

ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

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Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

Just before Thanksgiving, the House Special Investigations Committee [publicly released documents](#) supplied by ComEd in response to the committee's request in its pursuit to investigate possible misconduct by Speaker Madigan in ComEd's bribery efforts. The documents show email conversations between Madigan's long-time friend and confidante, Michael McClain, who once lobbied for ComEd, and the utility's former top in-house lobbyist, Fidel Marquez. Marquez pleaded guilty in September to playing a role in the political bribery scheme, and McClain was among four former ComEd executives and lobbyists who face similar charges after federal indictments issued in November. McClain pleaded not guilty to charges of bribery conspiracy, bribery, and falsifying records in federal court. Joining him were former ComEd CEO Anne Pramaggiore, former ComEd Vice President John Hooker, and former City Club of Chicago President Jay Doherty.

The Special Investigating Committee is scheduled to meet in-person on Monday, December 14. Meanwhile, House Minority Leader Jim Durkin has called on House Majority Leader and Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Ethics Reform Greg Harris to restart the work of his committee, having not met since March. Leader Harris responded that the joint committee will resume when it is safe to gather in large groups again.

This week, House Democrat Caucus Chair Kathleen Willis became the 19th member of the caucus to announce she will not vote to reelect Madigan as Speaker – the first member of Madigan's leadership team to do so. Willis wrote in a letter to colleagues she will work to “ensure a smooth transition of leadership,” but did not indicate if she was interested in the position herself. So far, the only announced Democrat for Speaker against Madigan is Rep. Stephanie Kifowit (D-Oswego). Leader Durkin suggested he already has 45 votes and just needs 15 “reform minded Democrats” to support him for Speaker. The House Democrat caucus may not yet agree on their next leader, but they all agree the next Speaker will be a Democrat. Leader Durkin also put to bed the notion Republicans will vote for a Democrat. Meanwhile, the House Black Caucus will convene a “candidate's forum” this weekend as they consider who to endorse for Speaker. With only two candidates, we expect 21 of 22 of those members to endorse Madigan (Rep. Maurice West is the only member of the Black Caucus to publicly announce he will not vote for Madigan).

The General Assembly has not yet released a legislative calendar for 2021, but members will be inaugurated on January 13. Senate President Harmon has encouraged his members to prepare to return five days prior to the 13th for a lame duck session but was clear to say he and the House have not yet worked out a 2021 schedule.

Pritzker Announces Intent to Borrow \$2 Billion

Governor Pritzker announced the state will give notice to the federal government that it plans to borrow \$2 billion from a federal program, the Federal Reserve's Municipal Liquidity Facility program, created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to fill the state's budget deficit. That figure is less than the \$5 billion in short-term borrowing authorized by the General Assembly in May. The MLF program permits the central bank to buy the debt of state and local governments that are in need of funds.

Pritzker said the \$2 billion will be used to cover revenue losses and unforeseen COVID-19 expenses for this current fiscal year. The state previously borrowed \$1.2 billion to cover losses from the last quarter of

the previous fiscal year and is the only state to borrow from the MLF thus far. The state has paid \$200 million toward the first \$1.2 billion federal loan, according to Pritzker's spokesperson. The interest rate incurred on the \$1.2 billion loan was 3.82 percent. Since the announcement was only for a notice of intent, the interest rate on the \$2 billion will not be known until the actual sale is finalized.

Elections Update

The Illinois State Board of Elections (SBE) met yesterday to certify results of the Nov. 3 General Election, which featured the highest statewide turnout since 1992 and set records for total number of votes cast and total registered voters. 6,098,729 voters cast ballots, exceeding the 2016 total of 5,666,118, which was a record at the time; and there were a record 8,364,099 active registered voters eligible to participate in the election, surpassing the 2016 record of 8,029,847. Turnout was 72.92 percent, the highest statewide voter turnout since the 1992 general Election's 78.24 percent and more than 2 percentage points higher than in 2016. SBE estimates that the total statewide vote was split roughly evenly between early voting, voting by mail and in-person voting on Election Day, each accounting for about 2 million votes. Official vote totals can be found on the Election Results page of the SBE website – the certified results show a number of close races.

Despite being down by 5,374 votes, Jim Oberweis has launched a discovery recount of the votes for the 14th Congressional District. Incumbent Rep. Lauren Underwood has been declared the winner. If the recount is granted, the results could lead to a legal challenge.

