

**House Study Bill 117 - Introduced**

HOUSE FILE \_\_\_\_\_  
BY (PROPOSED COMMITTEE ON  
JUDICIARY BILL BY CHAIRPERSON  
HOLT)

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act relating to court records for residential forcible entry  
2 and detainer actions and including effective date provisions.  
3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

unofficial

1 Section 1. Section 648.22, Code 2025, is amended to read as  
2 follows:

3 **648.22 Judgment — execution — costs — sealing of court**  
4 **records.**

5 1. If the defendant is found guilty, judgment shall be  
6 entered that the defendant be removed from the premises, and  
7 that the plaintiff be put in possession of the premises, and  
8 an execution for the defendant's removal within three days from  
9 the judgment shall issue accordingly, to which judgment for costs  
10 shall be entered in the judgment docket and lien index, and to  
11 which shall be added a clause commanding the officer to collect  
12 the costs as in ordinary cases.

13 2. In a residential forcible entry and detainer action, the  
14 court records of the action shall be sealed not later than three  
15 days from the date of the order, if any of the following occurs:

16 a. The defendant is found not guilty.

17 b. The case is dismissed.

18 c. The plaintiff does not appear for the hearing.

19 3. In a residential forcible entry and detainer action, the  
20 court shall enter an order sealing the court records of the  
21 action not later than three days from the date of the order if,  
22 by motion or upon the court's own determination, the court finds  
23 there is no genuine issue of material fact between the parties.

24 4. Upon application of a defendant found guilty in a  
25 residential forcible entry and detainer action for nonpayment  
26 of rent, the court shall enter an order sealing the record  
27 of the action, the existence of the petition, all filings and  
28 documentation within the case file, and any associated writs of  
29 execution, if all of the following conditions are met:

30 a. More than seven years have passed since the date of the  
31 finding of guilt.

32 b. The applicant has not been found guilty in a subsequent  
33 forcible entry and detainer action in the five-year period  
34 directly preceding the application.

35 c. The applicant has not previously been granted a sealing of

1 a finding of guilt under this chapter within ten years prior to  
2 the application.

3 d. The applicant has paid all court costs, fees, fines, and  
4 any other financial obligation ordered by the court or assessed  
5 by the clerk of the district court in the case.

6 5. The application to seal the record of the action shall be  
7 included in the record the defendant wishes to seal, using a form  
8 prescribed by the supreme court.

9 6. In a residential forcible entry and detainer action for  
10 nonpayment of rent in which the defendant is found guilty, the  
11 court shall enter an order sealing the record of the action, the  
12 existence of the petition, all filings and documentation within  
13 the case file, and any associated writs of execution, if all of  
14 the following conditions are met:

15 a. The application is filed jointly by the plaintiff and  
16 defendant.

17 b. The defendant applicant has paid all court costs, fees,  
18 fines, and any other financial obligation ordered by the court or  
19 assessed by the clerk of the district court in the case.

20 7. Upon sealing, the existence of the petition, all filings  
21 and documentation within the case file, and any associated  
22 writs of execution shall be removed from any publicly accessible  
23 location under the direction of the judicial branch or county,  
24 as applicable. The clerk of court shall enter satisfaction of  
25 judgment in the judgment docket and lien index. Notwithstanding  
26 chapter 22, records sealed upon satisfaction of the requirements  
27 specified in this section shall not be available for public  
28 inspection except in one of the following manners:

29 a. Upon request by the defendant or the attorney for the  
30 defendant by filing a motion in the sealed case.

31 b. Upon application to the judicial branch using a form  
32 prescribed by the supreme court for scholarly, educational,  
33 journalistic, or governmental purposes only, provided that in all  
34 cases, the names of minor children shall remain sealed at all  
35 times, and that the names and personally identifiable information

1 of all persons named as defendants or included in the plaintiff's  
2 petition shall be redacted and remain sealed unless the court  
3 determines that release of such information is necessary to  
4 fulfill the scholarly, educational, journalistic, or governmental  
5 purpose of the request.

6 c. State court administration shall maintain a record in  
7 the aggregate of all filings and the final disposition of any  
8 such actions, to include dismissal, default judgment, and writs  
9 associated with disposition. State court administration shall  
10 make available to the public and report annually such aggregate  
11 information in such a manner prescribed by the supreme court as  
12 to protect the identity of the parties while still providing the  
13 public with information regarding eviction proceedings.

14 8. Subsections 4 through 7 do not apply to a money judgment  
15 awarded for an action that was filed with a forcible entry  
16 and detainer action or arising from the same set of facts and  
17 circumstances.

18 9. Subsections 3 through 7 do not create an independent cause  
19 of action by a tenant for use of lawfully obtained information.

20 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act takes effect July 1, 2026.

21 EXPLANATION

22 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
23 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

24 This bill relates to sealing court records of residential  
25 forcible entry and detainer actions (eviction actions).

26 The bill requires a court to seal the court records of an  
27 eviction action not later than three days from the date of the  
28 order if any of the following have occurred: the defendant is  
29 found not guilty, the case is dismissed, the plaintiff does not  
30 appear for the hearing, or if, by motion or upon the court's  
31 own determination, the court finds there is no genuine issue of  
32 material fact between the parties.

33 The bill provides that upon application of a defendant found  
34 guilty in an eviction action for nonpayment of rent, the court  
35 shall seal the court records if more than seven years have passed

1 since disposition, the applicant has not been found guilty in a  
2 subsequent eviction action in the five-year period preceding the  
3 application, the applicant within the last 10 years has not been  
4 granted a sealing of eviction court records, and the applicant  
5 has paid all costs. The application to seal shall be included in  
6 the sealed court records.

7 The bill requires the court in an eviction action for  
8 nonpayment of rent in which the defendant is found guilty to  
9 enter an order sealing the court records if the application to  
10 seal is filed jointly by the plaintiff and defendant and the  
11 defendant has paid all court costs, fees, fines, and any other  
12 fees ordered by the court or clerk of the district court in the  
13 case.

14 The bill provides that upon sealing the court records, all  
15 filings, documentation, and writs of association shall be removed  
16 from any publicly accessible location. Sealed court records  
17 shall not be available for public inspection except upon request  
18 by the defendant or the attorney for the defendant by filing a  
19 motion in the sealed case or application to the judicial branch  
20 using a form to be prescribed by the supreme court for scholarly,  
21 educational, journalistic, or governmental purposes. The bill  
22 requires the state court administrator to maintain a record  
23 in the aggregate of all filings and to make such information  
24 available to the public in such a manner prescribed by the  
25 supreme court as to protect the identity of the parties while  
26 still providing the public with information relating to eviction  
27 actions.

28 Under the bill, certain provisions do not apply to an  
29 application to seal a record for an eviction action by a  
30 defendant found guilty when a money judgment has been awarded to  
31 the plaintiff.

32 Certain provisions of the bill relating to an application to  
33 seal do not create an independent cause of action by a tenant for  
34 use of lawfully obtained information.

35 The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.