



ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report December 6, 2023

After a week-long filing period, candidates have submitted their petitions to appear on the March 19, 2024, primary ballot for 17 U.S. House of Representatives seats, 23 of the 59 state Senate seats, all 118 Illinois General Assembly seats, and 77 judicial vacancies.

Candidates in line at the Illinois State Board of Elections office by 8 AM on the first day of the filing period, November 27, will be put into a lottery drawing for placement at the top of the ballot. Some candidates wait to file on the last day of filing, December 4 between 4 and 5 PM, for a chance to be in another lottery for placement in the last spot of the ballot list. The lottery is scheduled for December 13.

After filing, there is a period for candidates to challenge the signatures of opponents in an attempt to knock them off the ballot. Candidates have until December 11 to file their challenges. The March 19 primary ballot will be certified in January.

Lawmakers will return to Springfield for the second year of the 103rd Illinois General Assembly on **Tuesday, January 16, 2024.**

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- January 16: First Session Day for the 2nd year of the 103rd General Assembly
- January 19: Deadline – House & Senate Requests to the Legislative Reference Bureau
- February 9: Deadline – Introduction of House & Senate Bills
- 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*

CANDIDATE FILINGS – WHO FILED FOR WHICH OFFICE?

Several Illinois Congressional Reps are facing primary challenges: Reps. **Danny Davis, Sean Casten, Bill Foster, Jesus ‘Chuy’ Garcia, Jan Schakowsky, Mike Quigley, and Mike Bost.**

Rep. **Mike Marron** (R-Fithian) will resign effective December 18 to become CEO/President of Vermilion Advantage, an economic development organization that is also the local chamber of commerce. He had already announced he would not seek re-election. Rep. **John Egofske** (R-Lemont), who also previously announced he would not run again, announced he will resign on December 8. Egofske replaced former House Leader **Jim Durkin** and will continue to serve as mayor of Lemont. **Nicole La Ha Zwiernan** could end up being appointed to fill Egofske’s vacancy as she is the only Republican who filed to run for the seat.

It appears there could be about two dozen competitive state House races next November. House Democrats have candidates running in every Republican-held district where President Joe Biden won in 2020 -- that includes GOP Reps. **Amy Grant, Jennifer Sanalitra, Martin McLaughlin, Kevin Schmidt, Steven Reick, and Dan Ugaste.** House Democrats will also challenge GOP Reps. **Jackie Haas, Jeff Keicher, and Mike Coffey.** The House Republicans, in turn, will try to flip the seats held by retiring Rep. **Lance Yednock** and freshman Rep. **Sharon Chung.** Several incumbents in both parties will face primary challengers.

None of the seats held by Senate Republicans won by Biden in 2020 are on the ballot next year. Biden won Sen. **Patrick Joyce’s** (D-Kankakee) district by 6 points, and he will face Republican **Philip Nagel** in a rematch of 2022. Joyce also has a primary opponent. The Senate GOP hope to challenge as many as six Democrats – all of which were won by Joe Biden in 2020: **Joyce, Michael Hastings, Steve Stadelman, Rachel Ventura** (Biden won this district by 20 points), **Dave Koehler, and Paul Faraci** (Biden won this district by 27 points). From the Democrat caucus, Sen. **Natalie Toro** (D-Chicago), appointed to replace Sen. **Cristina Pacione-Zayas,** will face the fiercest primary challenge from **Garciela Guzman** in addition to two other candidates, **Geary Yonker** and **Dave Nayak.** From the Republican caucus, Sen. **Terri Bryant** (R-Murphysboro) will be challenged in the primary by well-funded **Wesley Kash.**

ILLINOIS INCREASES FY24 REVENUE ESTIMATE

Gov. **JB Pritzker’s** budgeting office has raised its current-year revenue estimate by \$1.4 billion. It now expects the state to collect \$52 billion in general revenues, up from \$50.6 billion when lawmakers approved the state’s budget in May. That number was published in the annual five-year fiscal and economic forecast from the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget one-third of the way through the fiscal year. The main reasons for the increase were the continued growth in income and sales tax receipts. Revenues will also get a boost because of the state’s failures in the previous two years to properly apply for federal matching funds. That will result in a one-time \$405 million boost as the state collects the funds retroactively.

