

# ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

February 1, 2021

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

## ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY UPDATE

Bills are being filed every day now that we are underway in the new 102<sup>nd</sup> Illinois General Assembly. The introduction deadline for House bills is February 11 and February 19 for Senate bills. After these dates, we will have a pretty good idea of the universe of issues up for debate this session. ([Click here for a list of community college-related bills identified to date.](#))

### Revised Session Dates

The Illinois House of Representatives will meet just one day in February. Speaker Welch cancelled previously-set session dates for Feb. 2-4, 9, 11 and 16-18 due to COVID-19 safety concerns. The House will meet in Springfield on February 10 to adopt rules to determine how business is conducted in the chamber. Part of that process will be working with the caucuses to adopt procedures to allow committees to meet virtually, allowing legislative work to continue remotely. Those rules are expected to be similar to the Senate's rules allowing remote committee hearings.

The House will reconvene in the Capitol, instead of the BOS Center, and will utilize a system of rotating members between the chamber and their offices to maintain social distancing. Going forward, there will be a balance of remote and in-person work. One change will be when committees are scheduled. In the past, committees were regularly scheduled from Tuesday afternoons through Thursday mornings. With remote committees, that schedule will be expanded to allow for meetings throughout the whole work week – primarily due to technological limitations, as only a few committees can be supported remotely at one time.

The Senate, which already has its rules in place and the ability to conduct remote committees, currently plans to meet in Springfield on February 9. Speculation continues as to whether or not the Senate will actually come to Springfield on the 9<sup>th</sup> – or in February at all.

### Committee Assignments

The new Speaker has released his committee chair assignments for the House. The full membership of the committees in both the House and Senate has not yet been released.

#### House Committee

\$ Elementary & Sec Ed  
\$ General Services  
\$ Higher Education  
\$ Human Services  
\$ Public Safety  
Adoption & Child Welfare  
Agriculture & Conservation  
Child Care Accessibility/Early Childhood Education\*\*  
Cities & Villages  
Consumer Protection  
Counties & Townships  
Cybersecurity, Data Analytics & IT  
Economic Opportunity & Equity

#### Chair

Davis  
Crespo  
Ford  
Lilly  
Mayfield  
Willis  
Harper  
Willis  
DeLuca  
Carroll  
Yingling  
Robinson  
Smith

Elem/Sec Education: Admin, Licensing, & Charters	Scherer
Elem/Sec Education: School Curriculum & Policies	Mussman
Energy & Environment Williams Ethics & Elections**	Burke
Executive	Rita
Financial Institutions	Walker
Health Care Availability & Accessibility	Greenwood
Health Care Licenses	Mah
Higher Education	Stuart
Housing**	Guzzardi
Human Services	Moeller
Immigration & Human Rights**	Gong-Gershowitz
Insurance	Jones
International Trade & Commerce**	Vacant
Judiciary - Civil	Vacant
Judiciary - Criminal	Slaughter
Labor & Commerce	Evans
Mental Health & Addiction	Conroy
Museums, Arts & Cultural Enhancement**	Lilly
Personnel & Pensions	Halpin
Police & Fire**	Hurley
Prescription Drug Afforability & Accessibility	Guzzardi
Public Utilities	Walsh
Restorative Justice	Cassidy
Revenue & Finance	Zalewski
State Government Administration	Kifowit
Tourism**	Robinson
Transportation: Regulation, Roads & Bridges	Moylan
Transportation: Vehicles & Safety	D'Amico
Veterans Affairs**	Kifowit

\*\*Special Committee

Speaker Welch has signaled some of his legislative priorities with the creation of special committees on ethics and elections, restorative justice, and housing (which will take up issues related to the pandemic), and immigration. During the time when legislating is occurring remotely, the Speaker plans for his caucus to convene weekly on Fridays at 1 PM.

House Republican Leader Jim Durkin said he had already spoken with Speaker Welch twice in the Democrat's first 10 full days in the top leadership post — and the new Speaker expressed an interest in “meeting on a regular basis for a cup of coffee or breakfast.” Durkin is hopeful these conversations are the beginning of a more collaborative relationship (which Durkin called “refreshing”).

Durkin has also appointed members to his leadership team for the 102nd General Assembly:

- Representative Dan Brady, Deputy Minority Leader
- Representative Tom Demmer, Deputy Minority Leader
- Representative Tom Bennett, Assistant Minority Leader
- Representative Avery Bourne, Assistant Minority Leader

- Representative Tim Butler, Assistant Minority Leader
- Representative C.D. Davidsmeyer, Assistant Minority Leader
- Representative Deanne Mazzochi, Assistant Minority Leader
- Representative Ryan Spain, Assistant Minority Leader
- Representative Keith Wheeler, Assistant Minority Leader
- Representative David Welter, Republican Conference Chair
- Representative Mark Batinick, Floor Leader

The new members of the leadership team are Rep. Bennett, Rep. Mazzochi, and Rep. Welter. No longer included in leadership is Rep. Norine Hammond.

