Illinois Statehouse Briefing

October 19, 2026

Illinois voters will head to the polls on November 3, with contests for U.S. Senate, governor and the other statewide constitutional offices, all 17 congressional districts, all 118 Illinois House seats, and 39 of the state's 59 Senate seats. Early voting is already underway.

With Gov. JB Pritzker holding a comfortable lead in the limited public polling available ahead of Election Day, there has been relatively little movement in the governor's race. One notable development came last week when former Illinois House Republican Leader Jim Durkin endorsed Pritzker over Republican nominee Darren Bailey, crossing party lines and citing his concerns about Bailey's leadership and direction of the Illinois GOP. Durkin, a longtime suburban Republican who led the House GOP caucus for nearly a decade, said he could not support his party's nominee.

For Springfield, the main question is how the election reshapes the margins heading into the 105th General Assembly. Democrats currently hold 78 of 118 House seats and 40 of 59 Senate seats, comfortably above the three-fifths majorities required in each chamber. While many legislative candidates are running unopposed, several suburban races are drawing significant attention and campaign spending, including contests in Senate District 26 and House Districts 52, 76, and 97.

The election will also begin a quick transition back to legislative business. Lawmakers return to Springfield for veto session **November 17-19** and **December 1-3**, followed by a brief lame-duck session in January and inauguration of the 105th General Assembly on January 13. Pritzker said last week he is "hopeful" lawmakers will reach agreement on data center regulation, noting negotiations have continued through the summer and early fall after legislation stalled in the spring. He also said discussions are ongoing over a legislative framework intended to help facilitate a potential Bears move to Arlington Heights. By contrast, Pritzker indicated his broader BUILD housing initiative may be more likely to return during the 2027 spring session.

ILLINOIS ROUNDUP

Races We're Watching

With control of both chambers unlikely to change, Election Night attention in Springfield will center on a handful of competitive legislative races that could affect the size of the Democratic majorities.

- **Senate District 26 – Sen. Darby Hills (R) vs. Rep. Nabeela Syed (D):** The highest-profile legislative contest of the cycle pits appointed Republican Sen. Darby Hills against Democratic Rep. Nabeela Syed in the northwest suburbs. Both parties are investing heavily, with more than $6 million flowing into the race.
- **Senate District 24 – Sen. Seth Lewis (R) vs. Ben McAdams (D):** Republican Sen. Seth Lewis is defending a DuPage-area district which has attracted more than $1.5 million in fundraising as both caucuses compete over suburban territory.
- **House District 97 – Rep. Jessica Dixon Heitman (D) vs. Gabby Shanahan (R):** Dixon Heitman, appointed this summer following former Rep. Harry Benton's resignation, is seeking a full term against Shanahan, who lost to Benton by about four points in 2024. Both House caucuses are spending significantly in the southwest suburban district.
- **House District 52 – Rep. Martin McLaughlin (R) vs. Maria Peterson (D):** A rematch in the northwest suburban district of one of the closest House races of 2024, when incumbent McLaughlin won by just 47 votes.
- **House District 76 – Rep. Amy "Murri" Briel (D) vs. Liz Bishop (R):** Another 2024 rematch, with incumbent Briel defending a closely divided north-central Illinois district.
- **House District 48 – Rep. Jennifer Sanalitro (R) vs. Amanda Zahorak (D):** Incumbent Sanalitro is defending a competitive suburban district that Democrats view as a potential pickup opportunity.

Illinois Implements Diesel Relief as Prices Remain Elevated

Illinois has begun implementing Gov. JB Pritzker's temporary diesel relief measures as fuel prices remain historically high. As of October 14, diesel averaged approximately $6.57 per gallon in Illinois, nearly 78% higher than a year ago. Under guidance issued by the Illinois Department of Revenue, farmers may use dyed diesel on state roads for qualifying agricultural purposes without state penalties through December 31. The relief follows Pritzker's statewide disaster proclamation and executive order responding to rising fuel costs during harvest season. Fuel industry representatives have raised questions about how the temporary relief will operate in practice, while the International Energy Agency now warns that global diesel shortages could persist well into 2027.

Bears Stadium Talks Resume Ahead of Veto Session

Talks over a new Chicago Bears stadium are picking back up ahead of veto session, with state leaders pressing the team to settle on a legislative path. Gov. JB Pritzker recently met with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, Bears minority owner Pat Ryan, House Speaker Chris Welch, Rep. Kam Buckner and Sen. Bill Cunningham in the first meeting to bring the governor, legislative negotiators and the NFL together. Participants described the discussion as productive, although no agreement was reached.

The two primary options remain the House's payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) approach and the Senate's municipal stadium authority proposal. Negotiators are reportedly showing renewed interest in the Senate framework, in part because it is location-neutral and could accommodate either Chicago or Arlington Heights. Whether a proposal advances during veto session will ultimately depend on whether negotiators can develop a package capable of winning sufficient support in both chambers while addressing lawmakers' continued concerns about taxpayer exposure.

