



Illinois Capitol Update

January 21, 2026

Last week, the Senate returned briefly, with their main focus being reallocating office space in the newly renovated north wing of the Capitol. Construction crews are still finishing parts of the first and second floor office spaces where most of the chamber's legislators will be housed. But leadership has begun its migration back to the upper floors of the historic building. The Senate will return on February 3.

The House returns this week, but their schedule also looks light – as it almost always is in January for the second year of a two-year General Assembly.

While the General Assembly isn't very active yet, there is a lot of activity in court, with lawsuits filed between Illinois and the federal government regarding immigration enforcement and federal funds.

In public comments over the last several days, the governor has stated the General Assembly will continue pursuing **insurance regulation** during spring session, emphasizing a goal of increased oversight without undermining Illinois' competitiveness, particularly in Bloomington-Normal. On the **Chicago Bears**, Pritzker reiterated concerns about using taxpayer dollars for a new stadium, noting discussions are ongoing but stressing protections for taxpayers. He said some infrastructure requests align with projects already planned under the Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan, which could provide a path forward. Pritzker has also defended the **SAFE-T Act**, saying it maintains public safety while allowing nonviolent defendants to await trial outside jail, and acknowledged continued work is needed to expand mental health and substance use treatment in state correctional facilities.

Below are the **key dates** from each chamber's calendar:

- Jan. 20, 2026:** First House Meeting
- Jan. 16, 2026:** House/Senate - LRB Request Deadline
- Feb. 6, 2026:** House/Senate - Introduction of Bills Deadline
- Feb. 18, 2026:** Governor's Budget Address
- Mar. 13, 2026:** Senate - SB Substantive Committee Deadline
- Mar. 27, 2026:** House - HB Substantive Committee Deadline
- Apr. 17, 2026:** House/Senate - First Chamber - Third Reading Deadline
- May 8, 2026:** House/Senate - Second Chamber - Substantive Committee Deadline
- May 22, 2026:** House/Senate - Second Chamber - Third Reading Deadline
- May 31, 2026:** Adjournment

Campaign Updates

The 2026 Illinois primary election is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, 2026. Vote by mail and early voting can begin on February 5.

Illinois Democrats Apply to Host Early 2028 Presidential Primary

The Democratic Party of Illinois has applied to the Democratic National Committee seeking to hold an early primary in the 2028 presidential nominating process. Party leaders argue Illinois' demographic and geographic diversity makes it a strong testing ground for candidates and would require contenders to build broad, statewide coalitions. The proposal has the support of JB Pritzker and legislative leaders. Illinois last moved its primary up in 2008 to join the nationwide "Super Tuesday" contests of February 5, 2008.

Fiscal & Budget Pressures

Pritzker Points to Federal Funding Uncertainty, Holds Firm on Budget Caution

Governor JB Pritzker said the state will continue withholding a portion of agency funding to guard against potential budget shortfalls driven by ongoing uncertainty in federal funding, offering no timeline for releasing funds to public universities. Under a September executive order, agencies were directed to hold back 4 percent of their budgets; colleges and universities have warned the impact is significant, with roughly \$29 million currently withheld. While Pritzker said he remains open to releasing the funds, he pointed to recent federal cuts to childcare services as adding new budget risk.

Court Temporarily Halts Federal Childcare Funding Freeze

A federal court has temporarily blocked the Trump administration from freezing federal funding for childcare and family support services after five states, including Illinois, filed suit. The Trump administration planned to withhold up to \$10 billion nationwide, including as much as \$1 billion from Illinois through Child Care and Development Fund and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs. The lawsuit argues the funding freeze is unlawful and an overreach of executive authority, noting the administration demanded extensive documentation, including sensitive personal information, from states within an unrealistic timeframe and targeted only Democrat-led states. A U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York issued a temporary restraining order blocking the freeze, preserving funding while the case proceeds.

Trump Administration Cuts Then Restores Mental Health Funding, Causing Confusion

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration briefly announced the termination of roughly \$2 billion in federal grants for mental health, substance abuse treatment, and related services, sending termination letters last week that blindsided grant recipients and prompted staffing and programming concerns. The abrupt move drew swift bipartisan outrage and criticism from providers and lawmakers who warned the cuts could disrupt lifesaving treatment and increase public health risks.

Within about 24 hours, the administration reversed course and restored the funding, acknowledging the backlash and reinstating grants that support thousands of programs nationwide. However, confusion and uncertainty remain among providers and communities that had begun responding to the initial cut notices.

Policy Updates

Attorneys General Seek Court Enforcement Over SNAP Funding Dispute

A coalition of 20 state attorneys general, including Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, has asked a federal court to enforce a preliminary injunction blocking the Trump administration from threatening states with federal funding cuts. The request follows concerns that the U.S. Department of Agriculture is

continuing to demand personal and sensitive information from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients as a condition of funding, despite an October injunction issued by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. The attorneys general argue the continued data demands violate the court's order and force states to choose between protecting recipient privacy and risking the loss of critical SNAP administrative funds.

Get Covered Illinois Extends Enrollment Period

Illinoisans will have additional time to enroll in health insurance through the state's official marketplace, announced Get Covered Illinois Monday. The deadline to enroll in a plan is now Feb 1, 2026. Illinoisans can get started at the Get Covered Illinois online directory.

Illinois Sports Betting Wager Trends

The Illinois Gaming Board reported a continued downturn in sports betting activity, with a 15 percent decline in bets in October and 6.4 million fewer wagers compared to the same month last year, a trend critics have linked to recent state and local tax increases. The Sports Betting Alliance warned that higher fees risk driving bettors away from the regulated market toward illegal or offshore options. Despite the drop in wagering volume, November 2025 saw a record \$1.66 billion in total sports betting handle in Illinois, indicating that overall money wagered and revenue remain historically high even as participation slows.

Illinois Interstate Shootings Drop Sharply in 2025; No Shooting Fatalities in 2025

The Illinois State Police reported interstate shootings fell 31 percent in 2025 compared to 2024, marking the fourth consecutive year of declines and the first year in roughly a decade with no fatal interstate shooting incidents. The reduction continues a multi-year trend, with shootings down 53 percent from 2023, 68 percent from 2022, and 80 percent from 2021. Governor JB Pritzker credited sustained public safety investments and ISP strategies, including Air Operations and Automated License Plate Readers, which help identify suspect vehicles while reducing the need for high-speed pursuits.

Pritzker Signs Clean Slate Act to Automate Record Sealing

Governor JB Pritzker signed HB1836, known as the Clean Slate Act, into law, automating the sealing of criminal records that are already eligible for expungement under existing Illinois law. The measure aims to remove bureaucratic barriers that have limited access to jobs, housing, and education for people with nonviolent records. State leaders estimate roughly 2 million Illinoisans are eligible for expungement, but only a small fraction are processed annually under the current system. The law excludes serious and violent offenses and maintains full access for law enforcement and certain state agencies, while sealing records from private background checks.

U of I System Approves Modest Tuition and Housing Increases

The University of Illinois System Board of Trustees approved a 2 percent tuition increase for in-state undergraduate students entering in fall 2026, along with higher rates for nonresident, graduate, and select professional and online programs across its Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield campuses. Under Illinois law, tuition for new undergraduates will remain locked in for four years, and system officials noted resident undergraduate tuition has been frozen in seven of the past 11 years. The board also approved room and board increases of 5 percent at Urbana-Champaign and Chicago and 3.5 percent at Springfield for first-time residents, citing inflationary cost pressures while reaffirming commitments to financial aid and affordability.