



Illinois Capitol Update

August 27, 2025

Governor JB Pritzker cleared his desk of the 436 bills passed by the General Assembly last spring. He issued two vetoes and one amendatory veto. Key new laws include a ban on the use of AI as primary instructors at community colleges, expansion of Scott's Law to require drivers to move over for all authorized emergency vehicles, and raising the age for mandatory annual driver tests from 79 to 87.

One vetoed measure, supported by State Treasurer Michael Frerichs, would have allowed his office to create an investment pool for Illinois nonprofits. Pritzker vetoed the bill citing potential unintended consequences that could enable fringe and extremist groups to benefit—a claim the Treasurer disputes.

The following is an update on some of the larger issues on the horizon for the General Assembly:

Transit Fiscal Cliff Delayed

Chicagoland's anticipated transit funding "fiscal cliff" will not arrive early next year. Following a unanimous RTA board vote, \$74 million was reallocated from Metra and Pace to the CTA's 2026 budget, delaying CTA service cuts by two to three months. With the expanded online sales tax projected to add \$225 million next year, the fiscal cliff is reduced from \$771 million to roughly \$546 million. Updated timelines now set the CTA crisis for mid-2026, Metra for mid- to late 2026, and Pace stable until 2027. Lawmakers continue to plan transit funding and reform discussions during veto session.

Clean Energy Incentives Under Review

The Senate Energy Committee heard concerns that federal cuts to clean energy tax credits could stall Illinois projects, threaten CEJA goals, and raise costs for consumers. Clean energy businesses reported cancellations, while advocates cautioned delays could jeopardize grid reliability and job growth—especially as data center demand surges. The hearing underscored the tension between advancing renewables, ensuring reliable baseload power, and supporting Illinois' growing AI and data center sectors.

Lawmakers Explore Rising Home Insurance Premiums

The Senate Insurance Committee examined Illinois' increasing home insurance rates. Industry representatives cited climate-driven property losses and rising construction costs, with Chicago facing the highest storm risk among major U.S. cities. Lawmakers explored consumer concerns, including transparency in carrier comparisons and the impact of credit checks and roofing claims on premiums. Insurers cautioned against overregulation, referencing New Jersey's experience where price controls reduced competition.

Next Legislative Schedule

Lawmakers are next scheduled to return **October 14–16** and **October 28–30**.

Campaign Updates

2026 Primary Candidates Circulating Petitions

225 E. Cook St. Springfield, IL 62704

Candidates for the March 17, 2026 primary are actively circulating petitions. The filing window for established-party candidates is October 27–November 3, 2025. Crowded fields are emerging for statewide, federal, and legislative offices.

Former Illinois Republican Party Chair **Don Tracy** announced his run for the GOP nomination for U.S. Senate, joining John Goodman, Casey Chlebek, Pamela Denise Long, and R. Cary Capparelli.

Redistricting Reform Push Resumes: A bipartisan coalition is mounting a renewed effort to place a constitutional redistricting amendment on the 2026 ballot. The proposed 12-member commission would prohibit the use of political data for state legislative map drawing and require compact, community-respecting districts.

Illinois Democrats Highlight Voter Engagement and Affordability at IDCCA Brunch

Illinois Democratic leaders convened at the IDCCA Brunch Wednesday to discuss strategies for the 2026 midterms, emphasizing voter registration, grassroots organizing, and fundraising. Gov. JB Pritzker and keynote speaker U.S. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries focused on economic issues, including the cost of living, health care, and union labor, framing these priorities as central to the party's upcoming campaigns. The event highlighted efforts to build local engagement and prepare for the next election cycle.

Illinois GOP Pushes “Renaissance” at State Fair but Faces Candidate, Funding Gaps

At Republican Day at the Illinois State Fair, GOP leaders pitched a Republican “renaissance” to turn Illinois red, pointing to Trump’s 43.5% showing in the 2024 election. But challenges remain. The GOP struggles with infighting, leaving the party without a full statewide ticket as petition season moves forward—with no announced GOP candidates yet for Comptroller or Treasurer. Some candidates for governor and other offices lack strong name recognition or credibility to compete with Democrats, who hold all statewide offices. Major donors such as former Gov. Bruce Rauner and billionaire Ken Griffin have exited the scene, leaving conservative megadonor Richard Uihlein as one of the last major funders—though his track record of backing winning candidates in Illinois is weak.

Policy Updates

Bears Stadium Update: Arlington Heights Still in Play—But Hurdles Remain

The Chicago Bears have shifted their focus back to building a new domed stadium in Arlington Heights, moving away from earlier Chicago lakefront proposals. Team President Kevin Warren says the Bears are holding weekly planning meetings with village officials and are ready to “move dirt” in 2025—if state lawmakers approve key enabling legislation this fall. Governor JB Pritzker reiterated his preference for the team to remain in Chicago but acknowledges he cannot block a privately funded move to Arlington Heights. Central to the Bears’ plan is a “Mega Projects” or payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) proposal that would let them negotiate property tax terms directly with local governments instead of following the standard Cook County assessment process. A similar measure stalled during the spring session, but Warren and organized labor allies are expected to push for action during the October veto session.

Pritzker Signs Bills Protecting Illinois Workers from Federal Rollbacks

Gov. JB Pritzker signed a package of legislation aimed at safeguarding Illinois workers from potential federal deregulation under President Trump. The measures include:

- **SB 1976 (Workers’ Rights Safety Act)** – Maintains protections under OSHA, the Fair Labor

Standards Act, and the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act for Illinois workers, even if federal rules are weakened, and directs the Illinois Department of Labor to replace repealed federal standards.

