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## ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report January 8, 2024

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Happy New Year! Legislators return to Springfield for the second year of the 103rd General Assembly on **January 16, 2024**. Legislation for the 2024 spring session is actively being filed and will continue to be filed until the February 9 bill introduction deadline. Due to the state's March 19 primary election, the legislative agenda is expected to be relatively light after that date, and a few scheduled session days are likely to be canceled.

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

*The deadline to request a bill is Friday, January 19. The Legislative Reference Bureau is implementing 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.*

- 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  
*Begin LRB Black-Out Period until 2/9*
- 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*

### RECENT RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

\* **Rep. Jonathan Carroll** (D-Northbrook) has resigned from his 57th House District seat. Carroll had previously announced that he would not seek re-election but had been expected to finish his term. **Tracy Katz Muhl** is running unopposed for the Democratic nomination. No Republican filed to run.

\* Retired U.S. Marine Master Sergeant **Brandun Schweizer** has been selected to fill the vacancy left by House **Rep. Mike Marron**, who resigned the 104th House District. During his 21-year career with the Marines,

Schweizer served as an intelligence chief, Equal Opportunity advisor, and recruiter. After retirement, he joined the city of Danville as a code enforcement inspector. This district could see a strong push by House Democrats to win the seat in the November 5 general election.

\* Republicans in the southwest suburbs of Chicago have selected **Nicole La Ha** to be the new state representative for the 82nd House District, filling the vacancy left after **Rep. John Egofske** resigned. La Ha is the third person to hold the seat since the start of 2023. Egofske replaced former Minority Leader **Jim Durkin**. La Ha is a former state Senate staffer and Homer Glen Village trustee. She previously announced that she would run for the 82nd district seat in the November election against Democrat Suzanne Akhras.

\* The Joint Committee on Administrative Rules welcomed new member **Senator Napoleon Harris, III** (D-Dolton). Sen. Harris succeeds **Sen. Kimberly Lightford** (D-Maywood), who was appointed to JCAR in 2019 and recently resigned from the committee.

\* **Jake Butcher**, chief of staff to **Senate President Don Harmon**, resigned at the end of 2023 to practice law. His successor is deputy chief of staff **Ashley Jenkins-Jordan**, who is the first African-American woman to hold the Senate COS position in Illinois.

### 2024 MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

Effective January 1, 2024, the new required minimum wage in Illinois will be \$14 an hour. This increase is in accordance with [Public Act 101-0001](#), enacted in 2019, that will raise the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour on January 1, 2025. Workers under the age of 18 who work fewer than 650 hours a year will now earn a minimum wage of \$12 an hour. More information about the minimum wage, including the implementation schedule and frequently asked questions, can be found on the [Illinois Department of Labor website](#).

### OTHER BILLS EFFECTIVE IN THE NEW YEAR

Here are a few notable new laws out of 318 taking effect in 2024:

- [House Bill 2789](#): Prohibits state-funded libraries from banning or removing materials due to religious or partisan disapproval.
- [HB 1541](#): Prohibits utility companies from discontinuing gas or electric services for residential users due to nonpayment of bills on days when the temperature exceeds 90 degrees or there is a heat watch, advisory, or warning.
- [HB 2389](#): Clarifies no vehicle can be stopped or searched solely based on any objects placed or suspended between the driver and the front windshield that may obstruct the driver's view.
- [HB 2245](#): Requires Illinois car manufacturers to establish a vehicle theft hotline to facilitate the location of stolen vehicles via their existing global positioning systems.
- [HB 3924](#): Requires high schools to teach students about the dangers of fentanyl in all state-required health courses.
- [HB 1540](#): Prohibits the use of electronic cigarettes in public places and within 15 feet of entrances.
- [HB 3516](#): Allows employees up to 10 days of paid leave in any 12-month period to serve as an organ donor.
- [HB 2431](#): Provides people operating a motor vehicle may not use an electronic device to participate in video conferences or access social media sites.

- [Senate Bill 380](#): Provides a civil cause of action for fertility fraud against health care providers who knowingly or intentionally use their own human reproductive material without the patient's informed written consent for assisted reproductive treatment.

Here is a full list, [via Illinois Senate Democrats](#).