The report also found another \$1 billion in “spending pressures” that may require approval of a supplemental spending plan when lawmakers return to Springfield in January 2024. Those pressures include assistance for asylum seekers, increased caseloads at the Illinois Department on Aging and the Illinois Department of Human Services, delays in other federal reimbursements, increased group insurance costs, and outstanding technology bills. The proposed supplemental spending, plus an expected \$198 million contribution to the state’s “rainy day fund,” leaves the anticipated Fiscal Year 2024 surplus at about \$422 million.

REDESIGNED FAFSA FORM AIMS TO INCREASE NUMBER OF PELL GRANT RECIPIENTS

New data from the U.S. Department of Education estimate an increase in Pell Grant recipients and an increase in the number of maximum Pell Grant awards after the launch of the redesigned 2024–25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid form. The department called the new form “simplified” and “streamlined.” Starting with the 2024–25 award year, the FAFSA form will also include updates to student aid calculations, linking eligibility to family size and the federal poverty level. These changes will significantly expand access to federal student aid. State-by-state data estimate an increase of 21,917 Pell Grant recipients and 52,902 maximum Pell Grant awards in Illinois after the launch of the redesigned FAFSA form, which the department said would be available to students and parents by Sunday, December 31.

ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION CUTS GAS UTILITIES RATE HIKE REQUESTS

The Illinois Commerce Commission has issued a series of decisions on requests from natural gas utilities, approving rate increases significantly lower than utility companies requested. Regulators cut Ameren Illinois's initial rate requests by 50.8%, Nicor's request by 30.3%, Peoples Gas' request by 25%, and North Shore Gas' request by 34%. In each case, the Commission also approved a Return on Equity percentage lower than what was requested by the utilities. The ICC regulators reached these conclusions in each case as part of an 11-month legal proceeding, closely scrutinizing the utilities' rate case filings.

IDOC CELEBRATES NORTHWESTERN PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM'S INAUGURAL GRADUATING CLASS

Stateville Correctional Center recently hosted a graduation ceremony for 16 students who earned their Bachelor of Science degrees in Social Sciences through an educational partnership with Northwestern Prison Education Program. The students were presented with diplomas during the history-making ceremony inside Stateville's theater, attended by family and friends of the students, Northwestern faculty, Illinois Department of Corrections leadership, government officials, and current NPEP students. The commencement marked the first cohort of individuals in custody in the United States to graduate with a bachelor's degree from a major university.

Launched in 2018, NPEP was the first program to offer a comprehensive, degree-granting liberal arts curriculum to incarcerated students in Illinois. In partnership with Oakton College and IDOC, NPEP offers an Associate of General Studies degree conferred by Oakton. Upon completion of this degree, students are eligible to apply to Northwestern University for a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in social sciences from Northwestern's School of Professional Studies. Northwestern admitted this inaugural class of NPEP students in January 2022 after they completed coursework required to receive associate degrees from Oakton.

MORE FUNDS FOR JOB TRAINING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity announced an additional \$13 million investment in the Job Training and Economic Development Program for workforce training and wrap-around services that will bolster equitable workforce recovery for Illinoisans struggling to gain meaningful employment. As part of Illinois' workforce recovery efforts, JTED grants focus on helping increase employment among workers and industries hardest hit by COVID-19. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity process.

IL SUPREME COURT HEARS CHALLENGE TO 2019 MUNICIPAL PENSION CONSOLIDATION

The Illinois Supreme Court heard arguments in a case challenging the 2019 Pension Consolidation Act, which consolidated nearly 650 individual police and firefighter pension funds into two. The case revolves not around whether the consolidation of 249 individual police and firefighter pension funds into two large statewide funds have yielded worse financial returns; they haven't. Rather, nearly three dozen retirees and 17 of the small funds argue that fund members' voting power was diluted, and that they no longer have the influence they once had over voting in those who control the pension investments. An attorney for the plaintiffs argued Illinois' ironclad pension protection clause — which the state's high court has reaffirmed over and over — extends to members' voting rights. During oral arguments, justices seemed skeptical.

MAJOR IL SUPREME COURT RULINGS

The Illinois Supreme Court has issued a series of rulings on hot-button cases, finding that the state's biometric privacy law does not cover health care workers in specific situations, and that the Freedom of Information Act does not apply to Firearm Owner Identification Card records. Those were just two of 17 rulings handed down by the court last week.

