

ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

January 11, 2022

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

The Illinois General Assembly returned to the State Capitol for the 2022 spring legislative session on Wednesday, January 5. The spring session will focus on drafting a state budget for Fiscal Year 2023. With the Illinois primary election set for June 28 -- and all 177 seats in the Illinois House and Senate on the ballot -- lawmakers will want to avoid controversial issues and get back home to campaign.

Both chambers of the General Assembly canceled the previously-scheduled January 4 and January 6 session days, as well as the session days scheduled for this week (January 11-13) and likely (although not yet officially) next week.

*****Please review [ICCTA's BILL LIST](#).**

Due to the virtual committee process, it is vital that we know your positions so that legislation does not slip through unopposed.***

2022 KEY SESSION DATES

Despite the canceled session days, deadlines are not changing. Senate Bills must be introduced by January 21; House Bills by January 28. Governor JB Pritzker is scheduled to give a joint State of the State and FY23 Budget Address on Wednesday, February 2. The General Assembly is currently scheduled to adjourn on Friday, April 8. Even though lawmakers were originally slated to be at the Capitol for roughly the same number of days as in a typical year – a condensed session, not a shorter session – it's now unclear if that will happen with the recent surge in COVID-19 cases. The reality remains that lawmakers will want to remain in their districts as much as possible.

Other Important Dates:

- February 10: Senate Committee Deadline
- February 18: House Committee Deadline
- February 25: Senate 3rd Reading Deadline
- March 4: House 3rd Reading Deadline

***** LEGISLATION SWITCHES CHAMBERS *****

- March 25: House & Senate Committee Deadline
- April 1: House & Senate 3rd Reading Deadline
- April 8: Adjournment

2022 LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY TO DATE

During the lone session day last week, lawmakers passed three bills: House Bill 3512 (Slaughter/Sims), a **criminal justice reform** trailer bill; HB 1953 (Stuart/Morrison), an **elections clean-up** bill; and HB 3138 (Hernandez/Harmon), a **judicial redistricting** bill. The House also amended its Rules to allow for remote

floor voting, extending the capability to June 1, 2022. The Governor signed all three into law on Friday, January 7.

Judicial redistricting legislation passed by the House and Senate redrew subcircuits for the 16th and 19th Circuits, as well as created subcircuits in the 3rd, 7th, 17th and 18th Circuits (Alton, Springfield, Rockford, and Wheaton/Naperville regions). This is a major overhaul of these circuits around the state. There was a push for subcircuits for the 12th and 22nd Circuits (Champaign and Peoria) but those did not make the final bill. Republicans criticized the maps as a way “to gerrymander the courts to uphold the Governor’s agenda.”

We expect many of the same **COVID protocols** from last session to be in place for session this year. The Senate recently issued its [Senate Guidelines for Registered Lobbyists and Members of the Public](#).

The Governor’s office announced **\$45 million in Restore, Reinvest, and Renew Program** funding for community organizations that serve neighborhoods most impacted by economic disinvestment, violence, and drugs. The program is administered by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority and focuses grants on civil legal aid, economic development, reentry from the criminal justice system, violence prevention, and youth development.

Redistricting Plan Upheld in Court

A panel of three federal judges have upheld the Illinois General Assembly’s **legislative redistricting plan** (Senate Bill 927), rejecting challenges brought by Republican state lawmakers, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. The ruling states the plaintiffs’ arguments and proposed maps failed to prove that the maps constituted a racial gerrymander. The full ruling can be found [HERE](#).

2022 Campaign Update

Candidates interesting in running in the June 28 primary election can start circulating petitions for office on **January 13**.

Billionaire hedge fund executive **Ken Griffin** is planning to fund a slate of candidates on the statewide GOP ticket in 2022. Publicly, Griffin denies any commitments to endorse or fund anyone, but he has pledged to spend \$60 million in the primary alone to defeat State Sen. **Darren Bailey** (R-Xenia), who has been campaigning for the governor spot for several months. The (speculated) slate is likely to include Aurora Mayor **Richard Irvin** for Governor, State Rep. **Avery Bourne** (R-Morrisonville) as his running mate, and State Rep. **Tom Demmer** (R-Dixon) for Treasurer. The potential entry of a slate backed by a billionaire is a giant departure in Illinois Republican circles. Part of that “slate” may include former US Attorney **John Milhiser**, who has announced his Republican campaign for Secretary of State. Milhiser is challenging State Rep. **Dan Brady** (R-Bloomington) for the Republican nomination.

Sen. Bailey has picked **Stephanie Trussell**, a former WLS-AM 890 talk show host, to join the 2022 ticket as his running mate for Lt. Governor.

Governor Pritzker denied any plans to run for U.S. President after the *New York Times* ran a story including him as a possible Democratic candidate.

