



ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report March 14, 2023

Both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly convened in Springfield last week to consider a significant number of bills – there were well over 1,500 substantive bills assigned to committees – ahead of the March 10 deadline to pass legislation out of committee. It was a long and very busy week. There was a delay organizing committees earlier this spring, shortening the time frame to get legislation through committee. Many of the bills passed last week were sent to the floor with sponsor promises to amend them before floor votes are taken. By the end of the week, House committees passed 460 bills and Senate committees passed 253 bills. Both chambers granted several deadline extensions through May 19 (adjournment day).

The House returns to session March 14-16, while Senators stay in-district. Both chambers will be in Springfield March 21-24. The Third Reading deadline in the House is March 24, and March 31 in the Senate.

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

It is vital that we know your positions so that legislation does not slip through unopposed.***

KEY SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- March 24: Deadline – Third Reading of House bills in the House
- March 31: Deadline – Third Reading of Senate bills in the Senate
- April 3-14: SPRING BREAK
- April 4: Consolidated Election (including community college trustee elections)
- April 28: Deadline – House bills out of Senate committee / Senate bills out of House committee
- May 2: Illinois Community College Caucus reception
- May 3: ICCTA Lobby Day
- May 11: Deadline – Third Reading House bills in the Senate
- May 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate bills in the House
- May 19: Adjournment

COGFA INCREASES REVENUE PROJECTIONS

The Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting Accountability has increased its revenue estimate for the current fiscal year by \$575 million – yet another positive development in a monthslong streak of revenue growth. COGFA anticipates revenues for the fiscal year that ends June 30 to exceed original estimates by \$5.5 billion, rising to a record \$51.9 billion. Much of that surplus has already been appropriated. Lawmakers allocated at least \$3.6 billion supplemental spending package in its January lame duck session, and Gov. JB Pritzker proposed spending another \$490 million by the end of the fiscal year when presenting his proposal for next year's budget last month. COGFA's new estimate for the current fiscal year is \$545 million beyond the amount assumed in Pritzker's budget proposal.

COGFA is also projecting stronger revenues in upcoming Fiscal Year 2024. The \$50.4 billion COGFA estimate marks an increase of \$465 million beyond the revenues proposed by the Governor.

ILLINOIS LEADS NATION IN STUDENT DEBT RELIEF APPLICATIONS

Before the Biden administration's proposed student debt relief program was held up in court last November, Illinois residents applied in droves. According to newly released data from the U.S. Education Department, the three congressional districts with the highest response rates in the nation were in Illinois. More than 70% of eligible borrowers in the 5th, 6th, and 8th congressional districts, all in the Chicago area, applied for or automatically qualified for debt relief. Borrowers must wait until the summer to find out if their debts will be canceled under the federal loan forgiveness program. That's when the Supreme Court is expected to issue its ruling.

REPORT FINDS EVIDENCE-BASED FUNDING FORMULA IS WORKING

The Center for Tax and Budget Accountability has released a report that found after 6 years of implementation, Illinois' evidence-based funding formula is working to counter historic inequities and close funding gaps for students in every region of the state and of every race and ethnicity. The formula distributes new K-12 funding to districts that have fewer resources to fund the amount required to provide the level of education the students they serve need to succeed academically. The full CTBA report is available [HERE](#).

NEW BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE EDUCATION CENTER

The launch of a new Behavioral Health Workforce Education Center will increase Illinois' capacity to recruit, educate, and retain behavioral health professionals. The Southern Illinois University School of Medicine will serve as the primary administrative hub in Springfield, providing coordination and support for building the behavioral health workforce pipeline and increasing entry into the field. The University of Illinois at Chicago's Jane Addams College of Social Work will serve as the secondary hub, supporting specific data collection and training initiatives. Public and independent universities, as well as community colleges in 10 regions, will be invited to participate as partners to increase the statewide impact.

TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE FOR STATE-OPERATED DEVELOPMENTAL CENTERS

Gov. Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Human Services have announced a transformation initiative and comprehensive plan that will reshape the way the state approaches care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF ILLINOIS FINED \$605,000 FOR NETWORK ADEQUACY VIOLATIONS

The Illinois Department of Insurance issued a \$605,000 fine to Health Care Service Corporation, the parent company of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, for violating the Network Adequacy and Transparency Act. BCBSIL was cited for failing to maintain a proper network for consumers and provide clear and accurate provider information on its website. HCSC paid the fine and agreed to take corrective action based on the exam findings. The Department will conduct follow up exams to ensure the company remains in compliance.

IDOT LAUNCHES REBUILD ILLINOIS ONLINE DASHBOARD

The Illinois Department of Transportation has launched an [online dashboard](#) allowing the public to access a variety of up-to-date data on road and highway projects completed under the Rebuild Illinois capital program. The dashboard includes information such as the number of projects awarded, the total cost of projects in each quarter, miles of road improved, and safety improvements completed.

\$40 MILLION IN ANNUAL ENERGY TRANSITION GRANTS AWARDED

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is distributing \$40 million to more than 50 local communities throughout the state that have been impacted by recent or upcoming fossil fuel energy plant or coal mine closures as part of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act Energy Transition Grants Program. Agreements regarding the grants are expected to close in July 2023, and \$40 million per year will be awarded until 2045 as part of the state's overall effort to transition to clean energy sources. The full list of recipients can be found [HERE](#).

GOVERNOR'S OP ED ON NATURAL GAS REGULATION

In a recent *Chicago Sun-Times* opinion piece, Gov. Pritzker urged changes to the current regulatory scheme for natural gas. The op ed is available [HERE](#).

POWER GRID OPERATOR WARNS OF SHORTAGES

In a February 24 report that prompting legislative hearings in Pennsylvania and Ohio, PJM Interconnection warned that the combination of fewer fossil fuel-fired power plants, higher demand caused by new data centers, the electrification of vehicles, and buildings switching from gas to electric-powered heating could lead to shortages during normal peak times as the decade proceeds. The report explicitly cites Illinois' Climate & Equitable Jobs Act enacted in 2021, as a contributor to the issue.

ANN MCCABE CONFIRMED AS ICC COMMISSIONER & OTHER ICC TRANSITIONS

The Illinois State Senate has officially confirmed the appointment of Ann McCabe to the Illinois Commerce Commission. Gov. Pritzker appointed McCabe to a five-year term on February 1, 2022. McCabe has over 25 years of energy and environmental policy and regulatory experience in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. She previously served on the ICC from March 2012 to January 2017.

ICC chair Carrie Zalewski will step down from her position in June. Former ICC chair Doug Scott will be nominated to replace Zalewski. Scott, who previously served as chair from 2011 to 2015, also previously served as director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. He is currently vice president of strategic initiatives at Great Plains Institute, a clean energy nonprofit.

Gov. Pritzker also announced the appointment of Conrad Reddick and Stacey Paradis to the five-person board. Paradis currently serves as executive director of the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance. Reddick is an attorney who previously represented the Illinois Industrial Energy Consumers and served as special assistant corporation counsel to the city of Chicago in matters of utility oversight.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS DIRECTOR STEPPING DOWN

Illinois Department of Corrections director Rob Jeffreys is stepping down from his leadership role, effective April 1, after leading the department since June 2019. IDOC chief of staff Latoya Hughes will serve as acting director until a permanent replacement is selected.

SAFE-T ACT LITIGATION UPDATE

The Illinois Supreme Court will hear oral arguments on the constitutionality of the SAFE-T Act on Tuesday, March 14.

COMED TRIAL UPDATE

The trial of four individuals charged with allegedly bribing former House Speaker Michael Madigan is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, March 14. Last week, the federal judge presiding over the trial ruled that the prosecution cannot call former Chicago City Council member Dick Simpson as a witness. The prosecution had hoped that Simpson would talk about Madigan's political operation and why companies like ComEd would want to provide patronage jobs to political figures. The judge wrote that he did not see how Simpson's testimony would help the jury understand the facts of the case.

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

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