As for legislative priorities, Durkin would like to see pension reform, property tax reform, and budget reform that will base the budget off of a “revenue estimate” prepared by the bi-partisan Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability.

### **Legislative Vacancies**

The newest departure from the state legislature is Rep. André Thapedi of Chicago, who announced his resignation on January 31 due to family health issues.

Former Senator Bill Brady’s seat has been filled for the remainder of his term by former Logan County clerk Sally Turner. Turner, who was chosen over the weekend from a field of nine applicants, is the wife of former State Rep. John Turner, who served in Springfield from 1995-2001. He was appointed to the Appellate Court in 2001, where he still serves.

Eight candidates are vying to replace former Sen. Andy Manar. They are former Decatur City Council member Shad Edwards, Macon County Assistant State’s Attorney Ruth Waller, Decatur Mayor Julie Moore Wolfe, Springfield Park Board member Lisa Badger, former Springfield City Council member Frank McNeil, current Springfield City Council member Doris Turner, Macoupin County Board member Roberta Vojas, and former state representative candidate Chase Wilhelm.

### **STATE BUDGET**

Illinois’ loss of tax revenue because of the pandemic was much lower than experts predicted in the spring when COVID-19 first took hold, but “tremendous uncertainties” persist moving forward, according to a University of Illinois study released on January 26. Based on an analysis of state tax receipts through November 2020, the study found that people “began to adapt their behavior” to what was allowed during the pandemic and “once retail establishments and restaurants began curbside pickup services, sales started to rise.”

The pandemic’s hit to the state’s budget remains significant. The loss to the state’s general funds was \$868 million from major revenue sources. Across all state funds, the loss was \$1.44 billion. That still falls short of projections from the spring, when the UI researchers predicted revenue drops of 15% to 20% that could cost the state “billions of dollars and possibly cost tens of billions of dollars.”

Gov. JB Pritzker is due to introduce his proposal for the state’s next budget year on February 17 – likely in a virtual format since neither the House or Senate will be in session. The Pritzker administration is still looking to the federal government for help in filling the hole, a prospect that becomes a little brighter under President Joe Biden and Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress.

## **COVID-19 UPDATE & REGIONAL METRICS**

Last Friday, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported 4,156 new confirmed and probable cases of coronavirus disease in Illinois, including 71 additional deaths. The preliminary seven-day statewide positivity for cases as a percent of total test from January 22–28 is 4.3%. The preliminary seven-day statewide test positivity from January 22–28 is 5.4%.

Information pertaining to the Coronavirus Response from the Governor's office and agencies can be found [here](#).

REGIONS 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11: Phase 4

REGIONS 8, 9, and 10: Tier 1 Mitigations

REGION 4: Tier 2 Mitigations

If all the mitigation metrics continue to improve, Region 10 (suburban Cook County) will move into Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan on Tuesday, February 2.

## **VACCINES**

The state has administered a record high number of vaccine doses for the third straight day in a row, with 58,357 doses administered in the most recent 24-hour period. A total of 1,304,475 doses of vaccine have been delivered to providers in Illinois, including Chicago. In addition, approximately 496,100 doses total have been allocated to the federal government's Pharmacy Partnership Program for long-term care facilities. This brings the total Illinois doses to 1,800,575. IDPH is currently reporting a total of 887,845 vaccines administered, including 131,401 for long-term care facilities.

White House officials pledged to increase doses to all 50 states starting this week — and to purchase 200 million additional doses of the two approved vaccines for a summer delivery. President Biden also pledged a 16% boost in dose deliveries to states. In addition, the Biden administration has committed to earlier notifications about the number of doses of the coronavirus vaccine coming to states, which should make it easier for providers to schedule shots in advance.

Illinois is also getting an additional \$43 million from the federal government to support its COVID-19 vaccination campaign. The money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency is set to come after the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced that Illinois and the city of Chicago -- which is responsible for its own pandemic response -- would get \$114.5 million to support vaccine distribution.

The news of additional doses and federal funds comes as pharmacy companies Walgreens and CVS (contracted by the federal government to provide the vaccine to long-term-care facilities), come under fire by elected officials for the slow rollout.

