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## ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report January 22, 2024

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Lawmakers returned to Springfield for the second year of the 103rd General Assembly on January 16, 2024. It was a light week. Given it is an election year, expect a very slow start and a reluctance to confront controversial issues. Historically, much of the heavy lifting occurs in the first year of any General Assembly. Legislators do not return to the Capitol until February 6.

Legislation for the 2024 spring session is actively being filed, but it has been gradual so far. We have now entered the inaugural “blackout period,” during which time the Legislative Reference Bureau will not accept requests for amendments. The blackout period will be lifted at the same time as the deadline to introduce new legislation on February 9. The more than 7,000 bills filed last calendar year remain viable and lawmakers could act on those as well between now and May.

### KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103<sup>RD</sup> ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

*The deadline to request a bill was Friday, January 19. The 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 19 through noon on February 9.*

- February 9: Deadline – Introduction of House & Senate Bills  
*LRB Amendment Requests Begin*
- February 21: Governor’s State of the State/Budget Address
- March 10: Deadline – Senate Bills out of Senate Committee
- March 19: Primary Election
- April 5: Deadline – House Bills out of House Committee
- April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
- April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
- May 2: ICCTA Lobby Day
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

### POLITICAL FUNDRAISING

Illinois Senate President **Don Harmon** led the four legislative leaders in the fourth fundraising quarter with \$4.19 million raised and \$11.52 million cash on hand. His caucus committee, the Illinois Senate Democratic Fund, had \$2.57 million in the bank. House Speaker **Chris Welch** raised \$3.89 million. Speaker Welch’s cash on hand at the end of the quarter was \$6.82 million. The Democrats for the Illinois House caucus committee ended the quarter with \$1.39 million in the bank. House Republican Leader **Tony McCombie** reported raising

\$601K and had \$1 million in the bank, plus another \$313K in the House Republican Organization account. That was followed by Senate Republican Leader John Curran, with \$519K raised and \$1.44 million in the bank, plus \$404K in the Senate Republican Victory Fund. Governor **JB Pritzker** deposited \$12 million of his own wealth into his campaign account. Pritzker does not have a campaign in 2024.

### **ICCB AND SELECT COMMUNITY COLLEGES CHOSEN AS NEW INDUSTRIAL ASSESSMENT CENTERS**

The Illinois Community College Board, along with the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center, is partnering with four Illinois community colleges across the state to help small-to-medium sized manufacturers find ways to reduce waste and pollution and create pathways to green jobs by engaging students. The consortium is one of 17 new Industrial Assessment Centers selected by the U.S. Department of Energy to receive funding to expand training opportunities for in-demand, high-quality jobs while identifying opportunities for organizations to save energy, improve productivity, and reduce waste. ICCB will partner with four community colleges in Illinois' four geographic regions: Northern Illinois - City Colleges of Chicago; Western Illinois - John Wood Community College (Quincy); Central Illinois - Lincoln Land Community College (Springfield); and Southern/Metro East - Southwestern Illinois College (Belleville). IMEC will partner with this consortium to design and carry out an assessment process and offer technical assistance to SMMs.

### **UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM FREEZES IN-STATE TUITION**

Tuition and fees for all three University of Illinois campuses will remain frozen for in-state undergraduate students in the upcoming 2024-25 school year. Rates will remain unchanged for the seventh year of the last 10 years. Base tuition for in-state undergraduates will remain \$12,712 a year at the Urbana-Champaign campus; \$11,178 a year at the Chicago campus; and \$321.50 per credit hour in Springfield. The board's decision will also freeze total fees at all three universities. However, room and board rates increased by 5% at the Chicago and Urbana-Champaign campuses and by 1.4% at the Springfield campus. Tuition rates for nonresident undergraduate students will increase between 1.7% and 2% at Chicago and Urbana-Champaign but will remain the same in Springfield.

### **NEW PRE-K SPOTS CREATED BY SMART START**

Thanks to a new state program, 5,886 new preschool seats have been created in preschool deserts—areas with too few publicly funded preschool seats to serve 80% of low-income 3- and 4-year-olds. As part of the Smart Start initiative, the Illinois State Board of Education originally aimed to add 5,000 new seats and exceeded the goal by 18%, expanding access to early childhood education statewide. ISBE also expanded services to families with babies and toddlers from birth to age 3, serving 1,130 additional children.

