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MEG MC LAUGHLIN / mmclaughlin@qconline.com

Corn waits to be processed at Wyffles Hybrid last September in Atkinson.

Farmers feel the squeeze

Many factors putting farmers in tough spot

THOMAS GEYER
tgeyer@qctimes.com

Record production of corn and soybeans, a continued tariff war and farmers marketing plans are all contributing to farmers struggling financially, agricultural experts say.

In one area of agriculture financing, FSA direct loans, 19.4 percent were delinquent in January. That is compared to 16.5 percent in January 2018.

Experts said that financing was the loan of last resort when farmers do not qualify for commercial or agricultural

loans through banks and other channels.

Ryan Drollette, farm management specialist with the Iowa State University Extension in Johnson County, said in talking with bankers who loan to farmers, the ones having problems, "are the same ones they have had problems with for the past three years."

"To me this says that the tariffs haven't pushed more people out," Drollette said. "It's pushing out those bottom ones who have had problems that last three years. Those people were already in trouble."

In many instances farmers are doing fairly well, he added.

"Five years ago many farmers went out and bought equipment," Drollette said. "They had the cash to do it. Many have paid off those equipment pur-

chases. Now with \$8 beans and \$3 corn, they have better cash flow because they don't have to worry about payments on new equipment."

But if those farmers hang on to that equipment for a while, that will mean fewer sales for agricultural implement manufacturers such as Deere & Co. and Case IH.

David Oppedahl, senior business economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, said the situation in Illinois might be better than Iowa given the record yields in 2018.

Oppedahl, author of the AgLetter published by the Federal Reserve Bank

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RI COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Judge throws out suit

She rules that RI County is exempt from act

SARAH HAYDEN
shayden@qconline.com

PEORIA — A lawsuit filed in an effort to halt demolition of the Rock Island County Courthouse has been dismissed.

During a hearing Tuesday, Peoria County 10th Circuit Judge Jodi Hoos dismissed the case, saying Rock Island County is exempt from the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act.

The hearing was moved to Peoria County to avoid conflicts of interest.

"My ruling today is not whether to demolish the courthouse is right or wrong; my ruling is whether plaintiffs have established valid claims under the law. I found they have not," Hoos said.

The temporary restraining order postponing demolition has been lifted effective immediately.

Attorneys for the plaintiffs asked that the temporary restraining order remain in place for seven days until an appeal can be filed.

"Having heard oral motions, I am going to deny that request," Hoos said. "It's not like it's going to be torn down tomorrow."

"They have a crane there," plaintiffs' attorney Tom Quinn said.

"I have to follow the law," Hoos said.

Rock Island County State's Attorney John McGehee said the Public Building Commission would decide when demolition would take place.

"I thought the judge was extremely legal today," McGehee said. "She followed the law as she saw fit. I thought her decision was

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DEMOCRATS 2020

Gillibrand touts bravery

Candidate from New York state visits Davenport

GRAHAM AMBROSE
GAmbrose@qconline.com

DAVENPORT — "I love being in Iowa. Because you're a red state," New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand said to a packed restaurant in downtown Davenport on Tuesday night. "I got my start in politics in the grassroots, in a red place, where you had to

work really hard to win."

Gillibrand, a Democrat from a conservative district in upstate New York, is running for president on a progressive platform.

But her message to Iowa voters Tuesday night at Barrel House in downtown Davenport had as much to do with character as with policy.

"I have always been brave," she said, citing her votes against the Wall Street bailout and the government's "Don't ask, don't tell" policy on homosexuality in the military. "I stand up for what's right. Because the truth is it doesn't matter who you're fight-

ing against. It matters most who you're fighting for."

Gillibrand's 90-minute meet-and-greet featured a 15-minute stump speech and about half an hour of questions.

The 52-year-old senator focused mostly on national issues: climate change, "the greatest threat to humanity;" the right of women to access abortions; the "immoral" policy of child separations at the U.S.-Mexico border; transgender rights; and health care, which she called

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John Schultz / Quad-City Times
New York Senator, and now Democratic candidate for president, Kirsten Gillibrand takes a selfie with supporters Tuesday at the Barrel House in Davenport.

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