### PAID LEAVE FOR ALL WORKERS ACT

The [Paid Leave for All Workers Act](#) allows Illinois workers to earn up to 40 hours of paid leave in a 12-month period. Workers will accrue one hour of leave for every 40 hours worked. After Gov. **JB Pritzker** signed the law, the city of Chicago and Cook County followed suit with new paid leave requirements of their own. There are significant differences between the three, but all three laws require covered employers to provide up to 40 hours per year of paid leave to eligible employees, though the Chicago ordinance also requires employers to provide paid sick leave. IDOL and the Chicago and Cook County counterparts will likely release additional guidance on these laws in the coming weeks and months. All employers are required to post information about the law.

### DUAL CREDIT STUDY

A new study into dual credit, where a student earns high school and college credit simultaneously, shows that participation in Illinois dual credit programs increased among all underrepresented groups; however, the increases and expansion have not been proportionate or evenly experienced across the state. The report, called "[Dual Credit in Illinois: Student Access and Outcomes](#)," was conducted by the Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative, a research arm of the University of Illinois System's Discovery Partners Institute. The report recommends that the state continue investing in efforts to make dual credit programs more accessible and affordable, but that it focus on increasing dual credit offerings in districts that currently have the lowest participation rates, especially urban and suburban districts.

### UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE WAGE GAP

Illinois university employees have led an unprecedented number of strikes this year, mostly related to wage negotiations, yet [new information](#) shows that university staff are paid significantly less than other state employees. As a result, AFSCME and its fellow unions will be seeking a legislative solution in the form of an appropriation specifically for wages.

### ILLINIOS JOINS LAWSUIT AGAINST NCAA

The NCAA is forcing some athletes to sit out a year following multiple transfers. Illinois Attorney General **Kwame Raoul** and six other AGs have filed a federal antitrust lawsuit challenging the NCAA's transfer rules as an illegal restraint on college athletes' ability to market their labor and control their education. Currently, athletes who transfer among Division I schools must wait one year before competing in games, although many athletes have gained immediate eligibility thanks to a growing number of waivers and exceptions.

## GOVERNOR NAMES NEW DCFS DIRECTOR

**Heidi Mueller**, who has been director of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice since 2016, was chosen to head the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services following a national search to replace **Marc Smith**, who had led the agency since April 2019. Smith, selected by Pritzker during his first year in office, announced last October that he was stepping down.

## HFS STAFF TRANSITIONS

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services is undergoing several transitions this month. In addition to the departure of HFS director **Theresa Eagleson**, chief of staff **Ben Winnick** will step down and become a senior advisor. **Dana Kelly**, currently associate secretary at HFS, will become the new chief of staff.

## IDFPR LAUNCHING COMPETITIVE BID FOR ONLINE LICENSING SYSTEM

The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation has begun launching a competitive bid for online software to handle the ongoing backlog in the state's professional licensing system. On December 8, Gov. Pritzker signed [HB 2394](#), which gave the department 90 days to procure a new online system that allows for existing licenses to be renewed and new licenses to be issued. After 90 days, the department will have another 90 days to get the new system up and running. IDFPR will soon publish a solicitation in [Bidbuy](#), the state's eProcurement system for vendors. The department will evaluate proposals and go through demonstrations to determine which licensing system will best fit the state's needs.

## IDPH DELIVERS STATE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The final version of the Illinois Department of Public Health's new State Health Improvement Plan notes that Illinois needs to improve in the areas of maternal and infant health, mental health and substance use disorders, and for the first time identifies racism as a public health crisis. The plan aims to address inequities by forming an appointed advisory committee on racism in health care and building a more diverse health care workforce. Absent from the report is any mention of licensed overdose prevention sites or a plan of care for recent migrant populations that have arrived in Illinois in the last 15 months.

## SCOTUS DECLINES TO BLOCK ILLINOIS ASSAULT WEAPON BAN

The U.S. Supreme Court has stepped back from blocking the state's assault weapon ban while the law continues to be challenged in a federal appeals court. Two lower courts previously also declined to block the law, which is being challenged by the National Association for Gun Rights, a Naperville gun store, and the gun store's owner on Second Amendment grounds.

## MADIGAN RACKETEERING TRIAL DELAYED

The racketeering trial for former Illinois House Speaker **Michael Madigan** has been moved from April to October while the U.S. Supreme Court considers a separate case out of Indiana that could affect the Illinois matter. Madigan is among a handful of public corruption defendants in Chicago who have asked for their cases to be put on hold while the Supreme Court considers the corruption conviction of **James Snyder**, a former mayor of Portage, Indiana. The delay removes the risk of a re-trial.

