



JB PRITZKER

Pritzker expected to veto bill giving Ameren rights to build transmission lines

by Kevin Bessler | The Center Square
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(The Center Square) – Unless there are changes, a bill giving Ameren Illinois the right of first refusal to build high-voltage power lines will most likely be vetoed by Gov. J.B. Pritzker.

The 18-month right of first refusal would allow Ameren to choose whether they want to build the new power lines, thus eliminating the competitive bidding process for such projects. The utility has testified in other states considering similar legislation, including Missouri, that the competitive bid process leads to delays and cost overruns.

During an appearance Wednesday for an unrelated event, Pritzker was asked about the [legislation](#).

“Competition is important and we want to keep costs down for our customers across the state, the customers of our utilities, and having a competitive environment helps do that,” Pritzker said. “I’m still considering what I will do with the bill but I think you understand at least where my head is at.”

The bill’s sponsor is state Rep. Larry Walsh Jr., D-Elwood. He said it would help keep transmission line projects in house.

“If we don’t have this, [Midcontinent Independent System Operator] could just go out to the market for open bid and you can get anyone to come in here,” Walsh said during debate.

Opponents of the proposal said it would reduce competition, leading to higher costs for construction projects and ultimately higher costs to energy consumers.

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The legislature could override Pritzker's potential veto this fall, but it would require three-fifths majorities in both chambers.

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