

ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Update

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Preview of 'Lame Duck' Session

Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, D-Chicago, scheduled a "**lame duck**" session to begin tomorrow, January 8, in Springfield. Madigan has indicated the session could last until January 13 -- the day newly elected and incumbent lawmakers will be sworn in at noon for the 102nd General Assembly session -- and "potentially longer." The House has not yet released a calendar for the spring session, although January 14 has been identified as a session day, indicating a possible prolonged battle for House Speaker.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to restrict the Illinois General Assembly's ability to safely meet in-person. Madigan's chief of staff said in an email to lawmakers last week that the House will meet at the Bank of Springfield Center, less than a mile from the State Capitol, with "substantially the same protocols as were followed in May 2020." The Senate will follow suit on a lame duck session and has informed its members to be prepared for a similar schedule. The Senate will meet in the Senate chamber in the Capitol, again with similar protocols as in May.

Much could potentially be considered over the next several days. The most widely anticipated proposals come from the General Assembly's **Legislative Black Caucus**. The Caucus will push a package of bills dealing with criminal-justice reform ([HB 163 SFA2](#)), education and workforce development ([HB 2170 SFA1](#)), economic access and opportunity ([HB 5871](#) / [HB 2685 SFA3](#)), and health care and human services ([HB 5548](#) / [HB 3840 SFA1](#)). All four measures were filed this week, and they are all huge and ambitious omnibus bills. Passage has to happen before the new General Assembly is sworn in on January 13 at noon. The House's bills are brand new bills, which take at least five session days to pass through both chambers. The Senate's are amendments to House bills, which won't take as long to pass. (A summary of HB2710 is attached.)

Also highly anticipated is a **revenue package** to deal with the massive gap in revenue and spending in the current fiscal year due in large part to the budgeted \$5 billion bailout from the federal government that never came. However, with the election of President-elect Joe Biden and Democratic control of both the House and the Senate in Washington DC, the likelihood of federal stimulus money to the state has increased. State lawmakers may punt on the issue of any tax increase and any revenue package may not be as significant as anticipated. House GOP members warn of an impending tax hike, but Democrat leaders have ruled out an income tax increase during lame duck.

Another bill for consideration in lame duck seeks to allow the General Assembly to **conduct business remotely** during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and future emergencies. Sponsored by Rep. Ann Williams (D-Chicago) and Sen. Robert Martwick (D-Chicago), the legislation ([HB 5868](#) / [SB 4030](#)) comes months after a similar measure narrowly failed in the House and just days ahead of the legislature's anticipated return to Springfield.

Committee Schedule – Lame Duck

- House Executive Committee will hold a hearing on 1/8/2021 at 2:00 PM
- House Judiciary - Criminal Committee will hold a hearing on 1/9/2021 at 9:00 AM
- House Higher Education Committee will hold a hearing on 1/9/2021 at 10:00 AM
- House Health Care Availability & Accessibility Committee will hold a hearing on 1/9/2021 at 11:00 AM
- House Judiciary - Civil Committee will hold a hearing on 1/9/2021 at 2:00 PM (SUBJECT MATTER: LaSalle Veterans Home)

Contested Race for House Speaker

The legislative activity during the lame duck session is a precursor to a showdown over who should lead the Illinois House. **Rep. Ann Williams** (D-Chicago) announced yesterday that she is adding her candidacy to become House Speaker. Williams becomes the fourth Democrat to jump in the race, including **Rep. Stephanie Kifowit** (D-Oswego), **Madigan**, and the likely candidacy of **Rep. Kathleen Willis** (D-Addison). All four presented to the House Democratic Women's Caucus yesterday to advocate for their support. The last time there was lack of consensus among the majority party in the House on who to select as speaker was 1974. No challenger to Madigan has a clear path to victory. The Speaker has secured the support of the Black Caucus (21 members) and the Latinx Caucus (although their press release did not include an actual list of Madigan supporters), but with 19 House Democrats continuing to withhold votes from him, Madigan doesn't have a clear path to reelection.

The quandary over the speaker position means the House could be tied up for weeks before the issue is decided. The legislative session cannot begin until a Speaker is chosen.

Legislative Redistricting Begins

The start of the 102nd General Assembly officially kicks off the beginning of a months-long **redistricting** process that will lead to the redrawing of boundaries for Illinois' congressional seats, 59 state Senate seats, and 118 state House seats. As all members of the House and Senate will be up for election in 2022, redistricting will be an important factor in their decision-making process this session. Republicans continue to push for "fair" redistricting maps, and Governor Pritzker reiterated this week he will **veto a partisan map**.

