

ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

March 15, 2021

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

SPRING SESSION UPDATE

The Illinois House of Representatives continued to conduct committee work virtually last week, while the Senate returned to Springfield for session, with some members choosing to participate remotely. As far as the public is concerned, **all committee and floor action is virtual**. The Senate has had a much lighter committee schedule than the House, convening primarily on Tuesday and Wednesday for a majority of their committees. Committee chairs created numerous subcommittees in both chambers and shifted legislation from the full committees to subcommittees. Once a bill is assigned a subcommittee, it must first advance through both the subcommittee and full committee before it can be considered on the floor.

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

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

It is important to note the [new House rules](#) adopted for the 102nd General Assembly not only allowed for virtual committee hearings, but also made the notable change of requiring all legislation filed in odd-numbered years (such as 2021) to be discharged from the House Rules Committee to a standing committee prior to the committee deadline. This requirement will lead to **long bill lists for each committee** and also result in more and more bills being sent to subcommittees.

Members and media personnel are utilizing the **University of Illinois saliva test** for rapid testing throughout the week. The Senate will continue convening in-person and can allow lobbyists, but they also will be required to take the saliva test.

Speaker Welch is calling the **House back to Springfield on Thursday, March 18** to work on at least two bills that need floor action (virtual committees will continue throughout the rest of the week). [House Bill 1871](#) calls for allocating federal funds from the Help America Vote Act to be used for establishing **ballot drop boxes** around the state. [HB 158](#) addresses **disparities in medical care** and other services in Black communities; it is the last of the four pillars of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus agenda. Gov. JB Pritzker is still hoping for a bill to **decouple** the state income tax revenues from a federal pandemic tax relief provision. Representatives will likely not meet in person again until after the spring break in mid-April.

On March 8, Gov. Pritzker signed the [Education "pillar"](#) of the Black Caucus agenda passed during the January 2021 lame-duck session. The new law is effective immediately.

Governor Pritzker also signed into law an equity-driven **healthcare and hospital transformation plan**. With support from federal matching funds, Illinois will invest \$150 million into collaboratives that fill healthcare gaps and focus on underlying health conditions in areas high on the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's social vulnerability index scale, communities that have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and areas served by critical access and safety net hospitals, including rural parts of Illinois.

STATE BUDGET

President Biden on Thursday signed the **\$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act**. Illinois stands to receive billions in investments to boost COVID-19 vaccination efforts, support for working families, transportation systems,

schools, small businesses, etc. The stimulus money will not be available for paying off pension debt – it will be earmarked for specific use. There will likely be an effort to pay off borrowing debt that the state incurred during the pandemic and to reduce some of Illinois' bill backlog that has grown with 12 percent interest payments. The state could also pay off Medicaid bills, which would bring more federal dollars to the state:

- \$7.5 billion for state funding, \$1.8 billion for Chicago, and \$4.2 billion for other municipalities
- \$275 million in vaccine distribution money
- \$1.5 billion in testing and public health money for Illinois' health departments
- More than \$100 million for mental health and substance abuse treatment efforts
- \$5 billion for Illinois K-12 schools
- Lowering health premiums on the Affordable Care Act exchange for the average Illinois couple by \$1,300 by boosting subsidies

The Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability reported last week that the state's **budget outlook continues to improve**. Gross sales tax receipts are up this fiscal year by 2.4 percent. The withholding tax on unemployment benefits has increased those receipts by 3.5 percent. COGFA adjusted its sales tax projections upward by \$706 million, and personal income tax receipts were adjusted upward by \$1.17 billion from its original projection (and up \$1 billion from its November projection).

COGFA also adjusted its Fiscal Year 2022 outlook. The estimates for both fiscal years track with new estimates by the Governor's Office of Management and Budget, with the difference closed by the Governor's plan to close what he calls corporate tax loopholes (\$932 million) and the redirecting of revenue from other funds (\$565 million), both of which require legislative approval. The full report is [here](#).

2021 KEY SESSION DATES

- March 26 Deadline for substantive bills out of committee
- March 29 - April 9 Spring break
- April 6 Consolidated election (including community college trustee seats)
- April 23 Deadline for 3rd reading of substantive bills
- May 14 Deadline for substantive bills to pass out of committee in the opposite chamber
- May 28 Deadline for 3rd reading of substantive bills
- May 31 Adjournment

ILLINOIS CREDIT RATING RAISED

S&P Global Ratings revised the state's credit outlook from negative to stable. It even hinted at a possible upgrade if the state takes prudent fiscal steps. Illinois is a tiny notch away from junk bond status. The rating agency noted Illinois' credit strengths, including a stronger-than-expected revenue performance and budget cuts by the Pritzker administration. Also leading to the improved credit outlook was the non-reliance on additional federal stimulus payments in the proposed budget.

LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING

The **House Redistricting Committee** has scheduled 23 public hearings statewide in April, seeking input from Illinois residents about redistricting even though census data from the federal government will be months behind schedule. State lawmakers are required to complete the remap by June 30 or a bipartisan committee will take over the work, something Democrats will try to avoid. **Looming over all discussions** is whether the 2022 primary will be delayed. A late map would make it difficult to meet deadlines for gathering signatures for candidate nominating petitions.

COVID-19 UPDATE

COVID-19 numbers have remained stable over the past week and continue to be some of the lowest reported since the beginning of the pandemic one year ago. **The state's 7-day statewide positivity rate is 2.2 percent.** In one full year since the state effectively shut down, 1.2 million Illinoisans have tested positive, and 20,901 Illinoisans have died.

Restrictions were eased this week for attendance at Chicago's baseball games and for some outdoor athletic venues for Illinois schools and other recreational sports venues. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced that both the Chicago Cubs and the Chicago White Sox could open their stadiums to fans at 20 percent capacity with mask-wearing and social distancing. Illinois schools and other recreational sports venues located in regions in Phase 4 can increase spectators from 50 persons to 20 percent of the outdoor venue capacity. The new guidance applies to all youth and adult recreational sports, school-based sports (high school and elementary school), travel clubs, private leagues and clubs, recreational leagues and centers, and park district sports programs. This guidance does not pertain to professional sports leagues or college division level sports. The new guidance is [here](#).

Looking at federal **estimates of excess deaths** — how many more people died than is usually expected — Illinois ranked among the 10 worst states (including the District of Columbia) for the 10-month period from March through December. In Illinois, nearly 111,000 people died from March 1 through Jan. 2, as tallied on a weekly basis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That is **27 percent higher than the average** for 2015 through 2019, which was about 87,000 deaths for the same 44-week period.

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

COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

Approximately **54 percent of those 65 years and older** are now vaccinated against COVID-19 in Illinois. Gov. Pritzker applauded President Joe Biden's order last Thursday that states make the vaccines **available to all American adults by May 1** and that all Americans 18 and older get vaccinated by the Fourth of July.

Approximately **5 million doses** have been delivered to providers in Illinois. A total of 3,680,703 vaccines have been administered in Illinois, including 353,125 for long-term care facilities. Illinois' 7-day vaccine administration average is 98,166 doses per day.

More than 80 days after the first shots of the coronavirus vaccine were administered in Illinois, more than 1 million people in Illinois have been fully vaccinated.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued updated [guidance](#) for individuals who have been fully vaccinated. Individuals who are vaccinated should continue to wear masks when they are in public, avoid crowds, and take other precautions when gathering with unvaccinated people who are at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Individuals are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after they have gotten the second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or two weeks after receiving the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Guidance on who can register for the **United Center mass vaccination site** was changed to focus on Chicagoans after the majority of early appointments were made by those who live outside the city. Sixty percent of the United Center appointments are reserved for Chicago residents, 30 percent for residents of suburban Cook, and 10 percent for Illinoisans who live elsewhere.

Nine critical access hospitals were selected as part of the federal **Safety Net Direct Vaccine Allocation Pilot program**. This is the next phase of the federal vaccine pilot program announced on March 3, in which five federally qualified health centers and four safety net hospitals started receiving vaccine doses directly from the federal government. This next phase specifically targets rural communities, providing hundreds of doses to each site per week. Information for locations is listed on the coronavirus.illinois.gov website.

SPORTS WAGERING

Just in time for March Madness, another online sportsbook is launching in Illinois. Barstool is bringing its iOS and Android sports betting app to the state starting March 11. Sports betting has exploded in popularity in Illinois. In January alone, Illinois gamblers wagered \$580 million on sports. Since sports wagering began on March 9, 2020, Illinois has seen more than \$2 billion in total sports bets. This year, the state is expected to bring in more than \$6 billion in total sports wagers. ***Illinois law prohibits wagering on any Illinois collegiate team.***

LAWMAKERS REVISIT DATA COLLECTION PRIVACY LAWS

State lawmakers are considering changes to an internet privacy law that recently led to a **\$650 million settlement** between Facebook and more than 1 million of the website's users in Illinois. A House judiciary committee has advanced [HB 559](#), a measure that would revisit the Biometric Information Privacy Act of 2008, to include provisions that sponsors say will protect small businesses but detractors say will render the privacy law obsolete.

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

Illinois Community College Trustees Association

401 E. Capitol Avenue, Suite 200

Springfield, IL 62701

217-528-2858

www.communitycolleges.org

