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## ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report March 25, 2024

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After last Tuesday's primary election, both chambers met Wednesday through Friday last week and held dozens of committee hearings. Legislators now return to their district offices for a short break. The House will reconvene on April 2 and the Senate on April 9.

The Senate deadline to move bills out of committee has passed, but 398 bills were given extensions. Last week 20 bills advanced out of committee, and 65 bills advanced to Third Reading. The Third Reading deadline is April 12. The House committee deadline is April 5, and last week 133 bills came out of committee. The House's Third Reading deadline is April 19.

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

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

### KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103<sup>RD</sup> ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- April 5: Deadline – House Bills out of House Committee
- April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
- April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
- May 1: Illinois Community College Caucus reception
- May 2: **ICCTA LOBBY DAY**
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

### LEGISLATION OF INTEREST

The Workers Freedom of Speech Act, [House Bill 5572](#) (Evans), has passed out of the House Labor Committee 18-6. The bill provides that an employer may not discharge, discipline, or penalize an employee for refusing to participate in an employer-sponsored meeting that is meant to communicate the opinion of the employer regarding religious or political matters. The bill is a priority of the AFL-CIO.

The House Consumer Protection Committee has passed [HB 5380](#) (Gong Gershowitz), which requires large social media companies to use third-party software companies that would alert parents if their child is being cyber bullied, talking about suicide, buying drugs, or engaging in other potentially other dangerous activity on the platforms.

The first of Governor JB Pritzker's spring session initiatives – the Health Care Protection Act, [HB 5395](#) (Moeller) – has passed the House Human Services Committee by a vote of 6-3. The bill would ban step therapy, ban prior authorization for in-patient mental health care, establish statewide standards on clinical criteria when performing utilization review; prohibit insurance companies from selling Short Term Limited Duration Plans; require insurers to publicly list all treatments that require prior authorization; raise network adequacy and transparency standards, requiring insurers to submit updated in-network care directories; authorize the Department of Insurance to fine insurers that violate network adequacy requirements; require cost-sharing adjustments for insurers to participate in the Exchange in 2026; and require insurers to post drug formularies on their websites, among other things. The sponsor stated the bill will be further amended on the House floor to address several concerns.

### **2024 IL PRIMARY RESULTS IN KEY RACES**

When all the votes are certified by the Illinois State Board of Elections next month, it will likely show the lowest turnout for a presidential primary in at least 34 years. Though thousands of properly postmarked mail-in ballots are still being tallied through April 2, state election officials believe it will be hard to crack 20%. The likely reason for the low turnout is that most races were uncontested. For the most part, incumbents beat back challengers.

In Chicago, Mayor Brandon Johnson's real estate transfer tax reform measure to fund housing programs ("Bring Chicago Home") has been rejected by voters, with residents voting nearly 54% to 46% against the measure. As mail-in votes continue to be counted, Cook County State's Attorney hopeful Eileen O'Neill Burke maintains a slim 2,015 vote lead over Clayton Harris. Based on the unofficial count results, Burke is leading Harris 50.19% to 49.81% overall, with thousands of mail-in ballots still to be counted in the city and suburbs. This race could be headed to a re-count challenge.

In congressional races, Chicago's incumbent U.S. Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL7) defeated four primary challengers, and U.S. Rep. Chuy Garcia (D-IL4) won his primary race against Chicago Ald. Raymond Lopez. U.S. Rep. Sean Casten (D-IL6) won his race against two primary challengers, as did U.S. Rep. Bill Foster of Naperville in his race against civil rights attorney Qasim Rashid. Downstate, U.S. Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL12) defeated former state senator Darren Bailey. Despite challenging Bost from the right, Bailey failed to defeat the incumbent after Bost secured an endorsement from former President Donald Trump, who also easily won the Republican presidential primary in Illinois.

Incumbent Illinois Supreme Court Justice Joy Cunningham will stay on the bench for a full 10-year term after defeating challenger Appellate Court Judge Jesse Reyes. Cunningham was appointed to the court after former chief justice Anne Burke stepped down in 2022.

