

Environmentalists advocate slate of bills: What to know

Patrick Keck State Journal-Register

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Dany Robles of Chicago leads a procession from the Environmental Protection and Climate Justice rally into in to the state Capitol after the rally that was held in front of the state Capitol Wednesday, April 19, 2023. *Thomas J. Turney/State Journal-Register*

Ahead of Earth Day, environmentalists rallied at the state Capitol to push lawmakers to act on bills they say will make Illinois more green.

The crowd of a few hundred met outside the Lincoln statue before heading to Gov. JB Pritzker's capitol office to deliver a letter requesting his signature on the legislation if it makes it to his desk.

Jack Darin, executive director of Sierra Club Illinois, said environmental activists had come together to push the state's Climate and Equitable Jobs Act and now needed to reassert those energies.

Green Energy: [Nuclear option: Illinois grapples with the future of nuclear power](#)

"Today, we're showing up for justice," he said, later joined by several activists and lawmakers who provided comments during the rally. "We're showing up for bold climate solutions, not false climate solutions that are lifelines for fossil fuels."

Many eyes Wednesday were on Chicago Mayor-elect Brandon Johnson's capitol visit, who spoke before a joint session of the Illinois General Assembly.



Environmental Protection and Climate Justice rally held in front of the state Capitol Wednesday, April 19, 2023. *Thomas J. Turney/State Journal-Register*

His speech focused mostly on the state's connection with its largest city, but also made mention of the Double Black Diamond solar farm being built just outside of Springfield. With construction beginning earlier this month, the plant will be one of the nation's largest solar farms and would provide electricity to O'Hare Airport and Midway Airport upon completion.

Here is a look at one of the bills environmental groups are behind this spring session:

House Bill 2520

A bill that did not pass in the Illinois House of Representatives last month still has the support of environmentalists. [House Bill 2520](#) from state Rep. Sonya Harper, D-Chicago, has now been approved for consideration by the House Rules Committee and would have until May 19 to move out of the chamber.

The bill creates several new provisions to construction projects to ensure they are environmentally-friendly, including a supplemental fee of \$100,000 for each construction permit application if the build takes place in an "environmental justice community."

Kevin Semlow, Illinois Farm Bureau director of state legislation, told Farm Week Now the bill would have a negative impact on construction and business in the state. IFB is among 23 opponents to the legislation, while the Illinois Environmental Council is joined by 13 other supporters.

Senate Bill 2421

Navigator CO₂ Ventures is moving forward with a 1,300 mile-pipeline spanning five states and more than a dozen counties in central and western Illinois. Concern among some residents, including those in Sangamon County, is how transport of carbon dioxide can be done safely and a belief that current federal regulations on carbon pipelines are not sufficient.

Senate Bill 2421, among several changes, would create the Carbon Transportation and Sequestration Readiness Fund and require any company or individual wishing to capture CO₂ to receive a permit from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency. EMS workers would also receive training in case of a carbon release.

The bill from state Sen. Laura Fine, D-Glenview, has not advanced out of committee. Its companion bill in the House, House Bill 3119, has also not made it to full floor vote.

House Bill 2376

A bill banning the use of polystyrene by retail establishments advanced out of the House and now awaits a vote in the Senate.

Maddie Krost, a eco-ambassador with Faith in Place, said the need for [House Bill 2376](#) and its Senate companion bill, is apparent due to the high amounts of plastic waste accumulated. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Americans are estimated to throw away approximately 70 million plastic foam cups every day.

"This waste lasts for hundreds of years," she said. "It will continue clogging our landfills, littering our streets, polluting our park and escaping into our rivers and oceans forever."

HB 2376 from state Rep. Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, D-Glenview, is now in the Senate Executive Committee and would make Illinois the first midwestern state to ban polystyrene.

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