BIPA

In the case of *Mosby v. Ingalls Memorial Hospital*, the justices ruled unanimously that biometric data used by health care workers to access patient medication via fingerprint-enable medication storage cabinets are not covered under the state's Biometric Information Privacy Act. The case involved a pair of nurses who sued their employer, Ingalls Memorial Hospital in Harvey, alleging their use of the medication storage cabinets violated BIPA. Despite rulings by lower courts to the contrary, the Supreme Court found that the law included a plain-language exclusion for the use of biometric data to protect medication and supplies because of regulations laid out in the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

FOIA

In the case of *Hart v. Illinois State Police*, the court ruled unanimously that the state's Freedom of Information Act does not apply to records regarding FOID cards. The case involved individuals who used FOIA to request copies of letters explaining why they were denied FOID cards or had their cards revoked. In 2011, lawmakers passed an amendment to the state FOIA specifically exempting "names and information" of people who have applied or received FOID cards.

The Supreme Court found that lower courts erred in their interpretation that the amended law allowed individuals to use FOIA to request their own information. In the opinion, Justice Joy Cunningham wrote that individuals can still request their information through other methods, but that FOIA is "not the proper means" to obtain this information.

Auto Insurance

Another unanimous decision came in the case of *Galarza v. Direct Auto Insurance Company*, where the court ruled that pedestrians and bicyclists with insurance who are struck by an uninsured vehicle driver or in a hit-and-run are entitled to coverage from their insurance companies.

PRITZKER ANNOUNCES PLAN TO IMPROVE ASYLUM SEEKER EMERGENCY RESPONSE

IDHS is investing \$160 million to provide intake, shelter, and wraparound services to the more than 24,000 migrants and asylum seekers in the Chicago area as winter weather approaches. The state, alongside local partners, has identified several “bottlenecks” causing delays in the effort to settle asylum seekers and deliver services, including the initial intake at landing sites, access to shelter, and the transition to independent living. Of the \$160 million, \$30 million will be invested in an intake center to coordinate new arrivals with all levels of government and community-based organizations, \$65 million will help Chicago launch a winterized soft shelter site providing temporary housing for up to 2,000 people for six months, and \$65 million will expand wraparound services to enable new arrivals to live independently as they await asylum hearings. This announcement builds on \$478 million in state funding that has been provided or committed to the asylum seeker response over FY 2023 and 2024. In addition to funding, some policy changes will occur related to shelter stay duration and intensified case management and housing assistance.

CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL APPROVES \$16.6B BUDGET

Mayor **Brandon Johnson**’s \$16.6 billion budget was approved by the Chicago City Council by a vote of 41-9. The 2024 budget does not raise property taxes and, in addition to \$150 million dedicated to addressing the migrant crisis, re-establishes the city’s Department of Environment with a \$1.8 billion budget, includes plans to begin reopening city mental health clinics and expand mental health services, and civilianizes 398 positions in the Chicago Police Department. Johnson’s budget also increases funding for the Office of Labor Standards and creates an Office for Re-Entry and a council Subcommittee on Reparations.

COOK COUNTY BOARD APPROVES \$9.26B BUDGET

The Cook County Board of Commissioners has unanimously approved a \$9.26 billion annual budget for 2024. Commissioners approved a budget with almost two dozen amendments to Board President Toni Preckwinkle’s original proposal. Amendments included additional funding for maternal health, oral and dental staff within Cook County Health, and a new disaster response fund that next year will help care for migrants.

STATE LAUNCHES WORK ON SHELTER SITES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

IDHS has begun construction on a new asylum shelter sites in Chicago. The brick-and-mortar site in Little Village will house up to 2,200 asylum seekers in total. The location of the shelter was identified by the city of Chicago and will operate as part of the city’s existing shelter system. Work to construct and operate the shelter is being funded by the state through the Pritzker administration’s recently announced \$160 million investment to improve the asylum seeker pipeline as well as the \$478 million in state funding that has been provided or committed to the asylum seeker response over state fiscal year 2023 and 2024. The Little Village shelter site is expected to open and begin housing asylum seekers as early as mid-December. A proposed base camp at Brighton Park has been placed on hold due to an Illinois Environmental Protection Agency report of contaminated soil (including mercury and arsenic) at the site.

IOWA-ILLINOIS CARBON DIOXIDE PIPELINE APPLICATION WITHDRAWN

Plans for a pipeline that would have transported carbon dioxide from Iowa for eventual storage in central Illinois are off the table for now. The pipeline, which would have connected two Archer Daniels Midland plants in Iowa and transported CO₂ to a site near the company’s headquarters in Decatur, faced stiff opposition from

the public as well as a recommendation to deny the permit from ICC staff. Wolf Carbon Solutions, the company behind the proposed project, filed a motion with state regulators to withdraw its application, although Wolf's president has stated that the company intends to file a new application in the future.