In the Statehouse, two incumbents were defeated. Michael Crawford beat Rep. Mary Flowers (D-Chicago) handily (69% to 31%) with the backing of House Speaker Chris Welch. Rep. Flowers stated after her loss that she will not return to Springfield. Despite high campaign spending, Sen. Natalie Toro (D-Chicago), appointed to the Senate 20th District seat in 2023, lost to CTU-backed challenger Graciela Guzman.

In the open seat to replace retiring Rep. Kelly Burke (D-Oak Lawn), Rick Ryan defeated progressive Sonia Khalil. Sen. Terri Bryant (R-Murphysboro) defeated a Republican challenge. In the open race to replace retiring Dan Caulkins (R-Decatur), Republican Regan Deering won. No Democrat has filed to run for the seat. In the downstate race of two write-in candidates, incumbent Adam Niemberg (R-Teutopolis) prevailed.

## **PRITZKER DECLARES APRIL AS ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH**

Gov. Pritzker has declared April 2024 as **ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH** “in honor of the Illinois Community College System and the significant contribution these institutions are making to every student, every community, and our state.” The full text of the proclamation can be viewed [HERE](#).

ICCTA, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Community College Marketing Collaborative will be featuring Community College Month stories on social media throughout the month of April, using the hashtags [#4everystudent4everycommunity](#), [#ilcommunitycollegeproud](#), and [#CCMonth](#).

## **DR. AONDOVER TARHULE NAMED ISU'S 21ST PRESIDENT**

The Illinois State University Board of Trustees has named Dr. Aondover Tarhule as the university’s 21st president. Trustees approved a four-year contract for Tarhule that will expire March 17, 2028. Tarhule served a year-long appointment as interim president. A 29-member committee composed of trustees, students, faculty, staff, and alumni conducted the nationwide search.

Tarhule previously served as vice provost and dean of the Graduate School at Binghamton University (State University of New York) and was executive associate dean and department chair in the College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences at the University of Oklahoma. Born and raised in Nigeria, Tarhule is a first-generation college student. He earned a bachelor’s degree in geography and a master’s degree in environmental resources planning from the University of Jos, Plateau State, in Nigeria. He later earned a master’s degree and a doctoral degree in geography from McMaster University in Hamilton (Ontario, Canada), then received a post-doctoral fellowship from the Canadian Science Advisory Council to conduct research at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario.

## **PRITZKER SIGNS ELECTED CHICAGO SCHOOL BOARD IMPLEMENTATION**

Gov. Pritzker has signed [Senate Bill 15](#), the implementation bill outlining how the Chicago Public Schools Board will transition from a mayoral-appointed to a fully elected body in the 2026 general election. Initially, 10 members will be elected in 2024, while the remaining 10 members and the board chair will be appointed by the mayor. However, starting in 2026, all 20 CPS Board members will be directly elected from subdistricts, with the board president being elected citywide.

During an unrelated news conference Monday, Pritzker threw his support behind a follow-up bill ([HB 5766](#)) from Rep. Margaret Croke (D-Chicago) that would prohibit the CPS Board from taking any action on CPS’ selective admission school system or closing any of selective admission schools until after the board is fully elected in Feb. 2027.

## **HOUSE WORKING GROUP ON TEACHER SHORTAGE & RECRUITMENT**

Speaker Welch has created a new group aimed at tackling the persistent teacher shortage afflicting schools statewide and will focus on devising strategies to recruit and retain qualified educators to fill vacancies across Illinois. Rep. Katie Stuart (D-Edwardsville), a former educator, will lead the working group. Stuart’s priority is to unify the various bills and programs attempting to address the shortage into a cohesive effort. The working group includes Reps. Harry Benton (D-Plainfield), Sharon Chung (D-Bloomington), Fred Crespo (D-

Streamwood), Will Davis (D-Hazel Crest), Laura Faver Dias (D-Grayslake), Michelle Mussman (D-Schaumburg), Aaron Ortiz (D-Chicago), and Sue Scherer (D-Decatur).