U.S. Rep. **Bobby Rush** (D-1st District), one of the state's longest-serving elected officials, will not seek re-election. Chicago Ald. **Pat Dowell** is among those intending to run for the newly open seat.

U.S. Rep. **Mary Miller** (R-15), who saw her current district dismantled in the redistricting plan passed by Democrats last year, said she will instead challenge fellow **U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis** (R-13) in the new 15th district. Miller's announcement that she would challenge Davis was accompanied by her endorsement by former President Donald Trump.

U.S. Rep. **Adam Kinzinger** (R-16) announced that he will not run for Governor or U.S. Senator. Instead he will spend "full time" fighting extremism.

State Sen. **Melinda Bush** (D-Grayslake), first elected in 2021, announced that she will not seek re-election in 2022. Among those planning to run for her vacant Senate seat are State Rep. **Sam Yingling** (D-Grayslake) and former Democratic Rep. **Mary Edly Allen**.

Sangamon County Republicans have chosen local realtor **Sandy Hamilton** to replace former State Rep. **Mike Murphy** in representing the 99th District. She was sworn into office on December 30. Hamilton, who lives on the west side of Springfield, would be in the 95th district (represented by State Rep. **Tim Butler**) if she runs in 2022.

COVID UPDATE

As COVID-19 cases began surging during the Christmas and New Year holidays, Gov. Pritzker urged hospitals on December 30 to **postpone non-emergency, elective procedures** so that they can expand staffed hospital beds as needed. The Governor said that he would not institute a statewide suspension of these surgeries as to not adversely impact larger hospitals that can still carry out priority elective surgeries.

The Illinois Department of Public Health has adopted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [recommendation](#) to **reduce the number of days for isolation** and quarantine for the general public. Earlier, IDPH had adopted CDC's updated guidance for health care personnel and for vaccines for children. Health care personnel and other groups should continue to follow their respective guidance.

IDPH also announced that two new oral antivirals will be available in Illinois later this month for those with mild-to-moderate COVID-19 who are at high risk of becoming severely ill. Both antivirals will be available by prescription only and should be taken as soon as possible after being diagnosed and within five days of the beginning of symptoms. Paxlovid is expected to reduce the risk of hospitalizations by 89%, and Molnupiravir by about 30%. Molnupiravir is meant for use when other treatment options are not available.

New updates to the IDPH *Vax Verify* immunization portal now includes use of the **SMART™ Health Card**. The SMART™ Health Card allows users to download a QR code, which individuals can use to easily

confirm their COVID-19 vaccination status at businesses, events, and other locations. *Vax Verify* is an online system that allows Illinois residents 18 years and older to check their COVID-19 vaccination record at <https://idphportal.illinois.gov>. The QR code can be downloaded or kept in Apple Wallet and presented for COVID-19 vaccination verification. Businesses wanting to verify vaccination status can download the Commons Project [SMART Health Card Verifier App](#) on Apple AppStore and Google Play Store.

ILLINOIS SEEKS UNEMPLOYMENT TRUST FUND WAIVER

Illinois and seven other states are asking the federal government to freeze interest on loans used to pay unemployment benefits during the pandemic. Illinois owes nearly \$4.5 billion to the federal unemployment trust fund, which has been accumulating interest at a rate of 2.27% since September 6. As of December 10, the state owed \$19.6 million in interest, a tab that would grow to more than \$100 million if the debt is left unpaid for a year, according to Comptroller **Susana Mendoza's** office.

ILLINOIS MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

The **minimum wage** in Illinois increased another dollar on Saturday, January 1, 2022. The new wage is \$12 an hour. Governor Pritzker signed legislation in 2019 putting the state on the path to a \$15-an-hour minimum wage by 2025. There have been three increases in the minimum wage since then. In Chicago, the minimum wage is already \$15 an hour for employers with 21 or more employees (\$14 an hour for smaller businesses). Workers under 18 years old and who work fewer than 650 hours in a year will earn a minimum wage of \$9.25 per hour beginning January 1. The youth minimum wage rate will gradually rise to \$13 an hour by 2025.

EARLY FEDERAL LOAN PAYOFF

The state has finished repaying -- by some measures as much as two years early -- the last chunk of the \$2 billion it borrowed from the Federal Reserve early in the pandemic. According to Comptroller Mendoza, Illinois saved about \$82 million in interest by paying off the loan early.

IDOJ/IDJJ EMPLOYEE VACCINATION MANDATE UPHELD

The arbitrator in the state's Vaccine Mandate Interest Arbitration determined that the state of Illinois can and should require vaccinations for Illinois Department of Correction guards and Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice staff. Employees subject to this decision will be required to get their first shot by January 31, unless they are approved for a religious or medical exemption.