## **State Vaccination Website**

Illinois health officials launched a [new website](#) Monday aimed at providing residents with up-to-date COVID-19 vaccination information, including vaccine site locations, how to make appointments, and the state's overall vaccination plan. The website, which can be found at <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/vaccine-plan-overview>, allows users to view a statewide map containing pharmacies offering vaccinations.

## **STATE PLANS TO LEAVE THOMPSON CENTER**

The state of Illinois will pay nearly \$73.3 million to purchase the building at 555 W. Monroe St. in Chicago's West Loop neighborhood from Principal Financial Group. State officials eventually expect to move more than 1,000

employees to the 17-story, 429,316-square-foot building, previously home to regional offices of PepsiCo, from the James R. Thompson Center and leased offices in seven downtown buildings.

### **HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS RESUME**

IDPH has announced that all high school sports are now allowed to play in regions that are in Phase 4 of the State's reopening plan. Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11 currently meet the criteria for looser restrictions. Higher-risk sports in Phase 4 are allowed to play in-conference and intra-region games. Lower-risk sports can play out-of-state tournaments and a state series.

Athletes must wear masks during the competition in sports where social distancing is not possible. There will not be unnecessary touching (like high-fives between free throws) or what is described as "'go-team' hand raises." Spectator attendance will be capped, depending on the mitigation efforts in place. IDPH guidance also asks participants and spectators not to sing, chant, or shout in their cheers. It also recommends taking athletes' temperatures before the game if practical.

### **HAWTHORNE OPENING ILLINOIS' FIRST OTB NON-CASINO SPORTSBOOK**

Hawthorne Race Course debuted the state's first non-casino, off-track betting site with a sportsbook on January 27 when its newly remodeled Club Hawthorne opened in Crestwood with PointsBet as its operator. Hawthorne is one of two horse tracks licensed for sports betting in Illinois, along with Fairmount Park. It currently has under construction a racino that is targeted for a December opening.

### **CANNABIS LICENSING MOVING FORWARD**

The Illinois Department of Agriculture issued the latest round of notices detailing specific problems that hopefuls for the upcoming craft cultivation, infusion, and transportation licenses can remedy in their applications. Similar notices will also be sent in the coming days to applicants who did not initially qualify for an upcoming lottery to determine the winners of the next 75 lucrative dispensary licenses.

### **500 ING MEMBERS ACTIVATED FOR WASHINGTON D.C.**

At the request of the U.S. Department of Defense, Gov. Pritzker activated approximately 500 Illinois National Guard members in support of the continued security mission in Washington, D.C. That mission will not impact the National Guard's ability to perform vaccination distribution, with 325 Guard members already activated to carry out that mission, and hundreds more to come online in the coming weeks.

Illinois Army National Guard soldiers, along with a small contingent of Illinois Air National Guard members, are expected to remain on duty in the nation's capital until mid-March. While ING members who deployed for the Presidential Inauguration have since come home, approximately 50 members of that mission have volunteered to return for the new DC mission. The Illinois Army National Guard's Chicago-based 108th Sustainment Brigade and its subordinate battalion, the North Riverside-based 198th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, will provide the bulk of the ING force for the Washington, D.C. mission.

### **UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS REMAIN HIGH**

The U.S. Department of Labor reported on January 28 that 847,000 more Americans filed new claims for state unemployment benefits last week. The federal government has now reported about 75.6 million initial jobless claims over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic — a number equivalent to roughly 47 percent of the nation's workforce. The Illinois Department of Employment Security reported 95,481 new unemployment claims were filed during the week of Jan 18 in Illinois. For comparison, during the same timeframe last year 9,762 people filed claims in Illinois.

IDES said that it has caught or stopped nearly 1 million fraud cases since March 2020. It also warns that individuals who receive 1099-G forms but did not file for Illinois unemployment benefits may be victims of fraud.

### **ILLINOIS CONTINUES TO LOSE POPULATION – 7 YEARS IN A ROW**

Illinois has lost population for seven years running and has witnessed the second-largest population loss of all U.S. states since 2010. Illinois lost almost 2% of its residents from 2010 to 2020. In 2019, more than 308,000 Illinois residents moved to other states. The top destinations were Indiana, Florida, California, Texas, and Wisconsin. Many of those states were also top sources of residents moving to Illinois, but in smaller numbers.

The vast majority of Illinois' population loss occurred outside the Chicago area. Only nine out of 102 counties saw population growth: Champaign, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kendall, McLean, Monroe, Will, and Williamson counties. This population drop likely will lead to Illinois' loss of at least one congressional seat during the 2021-2022 reapportionment process.

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

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