Resignations and Retirements

Since the holiday break, there have been some changes in the make-up of the General Assembly:

- ❖ Outgoing **Senate Republican Leader Bill Brady** has retired from the Senate. He announced after the November election he would be stepping down from as Minority Leader of the Senate. Party leaders in his central Illinois district have not yet selected a replacement. **Rep. Tim Butler** announced he will not seek the appointment.
- ❖ On Monday, **Senator Andy Manar** (D-Bunker Hill) announced he will resign from the Illinois Senate on January 17. He will join Governor JB Pritzker's administration to serve as senior advisor beginning on January 19. Pritzker announced Manar will advise "on a

range of issues, including downstate economic revitalization, appropriations, and COVID-19 recovery efforts.”

- ❖ **Cristina Pacione-Zayas** was sworn-in to the Senate on December 21. She replaces former **Sen. Iris Martinez** (D-Chicago), who is now the Cook County Circuit Court Clerk. Pacione-Zayas was the Secretary of the Illinois State Board of Education and the associate vice president of policy at the Erikson Institute.
- ❖ **Margaret Croke** was sworn in as state representative for the 12th District after outgoing **Rep. Jonathan “Yoni” Pizer** stepped down at the end of December. He is returning to his position as community liaison to Congressman Mike Quigley’s district office (a position he held before he was appointed to the legislature last year).
- ❖ Outgoing **Rep. Allen Skillicorn** (R-Crystal Lake) resigned on January 5 and is moving to Arizona. He was defeated in the November 4 general election by Democrat Suzanne Ness.
- ❖ Former **Senator Chuck Weaver** (R-Peoria), who did not seek reelection in November, announced his retirement early from the conclusion of his term. **Win Stoller** was sworn in on January 5.

Illinois Senate Republican Leadership Team Announced

Incoming Senate Republican Leader Dan McConchie announced some staff changes. Retiring state Senator **Dale Righter** (R-Mattoon) will serve as McConchie’s chief of staff, replacing **Brian Burian**, who will stay on staff in another role. McConchie also hired **Whitney Barnes** as his spokesperson, replacing **Jason Gerwig** who is leaving Senate staff.

McConchie also announced the members of his leadership team for the 102nd General Assembly:

- Sen. Sue Rezin, R-Morris: Deputy Republican Leader
- Sen. Jason Barickman, R-Bloomington: Republican Caucus Chair
- Sen. Donald DeWitte, R-St. Charles: Assistant Republican Leader
- Sen. Steve McClure, R-Springfield: Assistant Republican Leader
- Sen. Jason Plummer, R-Edwardsville: Assistant Republican Leader
- Sen. Chapin Rose, R-Mahomet: Assistant Republican Leader
- Sen. Dave Syverson, R-Rockford: Republican Caucus Whip
- Sen. Jil Tracy, R-Quincy: Republican Caucus Whip

COVID-19 Update & Vaccines

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today reported 8,757 new confirmed and probable cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Illinois, including 177 additional deaths. Illinois has now reported more than **one million cases** since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, including 17,272 deaths. Within the past 24 hours, laboratories have reported 105,518 specimens for a total 13,803,946. As of last night, 3,921 in Illinois were reported to be in the hospital with COVID-19. Of those, 783 patients were in the ICU and 450 patients with COVID-19 were on ventilators. The preliminary seven-day statewide positivity for cases as a percent of total test from December 31, 2020 – January 6, 2021 is 8.5%. The preliminary seven-day statewide test positivity from December 31, 2020 – January 6, 2021 is 9.8%.

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 \(available via this link\)](#).

Mitigations could begin easing starting January 15 as regions across the state continue to make progress controlling and reducing the spread of COVID-19. In order for a region to move back to Tier 2 mitigations, a region must experience less than 12 percent test positivity rate for three consecutive days AND greater than 20 percent available intensive care unit (ICU) and hospital bed availability AND declining COVID hospitalizations in 7 out of the last 10 days. Tier 2 does not allow for indoor dining.

Pritzker Extends Mask Mandate through Early June

Governor JB Pritzker's office filed an emergency rule with the state to extend the state's mask mandate until June 3. The original mask mandate, which took effect in May, expired on January 3. A new emergency rule was filed on January 4 and is in effect for 150 days. The language of the proposed emergency rule has not yet been released.

IDPH COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

On December 22, IDPH officials provided legislative members of the Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission an update on the current version of the state's COVID-19 vaccination distribution plan, including a preview upcoming phases of distribution.

During his presentation, IDPH Deputy Director of the Office of Preparedness & Response Andrew Friend explained Illinois is currently vaccinating **Group 1A**, which includes all individuals who work in health care settings who may indirectly or directly come in contact with patients, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

Yesterday, Pritzker announced **Group 1B**, the next group to be vaccinated, building on guidance from the CDC and IDPH. Group 1B will include all Illinois residents age 65 years and older and "frontline essential workers," as outlined by the CDC. In order to reduce COVID-19 mortality and limit community spread in Black and Brown communities, Illinois **reduced the age eligibility in Group 1B by 10 years** from CDC's recommendation.

