

ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

February 28, 2022

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

The Illinois General Assembly convened in Springfield last week. The Senate spent considerable time debating bills on 3rd reading ahead of its February 25 deadline. With some exceptions (there are always exceptions), the Senate has sent most of the legislation it will consider this session over to the House. While the Senate is not meeting this week, the House will return to Springfield to consider bills ahead of its 3rd reading deadline on Friday, March 4.

Both chambers continue to conduct appropriations hearings as they work to put together a state budget for Fiscal Year 2023. This session is moving very quickly – only six weeks remain before the scheduled adjournment on April 8.

The Secretary of State's office has announced that as of Monday, February 28, the public will not be required to wear masks when entering the State Capitol. That will not apply to offices and spaces controlled by the General Assembly and executive officers. Other areas (such as the area around the rail on the 3rd Floor of the State Capitol) will be mask optional. Organized large-group gatherings are still not allowed. The same rules will apply to the Stratton Building.

State Senator **Tom Cullerton** (D-Villa Park) resigned this week, effective immediately. Cullerton was indicted in 2019 on federal charges alleging that he took more than \$250,000 from the Teamsters Union without performing any work. He will plead guilty at his plea hearing set for March 8.

*****Please review [ICCTA's BILL LIST](#).**

Due to the virtual committee process, it is vital that we know your positions so that legislation does not slip through unopposed.***

2022 KEY SESSION DATES

- March 4: House 3rd Reading Deadline

***** LEGISLATION SWITCHES CHAMBERS *****

- March 25: House & Senate Committee Deadline
- April 1: House & Senate 3rd Reading Deadline
- April 8: Adjournment

COVID UPDATE

Both hospitalizations and daily averages of new cases continue to decrease throughout the state, with a positivity rate dropping to 2.5%, the lowest since November 5, 2021. Approximately 71% of eligible Illinoisans are fully vaccinated.

The Governor's indoor mask mandate will expire on February 28, except for healthcare facilities and congregate living facilities. The Illinois Supreme Court vacated a lower court's temporary restraining order of the state's school mask mandate on February 25; the appeal had been rendered moot since there is no emergency rule in place anymore. Gov. Pritzker then announced that, because the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommend that masks are needed only in areas of high transmission, **the state of Illinois will remove the school mask mandate, effective February 28.** The original case has been remanded back to the 7th Circuit Court.

Mayor **Lori Lightfoot** also announced that the city of Chicago will lift its indoor mask mandate and proof of vaccination requirement for businesses on February 28, the same day that the statewide indoor mask mandate is being lifted. Individual businesses will still have the option of requiring masks or proof of vaccination on their own.

STATE REVENUES \$4.6 BILLION HIGHER THAN PROJECTED

The Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting and Accounting reports that state revenues are \$4.6 billion higher for the current fiscal year than previously projected, namely because spending on goods (which Illinois taxes rather than services) grew during the pandemic and because the budget was bolstered with federal stimulus funds. COGFA expects incoming revenues to reach \$48.5 billion by June 30, up from the \$44.4 billion previously predicted.

This adjustment reflects COGFA's updated revenue forecast, but it is 'only' \$695 million higher than the Illinois Office of Management and Budget's revised revenue forecast from the beginning of February. The Governor is proposing that the additional revenue be directed to pay off delayed bills accruing unnecessary interest costs; invest in pensions; build up the Budget Stabilization Fund; and cover one-time tax-relief rebates.

FY23 STATE BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN

Gov. Pritzker's proposed FY 23 budget and unexpectedly high tax receipts have inspired some confidence in the state's upcoming budget, but nothing is guaranteed. House Chief Budgeteer **Greg Harris** (D-Chicago) held a conference with reporters on February 24 to explain the House's approach to the Governor's proposed budget and the House's own priorities. Despite higher-than-expected revenues, Harris said that the Democrats will play it safe given the unpredictability of COVID-19.

Among the budget highlights that Harris detailed on Thursday:

- Paying down \$3.2 billion borrowed from the municipal liquidity fund for cash flow during the height of the pandemic;
- Putting \$800 million into the state's "rainy day fund," last drained to maintain social services during the budget impasse under former Gov. **Bruce Rauner**;
- \$250 million in violence prevention strategies, on top of new investments in state police and crime lab services; and
- \$130 million for mental and substance use treatment, highlighting the increased suicide and drug abuse rates seen during the pandemic.

Harris said that Democrats are still determining how best to use federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars. A major potential use of the funds is to pay down the state's \$4.2 billion deficit in the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund.