Illinois lawmakers have implemented various measures to streamline licensing procedures, reduce fees, and enhance support for aspiring educators. Efforts such as raising the minimum teacher salary to \$40,000 annually and investing in early childhood education and teacher preparation programs have yielded growth in the educator workforce.

### **EXECUTIVE ORDER ON GENE THERAPY AFFORDABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY**

Gov. Pritzker has signed an executive order aimed at making transformative gene and cell therapy treatments accessible and affordable for all Illinoisans, particularly those suffering from sickle cell disease. At a press conference at La Rabida Children's Hospital in Chicago, health officials highlighted the significance of this move in addressing the healthcare disparities faced by sickle cell patients. Joined by Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton, Pritzker acknowledged the importance of affordable healthcare for all Illinoisans. He underscored the historic progress in medical science, particularly in gene and cell therapies, which offer hope for many families.

### **COGFA REPORT ON STATE GROUP HEALTH LIABILITY**

The Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability has published a report on the State Employees' Group Health Insurance Program. Key findings showed that Fiscal Year 2025 expected liabilities are projected to be significantly higher than in FY24 due to health cost inflation and various legislative mandates for health care procedures and coverage, including weight-loss medications. The Illinois Department of Central Management Services estimates that the FY25 liability for the SEGHIP will be \$3.775 billion, 16.5% higher than the FY24 liability. CMS has requested a \$490 million increase in general revenue funds for FY25. There are 359,188 participants in the SEGHIP.

### **ILLINOIS PROMOTED AS SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUEL HUB**

Speaking at the Illinois Sustainable Aviation Fuel Conference, Gov. Pritzker emphasized Illinois' commitment to becoming a leader in sustainable aviation fuel production, citing the state's advantageous infrastructure and abundant resources. He highlighted Illinois' efforts in fostering clean energy initiatives, underscoring the state's role in driving economic growth while prioritizing environmental sustainability. He also emphasized Illinois' rebuilt and modernized infrastructure, including its robust network of international airports, as key assets facilitating the growth of SAF production and distribution. In a bid to incentivize private sector participation in SAF projects, Pritzker noted measures such as a \$1.50 per gallon tax credit and initiatives to encourage investment in SAF infrastructure and technology deployment.

### **UTILITIES FILE SLIMMED-DOWN SPENDING PLANS**

The Illinois Commerce Commission sent the state's two major electric utilities, ComEd and Ameren Illinois, back to the drawing board in December when it rejected the companies' multi-year grid plans, citing a lack of transparency and unclear benefits to customers among other reasons for the rejection. The plans – products of the state's Climate and Equitable Jobs Act – propose billions of dollars in spending and lay out the companies' plans for supporting the state's climate goals, including the transition away from greenhouse gas emitting energy generation over the next 20 years. The ICC is now reviewing the plans in a process likely to last the rest of the year. The types of projects outlined in the company's filings include plans related to solar energy,

electric vehicles, battery storage, automating electricity distribution and making infrastructure more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

The plans propose less spending than the ones rejected last year. ComEd is asking for \$7.6 billion in spending on grid improvements, a 10.7% decrease from their rejected plan. Ameren is seeking \$1.88 billion in capital spending, about a 15.7% decrease from its previous request. The plans also include the companies' operational spending, which would be similar to current levels. Along with the grid plans, the two utilities are also filing rate plans to formalize the changes to customer rates and lay out some unrelated expenses. ComEd is proposing increasing residential customer bills by an average of \$3.74 per month next year, with smaller increases in subsequent years. By 2027, the average residential customer could be paying about \$92 more per year than they would be otherwise. Ameren, which serves about 1.2 million electric customers, has not filed its rate plan.

### **PRITZKER TO TOUT ILLINOIS ECONOMY AND FILM INDUSTRY IN CALIFORNIA TOUR**

Gov. Pritzker is in California, accompanied by key Illinois film officials and stakeholders. The aim is to elevate Illinois as a prime destination for business ventures and film productions. The trip will kick off an effort to pitch Illinois to industry giants and explore opportunities for expanded investments in the state. The Governor hopes to shed light on what the Illinois Film Production Services Tax Credit as well as the state's increased film infrastructure can offer companies who may be looking to expand beyond southern California. The delegation plans to meet with major studios and distributors to highlight the benefits of filming in Illinois, including the tax credit, picturesque locations, and robust infrastructure.

