

## ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

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### NEW HOUSE RULES

The Illinois House of Representatives convened in Springfield last Wednesday and **approved the Rules** by which the House chamber will operate for the next two years of the 102nd General Assembly. This is the first action taken by the body under new Speaker Chris Welch. There are some notable changes, but House Republicans criticized the Rules for being “functionally identical to the Madigan-led sessions of the past” apart from allowing remote committee hearings.

Regarding **remote committee hearings** – something the Senate has been doing for months – limited bandwidth will mean committees cannot meet simultaneously. Speaker Welch has noted that House committees could meet at any time Monday through Friday between 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Under the rules, as long as we are operating during a disaster proclaimed by the Governor due to COVID-19, the public will not be allowed inside the committee room. If a committee is meeting in person, testimony “may be limited to written testimony at the discretion of the Chairperson.” The other big change includes **10-year term limits for the House speaker and minority leader**. Also codified is the regular practice of sending all substantive bills to a subject matter committee for debate during odd-numbered years.

### COMMITTEE HEARINGS

[House Committee](#) and [Senate Committee](#) rosters can be found here. The Senate **Public Safety and Criminal Law Committees** will hold a joint hearing on February 16 to discuss public safety outcomes. The **Senate Labor Committee** will meet on February 17 to discuss unemployment insurance. The **Senate Tourism and Hospitality Committee** will meet February 18 to discuss a strategic plan for COVID recovery in the hospitality industry.

### BILLS, BILLS, BILLS

Bills are still being introduced until February 19 for the House and February 26 for the Senate. So far, 197 Senate bills have been filed, and 1,772 House bills have been filed.

[Please click here for a list of community college-related bills identified to date.](#)

The 19 bills that passed both houses during the January **lame duck session** have all been sent to Gov. JB Pritzker, starting the 60-day clock for gubernatorial action. He has not yet acted on any bill.

### FY22 STATE BUDGET

Gov. Pritzker will present his State of the State/Budget Address on February 17 virtually, as neither chamber will convene in person next week. In anticipation of this speech, the Governor announced last week that he will not include any tax increases in his Fiscal Year 2022 budget proposal, nor rely on federal COVID relief aid. Instead, his administration will shut down \$900 million in corporate tax “loopholes” and redirect revenue such as the cigarette tax into the general fund. Gov. Pritzker pegs the expected FY22 budget deficit at \$3 billion, but the Office of Management and Budget had indicated a \$5.5 billion deficit. The state budget still has a budget deficit in the current FY21 year (which ends June 30, 2021) of up to \$4.5 billion.

The Governor also said that he will not propose new state funding for K-12 education, even though state law mandates a \$350 million annual increase each year. Schools did not receive that \$350 million from the state this fiscal year, either, although \$679 million in emergency federal aid was appropriated. Pritzker’s office says

significant federal funding is expected for next fiscal year, too. Other agencies will be held to flat funding as well, with the possible exception of increases for Public Health, Children and Family Services, and Employment Security. The Administration has pointed to its much touted \$700 million in cost savings from earlier in the fiscal year as a way to hold spending even-stein in the coming year. But those cost savings included \$75 million from state worker furloughs, and AFSCME is not going along with that idea. Items like pension payments and healthcare spending will, of course, need to increase.

Under the new federal COVID-19 relief bill before Congress, Illinois would receive over \$7.5 billion, with local governments in Illinois gaining \$5.6 billion -- for a total of \$13 billion.

### **NEW HRO CHAIR**

House Republicans have named Rep. Ryan Spain (R-Peoria) as chair of the House Republican Organization, the House GOP campaign arm. He will be tasked to help with candidate recruitment to chip away at the Democrat supermajority in 2022.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

Last Friday, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported 2,598 new confirmed and probable cases of coronavirus disease in Illinois, including 32 additional deaths. IDPH is reporting a total of 1,158,431 cases, including 19,873 deaths. The preliminary seven-day statewide positivity for cases as a percent of total test from February 5–11 is 3.1%. The preliminary seven-day statewide test positivity from February 5–11 is 3.7%.

All information pertaining to the Coronavirus Response from the Governor's office and agencies can be found [here](#). Governor Pritzker has extended his pandemic executive orders through March 6.

The Illinois Department of Public Health has also announced the first case of COVID-19 variant B.1.351, which was first identified in South Africa. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed the variant in a Rock Island resident. Illinois is currently reporting 22 cases of the B.1.1.7 variant, first identified in the United Kingdom. Viruses constantly change and new variants are expected. In addition to the B.1.1.7 and B.1.351 variants, the P.1 variant has emerged in Brazil.

### **VACCINES**

COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Data: <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/vaccinedata?county=Illinois>

As of Friday, a total of 1,940,425 doses of vaccine have been delivered to providers in Illinois, including Chicago. In addition, approximately 445,200 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 2,385,625**. A total of 1,644,483 vaccines have been administered in Illinois as of Thursday, including 231,814 for long-term care facilities. The 7-day rolling average of vaccines administered daily is 59,009 doses. As of Friday, 10% of people in Illinois received their first dose of vaccine.