COVID-19 Update

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) yesterday reported 10,526 new confirmed and probable cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Illinois, including 148 additional deaths. Currently, IDPH is reporting a total of 770,088 cases, including 12,974 deaths. Within the past 24 hours, laboratories have reported 112,634 specimens for a total 10,918,998. As of last night, 5,453 in Illinois were reported to be in the hospital with COVID-19. Of those, 1,153 patients were in the ICU and 703 patients with COVID-19 were on ventilators. The preliminary seven-day statewide positivity for cases as a percent of total test from 11/27 – 12/3 is 10.3%. The preliminary seven-day statewide test positivity from 11/27 – 12/3 is 12.1%.

All information pertaining to the Coronavirus Response from the Governor's office and agencies can be found [here](#). DCEO regularly updates its [Frequently Asked Questions document \(available via this link\)](#).

Two weeks ago, Governor Pritzker moved the whole state to [Tier 3 mitigations](#) of the recovery plan. Included in the plan is a provision to enable individual regions to move into Tier 2 mitigations – “a region must experience less than 12% 7-day average test positivity rate for three consecutive days AND greater than 20% available intensive care unit (ICU) and hospital bed availability for three consecutive days AND declining 7-day average COVID hospitalizations for 7 out of the last 10 days.” On Monday, however, the governor said during his daily briefing that no region would be moved back to Tier 2 for the next few weeks, citing Thanksgiving gatherings and travel.

After 238 new COVID-19-related deaths were reported by state officials on Wednesday, Gov. Pritzker said the one-day toll marked a “solemn milestone” that “far surpassed our previous single-day high report.” The state recorded its previous one-day record for COVID-19 deaths in mid-May, when 191 new deaths were reported. Pritzker said some of the latest increase could be attributed to some fatalities that occurred over the long Thanksgiving weekend.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security reported 74,131 new unemployment claims were filed across the state last week, the week of Nov. 22. That is up 13 percent from the week before. Also, Illinois has lost more than a third of its small businesses since the beginning of the year, according data compiled by Harvard and Brown universities and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The national average businesses not open compared to January is 28.9 percent fewer.

IDPH Published Vaccination Distribution Plan

IDPH has published their [COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Planning Guide](#). The guide is designed to provide a plan for the distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available. The state's plan defines the first priority group as "critical workforce members who provide healthcare." The next group includes "staff and residents in long term care facilities" and the third is "critical workforce members who provide essential functions of society."

Projections of the number of doses the state will receive are "constantly in flux," said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike, who in one week gave dramatically different estimates. The first shipment is currently projected to be 109,000 doses, covering 55,000 people since the vaccine requires two doses. The New York Times has developed an app to give you a preliminary and rough guesstimate of where you are in the line to receive a vaccine – [click here](#).

LaSalle Veterans' Home COVID-19 Tragedy

On December 1, The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs reported at the state-run veterans home in LaSalle, 29 residents have died of COVID-19 related illnesses. Before the outbreak, the home had 121 residents and 230 employees. Since the beginning of the outbreak that began on November 1, the veterans home has reported a total of 108 residents and 97 employees testing positive with COVID-19. To date, 35 residents and 76 staff had recovered from the virus.

A week after the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee held a hearing into the outbreak, House Republicans renewed their call from Nov. 10 for a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing into the cause of the COVID-19 outbreak, or at least to be included in the next Senate hearing. While the Senate has approved procedures for conducting virtual hearings, the House has not. This means any House committee meeting must take place in-person, which the General Assembly has avoided due to the ongoing pandemic.

Last week, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs Director Linda Chapa LaVia announced the acting inspector general from the Illinois Department of Human Services would conduct an independent investigation into the LaSalle outbreak. The IDVA also released two reports from two separate on-site visits at the LaSalle home — the first on Nov. 12 and the second on Nov. 17. The inspection showed numerous breakdowns in safety procedures at the facility. The inspection found the facility wasn't using alcohol-based hand sanitizer in patient rooms, instead using a formula that wasn't effective in killing the virus. Proper masks weren't being worn in the facility, according to the report, and staff were only being tested once a week. Furthermore, proper screening and temperature checks weren't taking place when staff came in the building. The administration is blaming the outbreak on community spread.

On Wednesday, Rep. Andre Thapedi, chair of the House Judiciary-Civil Committee, [launched an investigation](#) into this massive outbreak. U.S. Rep. Adam Kinzinger is also demanding answers. Rep. Kifowit, chair of the House Veterans Affairs committee, has written to the House Speaker's Chief of Staff, Jessica Basham, to request an in-person meeting of the committee to discuss the outbreak.