### **REPORT TOUTS \$300 MILLION IN STATE-FUNDED MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE**

The Illinois Housing Development Authority has released a report touting the nearly \$300 million in mortgage assistance the state has delivered over the past several years. Funded by the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the Illinois Homeowner Assistance Fund has distributed \$298.6 million in emergency mortgage assistance that helped 16,845 households avoid foreclosure. Eligible homeowners could receive up to \$60,000 in grant assistance for past due mortgage payments, property taxes, homeowner's insurance and/or flood insurance payments, homeowner/condominium association fees, and mobile home lot rent. The average recipient received \$17,727. Of the nearly 17,000 households helped, 70% had a total income of less than \$60,000 per year, and they were located in 98 of the state's 102 counties.

### **ILLINOIS EPA OPENS \$44 MILLION FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS**

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has opened the second round of grants totaling \$44 million aimed at bolstering the purchase and installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across publicly accessible locations in the state. The program aims to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles by providing reliable access to charging on Illinois interstates. The funding opportunity invites applications from a spectrum of entities, including local governments and private organizations, to install and maintain charging stations. Each application must propose a minimum of two publicly accessible charging station locations.

### **MAJOR GENERAL NEELY RETIRING; BOYD NAMED NEXT NATIONAL GUARD COMMANDER**

Major General Rich Neely, head of the Illinois National Guard, will retire in May after 40 years of service. Neely's retirement signifies the end of a long career that saw him serve as Adjutant General for Illinois,

commander of the Illinois National Guard, and director of the Illinois Department of Military Affairs. Gov. Pritzker has appointed Major General Rodney Boyd as Neely's replacement, making Boyd the first Black officer to command the Illinois National Guard.

### **COMMISSION ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION LAUNCHES INAUGURAL BEP CERTIFICATION WEBINAR SERIES**

The Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion has announced its new Business Enterprise Program and Veterans Business Program Certification Educational Webinar series, in collaboration with Chief Procurement Offices. Each virtual webinar will provide practical insights regarding the benefits of being certified with the State of Illinois, contract bid opportunities and resources, and step-by-step guidance to complete the BEP and VBP certification applications successfully. More information is available here: [BEP and VBP Certification Educational Webinar](#).

- March 27th at 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
- April 24th at 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
- May 22nd at 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

### **IDHR STATEMENT ON IL SUPREME COURT DECISION REGARDING PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

Illinois Department of Human Rights director Jim Bennett released the following statement regarding the Illinois Supreme Court's decision to ensure the availability of places of public accommodations for individuals with disabilities, including athletes:

“The Illinois Supreme Court unanimously sent a case back to circuit court making it clear that the Illinois Human Rights Act ‘must be liberally construed to achieve its purpose’ of securing for Illinoisans the right to be free from unlawful discrimination in our places of public accommodations, including persons with physical or mental disabilities. The high-court decision further clarifies that organizations who own, operate, or lease a place of public accommodation can be held liable under the IHRA for the denial of full and equal enjoyment of that place based on a disability or other protected category.”

### **BLAGOJEVICH SUIT AGAINST GENERAL ASSEMBLY DISMISSED**

After Gov. Rod Blagojevich was impeached by the House twice in 2009, the Senate convicted him, removing him from office, and then unanimously voted to prohibit the Governor from ever holding public office again. Last year, Blagojevich filed a complaint seeking to invalidate the Illinois General Assembly's actions so that he could potentially run for office, stating that he was treated unfairly and the prohibition on future office violates the federal constitution. In an atypical opinion that closes with quotes from Dr. Seuss, Judge Seeger dismissed the claims and wrote -- “The time has come. The time is now. Just Go. Go. GO!”

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*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](http://www.communitycolleges.org)