COMPTROLLER CALLS FOR REPEAL OF PROMPT PAYMENT ACT

Illinois Comptroller **Susana Mendoza** is calling for the repeal of a law that imposes 12% interest whenever the state is 60 days late paying its bills, along with a program that allows private investors to purchase the debt owed to vendors and collect the interest penalty. Speaking to a Senate budget committee on February 22, Comptroller Mendoza said that the state is nearly caught up on its bill backlog and that those two programs are no longer needed.

HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARING ON ELECTION PROPOSALS

The House Ethics and Elections Committee held a subject matter hearing on several proposals last Tuesday. Lawmakers are proposing several pieces of legislation aimed at clarifying details about the election process and bolstering the ability to vote. Proposals discussed include initiatives to facilitate nursing home voting during declared disasters ([House Bill 4853](#)); notify election authorities about objections to petitions ([HB 4852](#)); allow for precinct redistricting ([HB 4854](#)); allow electronic signatures on ballot petitions ([HB 4966](#)); randomize ballot name order in some elections ([HB 4467](#)); remove the requirement that an election judge initial the ballot ([HB 4775](#)); and make Election Day a permanent state holiday ([HB 4858](#)).

IDOL HELPING BUSINESS COMPLIANCE WITH EQUAL PAY ACT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Illinois Department of Labor is incrementally notifying large businesses regarding compliance with Illinois Equal Pay Act reporting requirements. The registration deadline for the second tier of businesses is June 22.

In 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed and Governor Pritzker signed legislation updating the Equal Pay Act of 2003, requiring private businesses with 100 or more employees in the state of Illinois to report certain payroll information to IDOL ([Public Act 101-656](#) and [PA 102-36](#)). Each business will receive no less than 120 days advance notice of its registration deadline, although some businesses may not receive their assigned registration date for over a year. Public employers are exempt from these new reporting requirements. Questions can be sent to Robert Parrilli at Robert.Parrilli@illinois.gov or Nancy Hernandez at Nancy.Hernandez@illinois.gov.

2022 CAMPAIGN UPDATES

Petition circulation for the 2022 election began on January 13, with signatures due March 14. As a reminder, individuals filing paperwork to run for office are not "official" candidates until they file their petitions to get on the ballot next month. There are 120 days remaining until the June 28 primary election.

Days after retiring Illinois Secretary of State **Jesse White** backed **Anna Valencia** to succeed him, Governor **JB Pritzker** announced that he also endorsed Valencia over the other candidates in the Democrat primary: **Alexi Giannoulis** and **David Moore**.

Southern Illinois attorney **Tom DeVore**, who has become the face of legal challenges to Gov. Pritzker's pandemic executive orders and school mask mandate, is circulating petitions to run for Attorney General, not the Illinois Appellate Court.

OTHER LEGISLATION OF NOTE

Senate Bill 3120: Family Bereavement Act passed out of the Senate Labor Committee by a vote of 12-2-0. This bill provides that all employees shall be entitled to use a maximum of 2 weeks (10 work days) of unpaid bereavement leave to be absent from work due to (i) a miscarriage; (ii) an unsuccessful round of intrauterine insemination or of an assisted reproductive technology procedure; (iii) a failed adoption match or an adoption that is not finalized because it is contested by another party; (iv) a failed surrogacy agreement; (v) a diagnosis that negatively impacts pregnancy or fertility; or (vi) a stillbirth. Provides that the employer may not require that the employee identify which category of event the leave pertains to as a condition of exercising rights under the Act.

SB 3609: Vehicle Registration Discount passed out of the Senate by a vote of 53-0-0. This bill provides that the registration fee for cars and small trucks shall be reduced by \$25 if the vehicle is manufactured in Illinois, and the application for registration is made no more than one year after the month in which the vehicle was manufactured.

SB 2912: Public Works/Engineer passed out of the Senate by a vote of 39-10-0. This bill, as amended, provides that at least one employee in the public works department shall be a certified registered professional engineer or hold a degree in engineering from an accredited institution of higher learning.

Environmental justice: Illinois environmental groups held a lobby day and rally last week, urging legislators to pass bills pushing for more restrictions impacting environmental justice communities. Bills include [HB 4093/SB 2906](#) (Environmental Justice Act); [HB 4358/SB 3073](#) (protecting communities with aging power plants); [SB 828](#) (voting rights); and [HB 4390/SB 3866](#) (fixes to the Illinois Clean Energy Jobs Act). The Illinois Environmental Council filed an amendment to [HB 4093](#) on Friday. Proponents will attempt to pass the bill in the House before the March 4 deadline. They had previously committed to holding the bill until an agreement was reached between the various interest groups.

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

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