CEJA EQUITABLE ENERGY FUTURE GRANTS

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has announced \$25.5 million in funding for the Equitable Energy Future Grants Program as part of a larger strategy to equitably grow the clean energy workforce in Illinois. The program supports renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in low-income and historically disadvantaged communities. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity process. Qualified entities include equity eligible contractors and independent contractors, non-profits, co-operatives that are majority-owned by equity eligible persons, and businesses or non-profits with a proposed project that meets equity building criteria.

STATE OFFERING \$25 MILLION IN B2B GRANTS FOR NEW BUSINESSES

Businesses launched during the pandemic that were not eligible for state or federal funding are now eligible for [\\$25 million in Back-to-Business grants](#) as part of the NewBiz program. These businesses now have from November 30, 2023 through January 11, 2024 to apply for NewBiz funds.

FEDERAL DISASTER DECLARATION APPROVED FOR COOK COUNTY FLOODING

President **Joe Biden** has approved a federal disaster declaration allowing residents of Cook County hit by September's severe storms and flooding to seek individual assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Individual assistance includes grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-interest loans for uninsured losses, and additional resources. The September 17 storms produced heavy rainfall and flash flooding that caused widespread property and infrastructure damage.

SECRETARY OF STATE DEBUTS MONARCH BUTTERFLY LICENSE PLATE

Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias has announced that the Monarch Butterfly Specialty License Plate is now available for drivers who have reserved it. Created by the General Assembly in 2016, the Monarch Butterfly specialty license plate supports protection for the endangered species' habitats. The Monarch Butterfly is the Illinois state insect.

In 2016, state lawmakers introduced a universal license plate system to cut down on the number of specialty license plates on the road. New specialty license plates would only be created if they received more than 2,000 deposits that benefit an organization or charity. The Monarch plate received its necessary deposits in 2018, but the plate was never created, until now. The \$10 deposits for the plate go to support the Roadside Monarch Habitat Fund, which is part of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. If renewed, \$24 of the universal special license plate renewal fee will benefit the fund.

ISP NAMES REBECCA HOOKS FIRST FEMALE FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR

The Illinois State Police has promoted **Rebecca Hooks** from Lieutenant Colonel to First Deputy Director, second-in-command to Director **Brendan Kelley**. Hooks is the first female to achieve this position within the ISP since its creation in 1922.

IDOT RECEIVES \$4.5 MILLION FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY GRANT

The Illinois Department of Transportation has received a \$4.5 million grant from the Federal Highway Administration to improve safety and modernize future infrastructure. Illinois was one of 10 states selected from 35 applicants. The funding will be used to create a digital information-sharing network for upcoming projects that lessens reliance on paper reports, take full advantage of 3D modeling and aerial surveying, and improve communication with local agencies. As part of the Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan, IDOT plans to improve more than 3,000 miles of highway and almost 10 million square feet of bridges over the next six years.

IDOI REACCREDITED BY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INSURANCE COMMISSIONERS

Following a rigorous on-site review, the Illinois Department of Insurance announced its reaccreditation by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, the membership organization for state DOIs that sets insurance regulatory standards for all U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories. IDOI has received NAIC accreditation ongoing since 1993. IDOI regulates approximately 344 domestic and 1,401 foreign insurance companies, and more than 77,036 in-state and 211,419 out of state insurance producers.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF LABOR SUBPOENAS U.S. STEEL OVER WORKER LAYOFFS

The Illinois Department of Labor issued a subpoena to the United States Steel Corporation as part of an investigation into whether or not the company violated state law with its recent idle production at its Granite City facility. Earlier in the week, U.S. Steel said previously announced layoffs at the facility would be expanded and that the plant, which staffs more than 1,000 workers, would be shut down indefinitely. IDOL is investigating U.S. Steel's compliance with the Illinois Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, which requires employers with 75 or more employees to give at least 60 days advanced notice of a plant closing or a mass layoff. U.S. Steel announced in September its intention to temporarily idle work at one of its two Granite City blast furnaces for six months, resulting in 400 temporary layoffs. That closure has been extended indefinitely and more than 600 additional permanent layoffs were announced.

ISP LAUNCHES PUBLIC CORRUPTION ONLINE REPORTING TOOL

Illinoisans who witness examples of public corruption can now report their allegations directly to the ISP via an online form. Members of the public can use the form to report instances of embezzlement, steering contracts in exchange for kickbacks, overbilling contractors, and more to ISP's Special Investigations Unit.

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

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