### ***SITE SELECTION* MAGAZINE RANKS ILLINOIS #1 FOR MIDWEST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

For the second consecutive year, Illinois has been named the #1 leader for workforce development in the Midwest region. The top ranking highlights the state's commitment to expanding innovative workforce programs, making critical investments through legislation and programming to reduce barriers to good-paying jobs, and creating a thriving business ecosystem for jobseekers, employees and employers. The *Site Selection* magazine ranking recognizes "states that performed well in a set of measures that gauge workforce-related aspects of states' overall employment climate." It combines information from CNBC, U.S. News, and other organizations.

## IL SUPREME COURT RULING ON PENSION FUND CONSOLIDATION

The Illinois Supreme Court has ruled unanimously to uphold the 2019 law to consolidate 650 downstate police and firefighter pension funds into two after certain members sued, claiming their voting power was diluted. The consolidation enables the two funds to have greater access to bigger investment portfolios and larger returns. The court ruled that the ability to vote for local pension board members is not a constitutionally protected right. Furthermore, it determined that the law did not adversely impact the financial benefit that pensioners receive.

## HOUSE FORMS NEW ARRIVALS WORKING GROUP

The Illinois House of Representatives has formed a new legislative working group to address the ongoing influx of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in the state from the country's southern border. The New Arrivals Working Group will be led by Rep. **Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz** (D-Glenview), who brings 20 years of experience as an immigration attorney. The other members of the working group will be Reps. **Robyn Gabel** (D-Evanston), **Jehan Gordon-Booth** (D-Peoria), **Kam Buckner** (D-Chicago), **Dagmara Avelar** (D-Bolingbrook), **Eva-Dina Delgado** (D-Chicago), **Terra Costa Howard** (D-Lombard), **Hoan Huynh** (D-Chicago), and **Dave Vella** (D-Rockford).

## STATE ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL MUNICIPAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Illinois Department of Human Services has released \$17 million in additional funding for municipalities to support asylum seekers. This is in response to the more than 38,000 new arrivals sent to Illinois by Texas since 2022. These funds will help build capacity in municipalities outside of Chicago that are welcoming asylum seekers. The money will come from the previously announced \$160 million in additional state investment to support the asylum seeker response.

## ILLINOIS MANUFACTURING CAUCUS FORMED

The Illinois General Assembly has formed a bipartisan, bicameral Illinois Manufacturing Caucus. This new group of lawmakers will be dedicated to advancing the state's economy and industry through education, workforce development, energy, tax policies, and more. The caucus will be co-chaired by Rep. **Amy Elik** (R-Alton), Rep. **Justin Slaughter** (D-Chicago), Sen. **Sue Rezin** (R-Morris), and Sen. **Patrick Joyce** (D-Essex).

## SUPREME COURT TASK FORCE TO EXAMINE PRETRIAL RELEASE APPEALS

The Illinois Supreme Court has created a new task force to examine the recent significant increase in the number of pretrial release decisions by circuit courts. The Pretrial Release Appeals Task Force will consult with stakeholders to examine the impact of implementing the Pretrial Fairness Act in September 2023 and how it has affected caseloads across the five districts of the Illinois Appellate Court. The group will hold its first meeting within 14 days and issue a report to the Supreme Court within 45 days.

## JOURNALISM TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR LOCAL NEWS

The Local Journalism Task Force has worked over the past six months to address the crisis facing local news outlets, particularly in Illinois. Its new report highlighted some alarming trends in the local news industry, including a 26% drop in newsroom employment across the country in the last 15 years and the loss of 232 newspapers in Illinois since 2005. Illinois has seen an 85% decline in newspaper journalists, making it the highest percentage in the nation. Additionally, five out of 102 counties in the state lack a local news source, and 33 rely on just one. To combat these challenges, the task force proposed various policies aimed at

improving the financial situation of local news outlets. These include tax credits for subscribers, grant programs, and allowing media companies to negotiate collectively with tech giants for advertising revenue.