## **ICC LOWERS UTILITY RATE HIKES REQUESTS**

Regulators at the Illinois Commerce Commission have issued a series of rulings that set new rates for electric utilities Commonwealth Edison and Ameren. The ICC set ComEd's return on equity, or authorized profit rate, at 8.9% percent and Ameren's ROE at 8.7%. Both utilities had requested a 10.5% ROE. The ICC also rejected both electric utilities' integrated grid plans, saying both failed to comply with the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act and did not sufficiently incorporate customer affordability into their proposals. The regulators also denied a motion from People's Gas to revise their November decision on the utility's pipe replacement program and allow for an additional \$134 million in spending in 2024.

## **ILLINOIS HAS HIGHEST MEDICAID RENEWAL RATE AMONG STATES**

As HFS approaches the halfway point in resuming customer Medicaid redeterminations following the end of the pandemic-era continuous Medicaid coverage requirement, Illinois has the highest renewal rate among states, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation's Medicaid Enrollment and Unwinding Tracker. The tracker relies on renewal data that the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services collects from states. According to the data tracker, at this stage of the unwinding process, Illinois and Maine have the highest renewal rates among all states, at 90%.

## **BROADBAND EXPANSION**

Lawmakers on the Legislative Budget Oversight Commission heard a variety of perspectives on how best to use forthcoming federal resources to build equitable access to broadband internet and the potential challenges that may arise. The \$1.2 trillion federal infrastructure bill that passed in 2021 included \$42 billion for the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program, an initiative led by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to expand high-speed internet access in all 50 states and U.S. territories.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has submitted a five-year plan for how it intends to use the state's share of that funding (\$1.04 billion) to build out internet access for the state's unserved and underserved communities. The program is designed to first serve those with no access to the internet, then improve connections for those with slow access, and then finally provide high-speed gigabit access to community anchor institutions (CAIs) such as schools, libraries, and universities that can serve their surrounding communities. One of the major conflicts discussed during the hearing centered around the costs and benefits of fiber-optic networks versus fixed wireless options.

The Illinois Office of Broadband estimates that about 234,000 Illinois households are unserved, meaning they have no access to broadband internet, and another 132,000 households are underserved, meaning they lack access to the modern 100mbps down/20mbps up connections needed for day-to-day tasks or remote work.

## **ISBE SURVEY SHOWS MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING IMPROVING IN ILLINOIS**

Illinois school districts are making significant progress in phasing in universal mental health screening for students, according to a survey conducted by the Illinois State Board of Education. The report includes recommendations for how the state can continue to close gaps in mental health screening. These screeners, similar to those for physical, dental, and vision health, can help schools detect social-emotional and behavioral problems in students early so that staff can lend them support before a crisis occurs.

The report recommends that the state take a phased approach to universal mental health screening so that schools can build a solid infrastructure for mental health support at all levels. It also recommends that ISBE collect resources for schools that support a health culture and climate around mental health services in schools, release more guidance around screening tools, and develop a model policy for implementing universal mental health screening.

### **ILLINOIS POPULATION ESTIMATE INCREASED BY NEARLY 47,000**

Illinois' future population estimates will be increased by nearly 47,000 after the U.S. Census Bureau approved a state request to include previously omitted residents of residence halls and group homes in future population estimates. Following the release of 2020 census results, Governor Pritzker and members of the state's congressional delegation requested an official Post-Census Group Quarters Review to investigate inaccuracies in the census data. The review found that 733 Group Quarters were missed or undercounted in the 2020 Census, omitting 46,400 individuals. The 46,400 will not be added to the official 2020 census numbers but will be accounted for in annual population estimates produced between now and the 2030 census, which may impact the state's share of \$675 billion in state and federal program funding.

### **STATE LAUNCHING NEW ASYLUM SEEKER LANDING ZONE, SHELTER SITE IN JANUARY**

As part of its continuing efforts to support asylum seekers arriving in the city of Chicago, the state is launching a new intake center and shelter site this month, as well as an extension of a food services contract with the city. A new intake site will be established at the city's bus landing zone, consisting of six heated tents where asylum seekers can connect with wraparound services and receive help reaching their final destination. The state is funding the New Life Centers of Chicagoland and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago to support these sites. While work continues on a 220-person shelter at a former CVS Pharmacy location in Little Village, the state is also working with New Life Centers to operate a temporary shelter at a Chicago hotel to house the more than 2,500 new arrivals sent from Texas between December 20-27.

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

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