protections for transgender I



“The purpose of this bill, the purpose of every anti-trans bill, is to further eras from public life and to stigmatize our existence,” she said. “The sum total of e anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ bill is to make our existence illegal, to force us bac the closet. If we want jobs or a place to live, we have to go back, is what they’r us because the authors of these bills wish us every harm.”

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A guest post by

Mira Lazine

Mira Lazine is a freelance journalist covering LGBTQ+ issues, politics, and science. She can be found at miralazine.com or on BlueSky, @miralazine



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Kate Jensen 3h

Let's call this what it is, directly. Iowa legislature votes to legalize discrimination on the gender identity.

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Joan the Dork Joan the Dork 3h

Guess we know which state is getting its Florida stripes next.

♡ LIKE (22) 💬 REPLY

1 reply

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