### **WIELAND NORTH AMERICA TO INVEST \$500 MILLION IN ILLINOIS**

Wieland North America will invest \$500 million to modernize its East Alton facility. Wieland's footprint in Illinois also includes facilities in Carol Stream, Granite City, Montgomery, Tinley Park, and Wheeling. The investment, which retains 800 jobs across the state, will enable the company to increase production of critical copper and copper alloy components that are used in electric vehicles, EV charging infrastructure and renewable energy production while supporting the state's clean energy economy. Wieland's total incentive package from the state of Illinois is valued at approximately \$231 million. Through the Reimagining Energy and Vehicles in Illinois Act, Wieland is eligible to receive tax benefits totaling \$172 million over 30 years. The remaining benefits include capital funding for infrastructure projects in East Alton, which includes the construction of a new electricity substation, flexible funds for workforce support, and additional tax incentives.

### **IDPH ACCEPTING GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS SICKLE CELL DISEASE**

The Illinois Department of Public Health is now accepting applications for Prevention, Care and Treatment of Sickle Cell Disease grants. A total of \$750,000 has been allocated for the program. As many as eight organizations may receive grants for programs to increase comprehensive services for people with sickle cell disease and sickle cell trait.

### **RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS AVAILABLE**

The Illinois Department of Agriculture has announced that \$6.4 million in competitive grant funds will be available for projects designed to help strengthen the state's food supply chain. The Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure program is a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Applications will be accepted beginning Monday, January 22, from food and farm business and other eligible entities, including nonprofits, local government entities, universities, schools and hospitals.

### **ILLINOIS AG CALLS FOR FEDERAL RESCHEDULING OF CANNABIS**

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency classifies cannabis as a Schedule 1 drug, meaning that the federal government believes it has "no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse." Illinois Attorney General **Kwame Raoul** and his counterparts in 11 other states are calling on a reclassification to Schedule 3, meaning it has "a moderate to low potential for physical and psychological dependence." The reclassification would allow states to continue to "set the standard" for legal products, would allow businesses to take ordinary tax deductions, and would increase the ability to research the substance to fully determine its effects. at

### **STUDY: PERMANENT CHILD TAX CREDIT WOULD REDUCE CHILDHOOD POVERTY, BOOST ECONOMY**

Establishing a permanent state-level Child Tax Credit for Illinois would reduce poverty, deliver income tax cuts to eligible families, and support Black and Latinx households, according to findings from an Illinois Economic Policy Institute study. The report from the Project for Middle-Class Renewal and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign found that some child tax credits could reduce child poverty by as much as 14 to 23% while adding \$3 billion to the economy and creating or saving 17,000 jobs.

## **SOS EXPANDING ONLINE SERVICES**

Illinois Secretary of State **Alexi Giannoulias** is urging Illinois drivers looking to update their vehicle registration or renew their license to skip a planned visit to a DMV facility and instead use his offices' newly expanded online services. After initially encountering a severe problem with no-shows to scheduled appointments, a new text message notification system will now require individuals to confirm or cancel their upcoming appointments. The office has also established an online portal to clarify what services require an in-person appointment and what can be quicker online, over the phone, or via mail.

## **IDOT AWARDED \$7.1 MILLION TO FIX OR REPLACE ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS**

The Illinois Department of Transportation has received \$7.1 million in federal funds to fix electric vehicle chargers available to the public statewide. The funding, made possible through the Federal Highway Administration's Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Accessibility Program, helps support Gov. Pritzker's goal to have 1 million EVs on the road in Illinois by 2030. The grant will repair, replace, or upgrade an estimated 93 Level 2 ports and 34 Direct Current Fast Charging ports at various locations throughout the state.

## **ILLINOIS SECURES \$14.9 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING FOR EV CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE**

Illinois has also been awarded \$14.9 million in competitive federal grant funding as part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Fiscal Year 2022-23 Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant Program. The Illinois Finance Authority, in its role as the Illinois Climate Bank, was chosen to receive the funds to support the expansion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the state. The Illinois Community Charging Program is a joint effort between the Illinois Climate Bank and local and regional partners to construct 845 Level 2 EV charging stations and 36 DC Fast Charge stations around the state. The entire project is projected to cost \$18.7 million. Of that, 43% will be allocated for projects in disadvantaged areas, and 63% will be designated for dense urban communities with high levels of multi-family housing.

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

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