Illinois will [expand Phase 1B eligibility](#) on February 25 to people who have comorbidities and underlying conditions as defined by the CDC. In addition, the state will prioritize individuals with disabilities. The federal government is increasing the vaccine supply and launching a new Community Health Center vaccination program. The Food and Drug Administration will review the Johnson & Johnson one-shot vaccine for approval on February 26. \*\*Chicago and Cook County will not expand eligibility, citing lack of enough doses.

Information for locations is listed on the [coronavirus.illinois.gov](https://coronavirus.illinois.gov) website. The number of COVID-19 vaccination locations across Illinois continues to increase. There are now more than 850 vaccination locations in Illinois open

to the public. The new sites include 339 Walgreens stores, which will be receiving vaccine out of a federal allocation and not from the state's allotment. Additionally, four CVS locations are being added.

The Illinois Senate Health committee heard testimony last Thursday from local health officials frustrated at the slow vaccination rollout. Local officials say that they have received inconsistent and insufficient communication from the state. Between health care workers, front-line essential workers, residents 65 and older, and now anyone with comorbidities and disabilities, the Pritzker administration estimates that vaccinations will be open to roughly half of the state's population. The Biden administration has promised increased shipments and eventual approval of a third Johnson & Johnson one-shot vaccine, which will enable rollout expansion.

### **SPORTS BETTING**

For the first time, Illinoisans legally bet in Illinois on the Super Bowl. According to the Illinois Gaming Board, the total handle was nearly \$46 million, with almost \$43 million of those bets made online. The state's cut of that is \$1.14 million in tax revenue, which could go up due to outstanding wagers. Up next is March Madness – but Illinoisans can't bet on any Illinois college basketball teams.

Representative Michael Zalewski (D) has introduced [House Bill 849](#) to allow for sports wagers involving an Illinois collegiate team. New Jersey also introduced legislation to remove the prohibition.

### **CLEAN ENERGY JOBS ACT**

A statewide coalition held a press conference last week to support the Clean Energy Jobs Act, reintroduced this session. [House Bill 804](#) by Representative Ann Williams (D) sets a goal of 100 percent renewable energy sources by 2050. Senator Cristina Castro (D) will file the Senate version. The bill includes government subsidies and supports programs to encourage private investment in clean energy, including communities of minority populations, as well as requiring new jobs to be filled with a percentage of Black applicants. It creates an electric vehicle access program for those without reliable access to a car and aims to reach net zero fuel emissions from coal plants by 2030. The group's press release states, "CEJA would spark tens of thousands of clean energy jobs without raising taxes, hiking power bills, or giving bailouts to Exelon or fossil fuel companies."

### **CLIMATE JOBS ILLINOIS**

Joe Duffy, former campaign manager for Attorney General Kwame Raoul, is now executive director for Climate Jobs Illinois, a statewide coalition of labor unions supporting pro-climate, pro-worker policies. Nikki Budzinski previously held the position until recently joining the Biden administration.

### **STATE PROCUREMENT & BEP**

The state Central Management Services agency is rolling out a new formula to increase the number of diverse contractors throughout the state. The Business Enterprise Program establishes diversity contracting goals for state agencies based on the Federal Disadvantaged Business Enterprise model and uses a formula for diversity goal setting. According to CMS, the new formula makes contracting goals more representative of the overall vendor pool. For more info on BEP and upcoming events, visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/cms/events/SitePages/List.aspx>.

### **FLAT COPAY PLAN LEGISLATION**

The American Cancer Society is holding town hall meetings later this month as part of its advocacy of [House Bill 1745](#) by Majority Leader Greg Harris. This bill would require health insurers to make at least half of each company's offered individual and group plans include either 1) a pre-deductible, flat-dollar copayment on drug benefits; 2) limit beneficiaries' monthly out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs; or 3) limit beneficiaries' annual out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs. The town halls will be held on February 22, 23, and 24 with more information [here](#).

### **PRIOR AUTHORIZATION REFORM**

The Illinois State Medical Society is initiating its prior authorization reform bill again this session in [House Bill 711](#) by Leader Greg Harris (D) and [Senate Bill 177](#) by Senator Linda Holmes (D). There are already several bipartisan cosponsors lined up on each bill.

### **ACA MARKETPLACE REOPENS**

Last Thursday Gov. Pritzker announced plans to reopen Illinois enrollment in the Affordable Care Health Insurance Marketplace. The announcement follows an executive order signed by President Biden that allows states, including Illinois, that utilize the federal marketplace to reopen to help more people purchase health insurance coverage. The 2021 Special Enrollment Period in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic begins February 15 and runs through May 15. The [2021 SEP in Response to COVID-19](#) also allows people currently enrolled in an ACA Marketplace health plan to change plans. Consumers can visit [www.getcoveredillinois.gov](http://www.getcoveredillinois.gov) for more information.

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