

August 28, 2025

To:

Representative Randy Feenstra
Representative Ashley Hinson
Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeks
Representative Zach Nunn
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Re: Vote NO on the PERMIT Act – Protect Iowa’s Water, Communities, and Health

Dear Representatives Feenstra, Hinson, Miller-Meeks, and Nunn,

We, the undersigned organizations, businesses, and community leaders, write to urge you to **vote NO** on the Promoting Efficient Review for Modern Infrastructure Today Act (“PERMIT Act,” H.R. 3898). This legislation would gut core protections of the Clean Water Act and worsen Iowa’s already severe water quality crisis.

Clean water is essential to Iowa’s way of life. It sustains our families with safe, clean drinking water, supports farms and other businesses, and makes recreation, from fishing to swimming, possible across our communities.

The Clean Water Act was designed with a simple but powerful goal: to ensure clean water for everyone. When we lose sight of that, we all pay the price, whether through unsafe drinking water, higher business operating costs, increased risk of flooding, more polluted waterways, and the loss of the natural places we value. And a U.S. Supreme Court [decision](#) already narrowed its interpretation of which waters the Clean Water Act protects. We should be doing **more** to safeguard Iowa’s waterways and our health. Instead, The PERMIT Act puts polluters ahead of our communities and clean water.

Iowa is on the frontlines of a drinking water emergency.

Our rivers and lakes carry some of the highest nitrate concentrations in the nation, with nitrate levels this summer reaching **twice the federal safe drinking water limit**. These pollutants threaten public health and contribute to Iowa’s [second-highest cancer rate in the country](#), which is linked to up to 330 cancer cases each year. Nitrate-contaminated drinking water contributes to this cancer risk.

On June 8, nitrate levels in the Raccoon River reached 20.55 milligrams per liter, double the federal drinking water limit and the second-highest ever recorded. The federal limit of 10 milligrams per liter exists to prevent “blue baby syndrome,” a condition that can be fatal for infants under six months old. And a growing number of [studies](#) have linked nitrate concentrations lower than 10 mg/L to colorectal cancer, thyroid disease and other health issues.

This summer, Central Iowa Water Works was forced to ban lawn watering for 600,000 residents for the first time in its history, as nitrate levels overwhelmed treatment capacity. Communities across the state—from Des Moines to Cedar Rapids—are spending millions of dollars to filter out contaminants that shouldn't be in our water in the first place. Smaller communities and rural drinking water wells are also impacted by high nitrates, but when they don't have the dollars to treat nitrates, they must find other safe drinking water sources or simply drink water that does not meet safe drinking water standards. All of these costs are ultimately borne by Iowans.

Beyond drinking water, this summer, 19 beaches Iowa DNR monitors for water quality tested high for E. coli or toxic algae and were put on the [“do not swim” list](#). Iowa families looking to get a respite from the summer heat put themselves in danger swimming in these waters.

The PERMIT Act would make these problems worse.

If passed, the bill would gut critical clean water protections by weakening oversight and shifting the burden of pollution onto communities already saddled with the high costs of providing safe drinking water from nitrate-contaminated source waters. Additionally, due to the federal nature of this bill it would allow polluters in neighboring states discharge upstream of Iowa, putting the burden of that pollution and costs on Iowans.

The PERMIT Act will harm Iowans:

- **More unsafe waterways** for swimming due to bacterial contamination and harmful algal outbreaks.
- **Higher cost for water treatment** needed to remove nitrates so water is safe to drink.
- **More harmful pesticides, PFAS, and other forever toxic chemicals** in Iowa's waterways.
- **More “dead zones” in rivers and lakes** without enough oxygen for fish to breathe.
- **More oil and gas and carbon pipelines** that could leak into waterways or even explode.
- **Many businesses would spend more on higher water treatment costs**, experience greater legal liability, and run the risk of reputational harm if they depend on safe clean water sources to operate or grow their products.

We all drink the same water.

No Iowan wants to put their families at risk with unsafe drinking water. Polls show more than 80% of Americans, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike, believe safe, affordable water is a basic right. The Clean Water Act has long enjoyed bipartisan support, protecting both our public health and our agricultural economy. The PERMIT Act undermines that legacy.

We urge you to stand with your constituents and reject this dangerous bill. Iowa's families, farmers, and businesses all rely on clean water. Our local and state water issues highlight this issue all too clearly. We cannot afford policies that take us backward when the stakes—for public health, our economy, and our future—are this high.

Please vote **NO** on the PERMIT Act.

Sincerely,

Des Moines County Farmers and Neighbors, for Optimal Health

Environmental Law & Policy Center

Food & Water Watch

Iowa Alliance for Responsible Agriculture

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement

Iowa Environmental Council

Iowa Faith and Climate Network

Iowa Groundwater Association

Iowa Wildlife Federation

Jefferson County Farmers and Neighbors

Panora Conservation Chapter Izaak Walton League

Poweshiek CARES

Progress Iowa

Raccoon River Watershed Association