Google, Constellation Announce Plan to Expand Nuclear Capacity

Constellation Energy, the nation's largest nuclear power provider, agreed this week to invest $4.3 billion to increase output at 11 nuclear plants in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Google will purchase the additional power under a 20-year agreement. Approximately $2 billion of the investment will support the Byron, Braidwood, LaSalle, and Quad Cities plants in Illinois. Google will fully fund the northern Illinois upgrades at no cost to Illinois customers, and the additional output is expected to put downward pressure on electricity rates. The agreement will increase generation across the 11 plants by 890 megawatts, roughly the capacity of a typical U.S. nuclear reactor. The additional power will be distributed through PJM Interconnection.

Pritzker Helps Launch Multistate PJM Governors' Collaborative

Gov. JB Pritzker joined a bipartisan group of governors in formally establishing the PJM Governors' Collaborative, a multistate effort aimed at giving states a stronger voice in decisions made by the regional grid operator that serves northern Illinois and much of the Mid-Atlantic. The group plans to coordinate positions on PJM policy, share technical expertise and jointly engage with PJM, FERC and state utility regulators. The effort comes amid growing concern over electricity costs, grid reliability, transmission delays and rising demand from data centers. Pritzker has increasingly pressed PJM to ensure that large new loads do not shift infrastructure and generation costs onto existing ratepayers.

Illinois Revenue Running Ahead of Budget Expectations

Illinois revenues remain well ahead of expectations through the first quarter of FY27, with receipts running about $1 billion, or 8.2%, above last year's pace. September revenues were nearly 10% higher than a year ago, driven largely by strong corporate and sales tax collections.

COGFA cautioned, however, that the strong pace may not continue. Approximately $265 million in assumed FY27 revenue remains tied up in litigation, while year-over-year comparisons will become less favorable later in the fiscal year. The Commission has also warned that federal tax changes enacted through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act could weigh on Illinois corporate income tax collections because of the state's conformity with portions of the federal tax code.

Digital Asset Tax Delayed Six Months

Illinois has agreed to delay implementation of its new 0.2% digital asset tax from January 1 to July 1, 2027, pending court approval. The agreement between the state and industry groups would avoid an immediate fight over a

preliminary injunction while litigation continues over the tax's constitutionality and enforceability. The tax, enacted earlier this year, applies to certain digital asset businesses with more than $100,000 in Illinois receipts.

Judge Blocks Illinois Prediction Market Regulations

A federal judge has temporarily blocked Illinois from regulating prediction markets such as Kalshi and Polymarket in the same manner as sportsbooks, finding that the contracts are likely subject to exclusive federal oversight under the Commodity Exchange Act. The ruling prevents enforcement of state restrictions on who may trade and what types of contracts may be offered while the litigation continues. The court did not resolve Illinois' separate tax on prediction-market transaction fees, signaling that the tax could potentially survive even if the broader regulatory scheme is preempted. Lawmakers did not include revenue from the tax in the FY27 budget, anticipating litigation over the new law.

Report Highlights Economic Benefits, Policy Challenges of Data Centers

A new report from the Illinois Economic Policy Institute and the University of Illinois' Project for Middle Class Renewal estimates that planned data center development could support more than 120,000 jobs and generate nearly $300 million annually in property tax revenue over the next decade. The report also highlights growing concerns over electricity demand, water usage and potential costs to ratepayers, noting that data centers already account for approximately 7% of Illinois electricity demand.

Researchers recommend requiring data centers to bear the cost of new energy infrastructure, encouraging projects to bring new clean-energy resources online, strengthening water-efficiency requirements, and tying state tax incentives to higher environmental standards. Lawmakers are continuing to consider data center regulations following the spring session debate over the POWER Act, making the issue one to watch heading into veto session.

FEMA Denies Illinois Disaster Assistance Request

FEMA has denied Illinois' request for a major disaster declaration following the severe storms, flooding, derecho and tornadoes that struck the state in August. The request sought individual and public assistance for Champaign, Cook, Ford, Fulton, McLean, Tazewell, Vermilion and Will counties.

Newly released state documents show the request exceeded FEMA's statewide eligibility threshold, with $27.6 million in documented damage compared with the $24.9 million required and per-capita damage of $5.95 compared with a $1.94 threshold. Some individual counties did not meet their own thresholds, although federal rules allow damage across affected counties to be considered together. FEMA has not publicly provided a more detailed explanation for the denial. Gov. JB Pritzker is appealing the decision. The state's request documented more than 4,500 damaged residential structures, including 46 destroyed homes, along with significant uninsured losses and public infrastructure damage.

Illinois Health Insurance Marketplace Rates Rise 14.1% for 2027

The Illinois Department of Insurance released 2027 rates for plans offered through the Get Covered Illinois marketplace, showing a statewide weighted average increase of 14.1% for individual plans. That is down from the 28.8% average increase approved for 2026. Five insurers will offer plans through the marketplace for 2027. IDOI noted that posted rates do not reflect the actual premiums consumers will pay after plan selections and available tax credits are applied. In 2026, more than 466,000 Illinoisans enrolled in marketplace coverage and approximately 85% received premium tax credits. Open enrollment for 2027 coverage runs November 1 through January 15, with consumers able to preview plans beginning October 19.