

Reminder -

Don't Place Campaign Signs in Highway Right-of-Way

What to know and why it matters

JULY 2026



Iowa DOT is reminding campaigns and customers that political campaign signs cannot be placed anywhere in the right of way of Iowa DOT primary roadways.

What are primary roadways? These include Interstate highways (I-35), US numbered highways (US 20), and state numbered highways (IA 9).

Is this based on Iowa law? Yes, this is documented in Iowa Code 318 and is included in Iowa DOT policy and manuals. This short guide provides a simpler explanation for customers.

Know the Rules

- No sign may be placed permanently or temporarily on the primary roadway ROW, including political campaign signs. The ROW includes the roadway, shoulders, ditches, and any other area owned or reserved by the Iowa DOT for the roadway purpose. The ROW may not always be defined by a fence line or obvious border, but maps are available at Iowa DOT District offices.
- No signs may be affixed permanently or temporarily to any infrastructure. This includes prohibiting signs attached to a bridge railing, fence, or signpost. Signs or banners may be held by participants during a rally or event, but they may not be attached to anything within the roadway ROW.
- If a sign constitutes a hazard to motorists, the Iowa DOT District office will remove it immediately. The sign will be retained at the closest District garage, and Iowa DOT staff will attempt to contact the campaign / owner for retrieval.

- If a sign does not constitute an immediate hazard, the District will contact the campaign / owner to remove the sign. If the owner does not remove the sign after 48 hours, then the District will remove and retain the sign at the closest District garage for retrieval.
- By law, Iowa DOT may charge a sign owner if there is an appreciable cost in removing signs. While this is rare for traditional signs, this could be required if Iowa DOT needs special effort or equipment to remove signs with some stronger methods of placement.

Placement of Signs in Other Locations

- Questions about signs in county or local ROW should be handled by the county or local public agency.
- The Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board provides guidance for general placement of campaign signs, which might be visible from the highway (but not placed on the ROW).
- Placements on private property adjacent to the primary highway rights-of-way may be subject to Iowa DOT permitting requirements under Iowa Code 306C, if any type of payment or compensation is being provided to property owners in exchange for allowing the placement.

Questions?

Contact the local Iowa DOT District office, or Daniel Yeh in the Office of the Director, 515-237-3325.

Iowa DOT Districts: <https://iowadot.gov/about/districts>



More Information: <https://go.iowa.gov/FfM9>