The frontline essential workers designation includes first responders; educators; manufacturing, distribution and agriculture workers (including grocery store workers); United States Postal Service workers; public transit employees; corrections workers and incarcerated people, and others. All in all, Phase 1B totals approximately **3.2 million Illinoisans**. [View Phases 1A and 1B here](#).

Group 1C currently includes individuals between ages 16 and 54 with high risk-conditions or co-morbidities like heart disease. The CDC is still trying to determine who exactly falls into which group. Friend emphasized different areas of the state will move from phase 1A into phases 1B

and 1C at different times depending on the makeup of that specific community and the uptake rate of those individuals being vaccinated.

Illinois Loosens Qualifications to Allow EMTs to Give Vaccines

IDPH [issued a proclamation](#) allowing EMTs to administer the flu and COVID-19 vaccines to persons over the age of 6 after successful completion of an IDPH-approved vaccine training program and as authorized by the EMS Medical Director for the jurisdiction where vaccinations are being administered.

EMTs can only administer the vaccines when they are (1) acting under the authorization of the EMS Medical Director for their respective jurisdiction; (2) responding to a request for assistance from a certified local health department or hospital and; (3) working under the direction of IEMA and IDPH, an IEMA-certified emergency services and disaster agency, or a certified local health department that is enrolled in IDPH's immunization program and operating pursuant to a vaccine provider agreement with IDPH.

36th Veteran Death at LaSalle, VFW Calls for Resignations

A total of 36 residents have now died at the LaSalle Veterans' Home since a COVID-19 outbreak struck the home in early November. A group of veterans' advocates from around the state are calling on Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs Director Linda Chapa LaVia and her Chief of Staff, Anthony Kolbeck, to resign or for Governor Pritzker to fire them.

Free Statewide Broadband Access Could Cost More Than \$3 Billion Per Year

Providing free broadband Internet access to every Illinois household would cost between \$3.3 billion and \$4.2 billion each year, according to a new report set to be presented to the Illinois General Assembly. In late December, the [Illinois Broadband Advisory Council](#) was presented with the findings of an affordability study required by [SB 2135](#), a measure approved by the legislature in May. The study, which is still in draft form but was due to the General Assembly on January 1, examined the cost of providing universal broadband to Illinoisans, as well as estimating the cost of providing "affordable" access to all residents.

Cannabis Expungements & Pardons

Thousands of pardons were issued for low-level cannabis convictions and nearly half a million non-felony cannabis-related arrest records have been expunged. Gov. Pritzker's office said the Governor issued pardons for **9,129 low-level cannabis conviction records**; the arrest records have been expunged by the Illinois State Police. The expungement of all **492,192 cannabis arrest records** on New Year's Eve means ISP has completed its automatic expungement process four years early; its statutory deadline is Jan. 1, 2025. Expungement has been completed at the state level, but the process continues in most of the state's 102 counties, which have until Jan. 1, 2025.

Cannabis License Dispute to be Heard by Illinois Supreme Court

The case between **Curative Health Cultivation LLC** and **Medponics Illinois LLC** is expected to be heard by the Illinois Supreme Court early in 2021. The license in question, issued in 2015 and

among the last of its kind to be disputed in court, would enable the production of large amounts of marijuana for medical and recreational uses, making it more lucrative than more recent and restrictive permits.

New Director Appointed to Illinois Department of Insurance

Dana Popish Severinghaus will serve as Director of the Illinois Department of Insurance. Popish Severinghaus was formerly Legislative and Regulatory Counsel at Allstate Insurance Company, where she advised Allstate and its subsidiaries on legal, regulatory and legislative matters across the Midwest. Before that, she served as Senior Policy Advisor at the State of Illinois in Central Management Services where she saw oversaw the Bureau of Benefits. Prior to that, Popish Severinghaus served as the Director of Government Relations for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois. Popish Severinghaus takes over for **Shannon Whalen**, who was named interim acting director last month. Whalen took over after **Robert Muriel** exited the post.

IDES Preparing to Administer New Federal COVID-19 Relief Legislation

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) announced it remains committed to implementing newly announced federal unemployment benefits and relief measures as quickly and effectively as possible. President Trump signed the omnibus spending bill, H.R. 133, on December 27. Included in the bill were critical extensions to the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and Extended Benefits (EB) programs. The new legislation includes an option for states to implement the **Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation** (MEUC) program. Illinois and IDES plan to adopt the MEUC program, which addresses mixed-income earners who have self-employment income but are disqualified from receiving PUA because they are eligible to receive regular unemployment benefits. Claimants are encouraged to check the [IDES website](#) and social media platforms for additional updates.

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