

As the 104th Illinois General Assembly gets underway, legislation is beginning to trickle in. Most bills are expected to be filed in the days leading up to the February 7 filing deadline. All four caucuses have been finalizing their leadership and committee assignments. Lawmakers will return to Springfield on January 28.

While revenue returns remain on track halfway through the current fiscal year, the outlook for the next fiscal year remains a significant concern. Gov. **JB Pritzker** is scheduled to deliver his budget address on February 19.

KEY 2025 SESSION DATES FOR THE 104TH ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The deadline to request a bill is Friday, January 24. The Illinois Legislative Reference Bureau has implemented a black out period during which it will not accept requests for bills or amendments, beginning at 5 PM on January 24 through noon on February 7.

- January 24: Deadline – House & Senate LRB Requests
LRB black out period begins until 2/7
- February 7: Deadline – Introduction of House & Senate Bills
LRB amendment requests begin
- February 19: Governor’s State of the State/Budget Address
- March 21: Deadline – House & Senate Bills Out of Committee of Origin
- April 12: Deadline – House & Senate Third Reading Deadline
- May 7: **ICCTA LOBBY DAY**
- May 9: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 23: Deadline – Third Reading Deadline for House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 31: Adjournment

NO CHANGES IN SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

Senate Republican Leader **John Curran** (R-Downers Grove) announced that his leadership team will remain the same for the 104th General Assembly as it was for the 103rd:

- **Deputy Minority Leader:** Sen. Sue Rezin
- **Minority Caucus Chair:** Sen. Neil Anderson
- **Assistant Republican Leaders:** Sen. Terri Bryant, Sen. Dale Fowler, Sen. Steve McClure, Sen. Jason Plummer
- **Republican Caucus Whips:** Sen. Sally Tuner, Sen. Jil Tracy

SPEAKER WELCH APPOINTS NEW CHIEF OF STAFF

Former Cook County state’s attorney candidate **Clayton Harris III** will take over as chief of staff to House Speaker **Chris Welch**. Harris, who narrowly lost to **Eileen O’Neill Burke** in the 2024 Democratic primary, previously

worked in Mayor **Richard M. Daley**'s office, as general counsel at the Chicago Department of Transportation, and as deputy chief of staff for Gov. **Rod Blagojevich**. Speaker Welch also announced that **Isabel "Izzy" Dobbel**, political director at the Chicago Federation of Labor, will join his office in late January as deputy chief of staff.

FORMER SPEAKER MADIGAN TRIAL CONTINUES

Former Illinois House Speaker **Michael Madigan**'s federal corruption trial saw significant developments last week as the case moves toward its conclusion. Madigan completed his testimony, consistently denying allegations that he traded his public office for personal gain. After his testimony, the defense rested its case, paving the way for closing arguments. Through cross examination, prosecutors worked to challenge Madigan's credibility, presenting wiretapped conversations and questioning his knowledge of associates allegedly receiving benefits for minimal work. The trial now moves into its final stages, with the jury set to hear closing arguments before deliberating on charges of racketeering, bribery, and wire fraud.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION SEEKS \$11.4 BILLION FOR PRE-K - 12 SPENDING

The Illinois State Board of Education has approved a budget request of nearly \$11.4 billion for the upcoming fiscal year, marking a 4.6% increase over the current budget. This proposal includes a \$350 million boost in Evidence-Based Funding, targeting the state's most underfunded districts; a \$142 million increase in mandatory categorical aid for expenses like transportation and special education; and an additional \$75 million for early childhood education. State Superintendent **Tony Sanders** emphasized that the budget aims to balance the state's fiscal challenges with critical investments in student learning. Notably, Pre-K - 12 education constitutes about one-fifth of Illinois' General Revenue Fund spending.

'AAA' RATING FROM FITCH RATINGS FOR ILLINOIS FUNDS

The Illinois Funds, used by local governments through the Illinois state treasurer's office, has received an 'AAA' rating from Fitch Ratings. "This is an example of an outside firm pointing out that we're doing things right," said State Treasurer **Michael Frerichs**. "Every dollar we can earn through safe, smart investing is a dollar that local governments that take part in Illinois Funds don't have to raise in property taxes or cut from vital services."

S&P DOWNGRADES CHICAGO'S CREDIT RATING

S&P Global Ratings has downgraded Chicago's credit rating from 'BBB+' to 'BBB,' two notches above junk, citing persistent structural budget imbalances and challenges in balancing future budgets. The downgrade, announced less than a month after the City Council approved a \$17.1 billion budget, may increase borrowing costs for the city. S&P emphasized the city's strengths but highlighted ongoing fiscal issues, particularly with pension funding and structural gaps.

CHICAGO SEEKS \$830 MILLION BOND AUTHORIZATION

Chicago Mayor **Brandon Johnson** wants to sell as much as \$830 million in general obligation bonds, filing an ordinance to approve the borrowing one day after S&P Global Ratings cut the city's credit rating. The proceeds of the proposed sale would help finance "improvements to public rights-of-way, infrastructure and transportation, loans and grants, acquisition of property, construction and maintenance of public buildings, economic programs, lead service line replacements, and funding of judgments, settlements and escrow accounts payable by the City," according to city documents. The bond authorization needs city council approval.

MOBILE ILLINOIS IDS SOON AVAILABLE IN APPLE WALLETS

Illinois Secretary of State **Alexi Giannoulias** announced that his office will be partnering with Apple to allow Illinois IDs to be uploaded to a person's Apple Wallet on their phone. Giannoulias-supported [Public Act 103-0824](#) went into effect on January 1, 2025, allowing the Secretary of State's office to begin procedures to add mobile ID cards and driver's licenses to virtual wallets. Mobile IDs will not replace physical ID cards, as a physical state ID card will still be a valid form of identification. Giannoulias expects this technology to be utilized within Android's Google Wallet in the future.

If testing goes according to plan, Illinoisans will be able to show only their personal information that is directly relevant in each situation. For instance, a person buying alcohol will be able to share their age listed on their ID without sharing other information, such as their home address.

CTA NAMES NORA LEERHSEN ACTING PRESIDENT

The Chicago Transit Authority has named **Nora Leerhsen** as its acting president, following the upcoming retirement of **Dorval Carter Jr.** on January 31. Carter, who served as CTA president for nearly a decade, leaves behind a legacy of major projects, including securing \$2 billion in federal funding for the Red Line Extension to 130th Street. Leerhsen, current Carter's chief of staff, steps into the role during a challenging period for the CTA, which faces criticism over service reliability and safety concerns. Her appointment signals a focus on stabilizing transit services while continuing key infrastructure projects.

ILLINOIS GROCERY INITIATIVE ANNOUNCES SECOND ROUND OF \$2.4 MILLION IN FUNDING

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has unveiled a second round of funding for the Illinois Grocery Initiative Equipment Upgrades Grant Program, with \$2.4 million available. This program aims to improve fresh food access in food-insecure areas by supporting energy-efficient equipment for local grocery stores. Independent grocers and cooperatives with fewer than 500 employees and no more than four locations are encouraged to apply. The DCEO has partnered with Chicago State University and Western Illinois University to offer technical assistance and business counseling to applicants.

BEACON PORTAL LAUNCHES FOR YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Illinois Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative has unveiled BEACON, a new online portal to streamline access to youth mental health resources in Illinois. The site (beacon.illinois.gov) connects families with state programs, community services, and support coordinators, ensuring comprehensive care. Developed in collaboration with six state agencies and Google Public Sector, BEACON simplifies navigating mental health options while prioritizing data privacy.

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

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