ILLINOIS DRIVER'S LICENSE AND ID CARD EXPIRATION DATES EXTENDED

Illinois Secretary of State **Jesse White** is extending expiration dates on driver's licenses and ID cards by three months to **March 31, 2022** to reduce crowds at state facilities. The extension does not apply to CDLs. Secretary White noted that this will be the final extension.

DRIVER SERVICES OFFICES CLOSED JANUARY 3-17

Secretary White also announced that driver services offices will be closed to the public from January 3-17 due to the statewide and national increase in COVID-19 cases. Online services will remain available, including renewal of license plate stickers, renewing driver's licenses, and obtaining duplicate IDs.

TAX FILING DELAY FOR TAXPAYERS IN TORNADO-IMPACTED COUNTIES

Victims of severe storms, straight-line winds and tornadoes beginning December 10, 2021 now have until **May 16, 2022**, to file various individual and business tax returns and make income tax payments. Tax filing relief is now available to taxpayers who live or have a business in Bond, Cass, Coles, Effingham, Fayette, Jersey, Macoupin, Madison, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie, Pike and Shelby counties. If filing a return via postal mail, taxpayers should write "Tornado-December 2021" on the top of their returns in red. If filing electronically, taxpayers must notify the department that their return will be delayed by emailing REV.DisasterRelief@Illinois.gov. They should provide their full name, account number (if using a social security number, only include the last four digits), mailing address and an estimate of when they believe they can file or pay their taxes.

NEW LAWS EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2022

More than 280 new laws went into effect on January 1, 2022. The Senate Democratic Caucus outlined 10 laws "that will affect Illinoisans in all corners of the state:"

- **SB 1682:** Requires pharmacies to post a notice informing customers they can request the retail price of brand name or generic prescription drugs;
- **HB 576/SB 1577:** Gives Illinois students up to five excused absences to prioritize their mental health;
- **HB 605:** Requires state agencies and institutions to only purchase Illinois and American flags made in the United States;
- **SB 817:** Prohibits discrimination against natural and ethnic hairstyles;
- **SB 119:** Prohibits lemonade stands and other means of nonalcoholic sale operated by a person under the age of 16 from being regulated or shut down by public health authorities;
- **HB 3922:** Recognizes June 19 — Juneteenth — as an official holiday celebrating the end of slavery in the United States.;
- **HB 168:** Prohibits people who have a record of felony offenses such as torture or animal fighting from owning or living with animals;
- **HB 122:** Ends early termination fees on utility contracts for deceased residents;
- **SB 58:** Lowers the registration fee for trailers weighing less than 3,000 lbs. from \$118 to \$36;
- **HB 226:** Allows students to choose whether to submit their ACT/SAT score when applying to Illinois public institutions.

STATE CAPITOL RENOVATIONS

Renovations are underway on the north wing of the Illinois State Capitol. Plans include the construction of an underground parking garage, elimination of the circle drive on the north side of the Capitol, and the addition of a new entry that improves access and security. The purpose of the renovation is to address safety and security concerns, but also to return the historic architectural detail to the Capitol.

The Illinois Senate will convene in the Howlett Auditorium after the 2022 spring session and will continue meeting there until January 2025 when renovations are scheduled to be completed.

THOMPSON CENTER SALE

Governor Pritzker announced that he has reached a preliminary deal to sell the James R. Thompson Center in downtown Chicago for \$70 million. The state selected a company led by Michael Reschke,

chairman and CEO of real estate developer The Prime Group, as the buyer from the two bids submitted this fall. Reschke's JRTC Holdings is working with original architect Helmut Jahn's firm on its plan to revamp a building that has inspired strong opinions since opening in 1985.

Gov. Pritzker noted that the savings for the state's taxpayers will add up to as much as \$20 million per year over the next 30 years while retaining a roughly 30 percent lease, meaning state workers will be able to stay in the building. Reschke said that the sale should close within six months, with renovations to start within a year.

AMAZON WAREHOUSE COLLAPSE AND STATE BUILDING CODES

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has opened an investigation into the fatal December 11 collapse of an Amazon warehouse in Edwardsville. Investigators will look at whether current building and construction regulations were followed at the warehouse. Gov. Pritzker commented on the prospect that climate change may be contributing to a rising number of storms and added that he is speaking with state legislators on "whether or not we need to change code based upon the climate change that we are seeing all around us."

REFUNDS FOR ComEd CUSTOMERS

ComEd has voluntarily offered to provide customer refunds of more than \$21 million in wake of the federal investigation into the company's pay-to-play scandal. The costs cover a nine-year period, and ComEd has added interest to the refund. The company's full statement is [HERE](#).

For more information on state legislative and public policy issues, please contact:

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