Candidates Start to Line up to be Next Illinois Secretary of State

Former Illinois Treasurer, U.S. Senate candidate, and Illinois Community College Board chair Alexi Giannoulias announced he is exploring a possible candidacy for the Illinois Secretary of State position that will open up with Jesse White's retirement in 2022. Giannoulias hasn't formally announced, but he is laying the groundwork by gathering endorsements and lining up donors. Giannoulias's announcement triggered similar announcements from Cook County Clerk Karen Yarbrough and Chicago Ald. Walter Burnett. Sen. Mike Hastings could enter the race as well. In 2018, when White initially said he was going to retire, Hastings lined up the maximum number of signatures to run. The race to succeed Jesse White is widely expected to be hotly contested and very expensive.

Two New Homebuyer Assistance Programs

Governor Pritzker announced the creation of [two new programs](#) designed to contribute financial assistance to communities of color in their path toward homeownership. The Smart Buy and Opening Doors mortgage assistance programs both launched on December 1, 2020 and will continue until funding is exhausted. Both programs were created using appropriations allocated to IHDA in the Rebuild Illinois capital plan and will continue until funds run out. Both programs are expected to assist approximately 6,000 to 7,000 borrowers.

IDOT Announced Workshops for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program

The Illinois Department of Transportation is hosting free virtual workshops in December as part of its Building Blocks of Success series for firms interested in participating in the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program and strengthening their skills. The workshop dates and topics are:

- Dec. 4: Basic Plan Review, 10 a.m. to noon.
- Dec. 11: Estimating and Bidding, 10 a.m. to noon.
- Dec. 14: Overhead Rate Calculation, Construction and Professional Services, 1 to 3 p.m.

Workshop information, including dates and times, will be made available through Eventbrite at bit.ly/DBEworkshops. Advance registration is required. Questions can be directed to the DBE resource center at (312) 939-1100.

IL Department of Insurance Director Change

Robert Muriel, Director of the Illinois Department of Insurance, announced this week that he'll leave his position on December 11, 2020. Muriel was appointed to the position by Governor J.B. Pritzker in March 2019. IDOI's Chief Deputy Director of Product Lines, Shannon Whalen, will fill in as Interim Acting Director.

IHSA Announced No Sports Before January

"Given Governor Pritzker's current mitigations, the Board has no expectation of starting low risk winter sports prior to January," said Illinois High School Association Executive Director Craig Anderson. "The Board and IHSA staff will continue to monitor the Tier 3 Resurgence Mitigation in effect currently. When there is a timeline for the state to emerge from these restrictions, the Board is prepared to restart lower risk winter sports quickly."

Driver Services Facilities to Remain Closed to In-Person Service

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White announced Driver Services facilities statewide will remain closed for in-person transactions until Monday, Jan. 4, 2021. Expirations for driver's licenses and ID cards have been extended until June 1, 2021. Online services have been expanded, which they can be accessed by visiting www.cyberdriveillinois.com. Select facilities are open to serve new drivers, CDL applicants, and/or license plate sticker renewal.

IDFPR COVID-19 Actions

On December 3, IDFPR announced several proclamations and variances.

- [Licensure Variances \(physicians\) \(nurses\) \(physician assistants\) \(respiratory care therapists\)](#) – Certain health care professionals with expired or inactive or non-renewed licensure status for a certain amount of time can restore their license without paying the renewal fee, completing the continuing education requirements, or submitting a completed physician profile. Such licensees will only be able to provide treatment in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and is only valid until May 31, 2021
- [Out-of-State Health Care Professionals](#) – IDFPR is waiving the requirement for permanent licensure of many healthcare professionals licensed in another state, are in good standing, and working in response to the public health emergency declaration so they can provide services in Illinois. Such licensees will only be able to provide treatment in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and must register with IDFPR. This order is effective Jan. 1, 2021 and ends May 31, 2021.
- [Vaccine Administration: Dentists](#) – IDFPR expanded dentists' scope of practice to administer COVID-19 vaccinations to persons 18 years of age and older pursuant to a valid prescription. The order outlines requirements for the vaccine, training needed on vaccines and CPR, and recordkeeping. This order is effective for the duration of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation.
- [Vaccine Administration: Pharmacists](#) – IDFPR expanded pharmacists' scope of practice to order and administer influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations to persons age 3-18 with similar requirements as dentists. Pharmacy technicians and pharmacy interns will also be able to order and administer influenza and COVID-19 vaccines to persons over the age of 3 under supervision of an IL pharmacist. This order is effective for the duration of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation.

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