- **HB 1189** – Ensures workers on federal construction projects in Illinois are paid the higher of the state or federal prevailing wage.
- **HB 2488** – Protects the state’s Equal Pay Act by removing reliance on a federal program, maintaining requirements for large employers to obtain an equal pay registration certificate.

At the bill signing ceremony, Pritzker and bill sponsors emphasized the state’s commitment to fair pay and safe working conditions, pledging not to let federal changes erode labor protections.

State Expands Reproductive Rights

Governor Pritzker signed two key laws reinforcing reproductive health access in Illinois. **HB 3709** requires public colleges and universities with on-campus pharmacies to offer abortion and contraceptive medications; **HB 3637** expands legal “shield law” protections for healthcare providers prescribing such medications, protecting them even if FDA approval is later revoked.

Pritzker Launches “One Click College Admit” to Simplify Higher Ed Access

The *One Click College Admit* program enables Illinois public universities and community college students to receive automatic admission based on GPA—eliminating applications, essays, recommendation letters, and fees. Beginning with the class of 2027, students can opt in as juniors to secure admission offers their senior year. Starting in 2026, community college students with 30 transferable credit hours will also be eligible for automatic admission to participating universities. Students must still complete the FAFSA to access financial aid.

Illinois Launches State-Based Health Insurance Marketplace

Illinois will replace the federal HealthCare.gov system with its own state-run platform—Get Covered Illinois—starting November 1, 2025, for the 2026 coverage year. Open enrollment runs through January 15, 2026, supported by a new Customer Assistance Center and certified brokers and navigators.

Illinois ACA Exchange Rates Set to Rise

Illinois residents shopping for Affordable Care Act exchange plans this fall will face significant rate increases as insurers respond to rising healthcare costs and federal policy uncertainty. Blue Cross and Blue Shield is proposing a 27% average hike, UnitedHealthcare 21%, and Celtic’s Ambetter plans nearly 39%. Several insurers, including Aetna and Cigna, are exiting parts of the market next year.

Illinois Sportsbooks Post Record Revenue Amid Tax-Driven Surcharges

Illinois sportsbooks posted a historic June, generating \$113.9 million in adjusted gross revenue—a state record—thanks to a near 12% hold, which represents the percentage of wagers sportsbooks retain after paying out winners. By comparison, the typical national hold hovers around 7–8%, making June unusually lucrative for operators and the state alike. The record revenues delivered \$41.5 million in state tax revenue under the new progressive tax rates of 20–40% that took effect this fiscal year. For FY2025 overall, sportsbooks contributed \$428.9 million in tax revenues.

Intersect Illinois Rebrands → IL Economic Development Corporation

The public-private effort to recruit business to the state, formerly known as *Intersect Illinois*, has been relaunched under a new name: the Illinois Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). Its services will continue to include site selection assistance, data and analytics, and partnership with key stakeholders to promote economic growth. The organization was launched nearly a decade ago under Gov. Rauner, was integrated with the governor’s office under Gov. Pritzker, and now boasts 56 corporate members.

ISBE Launches Updated Proficiency Levels

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is rolling out new performance measures in reading, math, and science to better reflect students' readiness for college and careers. Developed with input from educators and analysis of college placement data, the changes aim to correct past misalignments in state assessments.

Court Blocks Use of Medicaid Data for Immigration Enforcement

A federal judge has issued a preliminary injunction preventing the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Homeland Security (DHS) from sharing Medicaid recipients' personal information for immigration enforcement purposes. The ruling follows a lawsuit filed by Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul and 20 other states.

Pritzker Signs Landmark 'Sonya Massey Bill' to Strengthen Police Hiring Standards

Governor Pritzker signed SB 1953, strengthening Illinois police hiring standards. The law requires agencies to obtain detailed employment records and review prior disciplinary history. The population threshold for counties to establish police merit boards and commissions is lowered from 1 million to 75,000, expanding oversight statewide. The bill was introduced following Sonya Massey's July 2024 death at the hands of a police officer with prior misconduct.

DOJ Demands Full Illinois Voter Database, Pritzker Pushes Back

The U.S. Department of Justice has ordered Illinois to hand over its complete voter registration database—including driver's license numbers and partial Social Security numbers—rejecting the state's offer of a redacted list. DOJ cites federal election laws, but critics argue the demand overreaches and risks voter privacy. Governor JB Pritzker condemned the move as politically motivated, warning it could be used to undermine trust in 2026 elections. Illinois officials maintain the state's decentralized, county-run election system is secure.

Judge Dismisses GOP Lawsuit Over State Budget Bills

A Sangamon County judge has thrown out a Republican-led lawsuit challenging three major state budget bills signed by Gov. JB Pritzker. GOP lawmakers argued the measures violated Illinois' constitutional three-readings rule, but the court cited the *Enrolled Bill Rule*, which prevents judges from second-guessing certified legislative procedures. The ruling keeps the budget, implementation, and revenue bills in place.

New Business Investments Strengthen Illinois Economy

- **AbbVie:** \$195 million investment to expand North Chicago facility, creating at least 50 new jobs.
- **Richardson Electronics:** \$8.5 million expansion in La Fox to develop advanced battery energy storage, retaining 200 employees and adding 54 new positions, supported by REV Illinois.