

ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

April 12, 2021

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

The Illinois General Assembly – both the House and the Senate – return to Springfield on Tuesday, April 13, after a two-week session hiatus. Lobbyists will be required to have negative COVID tests before entering the State Capitol. Senate bills must be moved from standing committees by Friday, April 16. Third Reading deadlines for first chamber bills is Friday, April 23.

Lawmakers continue to field redistricting recommendations from Illinois residents as both the House and Senate continue to host **Redistricting Committee hearings** to discuss the drawing of legislative and congressional maps. Census data, which would usually be in the hands of legislators by now, has been delayed until at least August. Democrats view June 30 to be a constitutionally required deadline to pass the new maps and would like to use data other than official census data to do so. Republicans argue they need to wait for the full census data to be available. At some point, the courts will get involved with the redistricting process.

*****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.***

2021 KEY SESSION DATES

- April 16 Deadline for substantive bills out of committee (Senate)
- 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

CITY COLLEGES ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTED TO ILLINOIS HOUSE

Democratic leaders in the 32nd House District appointed **Cyril Nichols**, the associate athletics director for the City Colleges of Chicago, to replace Rep. **Andre Thapedi**, who stepped down after 12 years. Nichols' district encompasses part of the South Side and south suburbs.

2022 ELECTION UPDATES

Gary Rabine, CEO of Rabine Group paving and roofing company, has launched his bid for the Republican nomination for governor. Former Senate Republican Leader **Bill Brady** said that he is considering a potential statewide run for office as secretary of state, governor, or perhaps the U.S. Senate seat held by **Tammy Duckworth**. U.S. Rep. **Rodney Davis** (R-Taylorville) is also mulling a bid for governor.

Chicago Ald. **Pat Dowell** has officially jumped into the race to become Illinois' next secretary of state as **Jesse White** heads to retirement in 2022. She joins former state Treasurer **Alexi Giannoulis**, state Sen. **Michael Hastings** (D-Tinley Park), and Chicago City Clerk **Anna Valencia**, who have either announced a bid or are exploring running. Cook County Clerk **Karen Yarbrough** announced she will not run because of her husband's health.

COVID-19 & VACCINE UPDATE

COVID cases continue to rise, with the **statewide positivity test rate at 4.4%**. Chicago's positivity rate is at 5.6%. Daily cases and other measures of virus transmission over the last week have increased to levels that haven't been seen since midwinter.

With rising COVID rates and hospitalizations, Illinois has paused its entry into the recently announced “**bridge phase**,” even though the state has met the vaccination metric with 73% of seniors receiving at least one dose. To meet the “bridge” phase (which will allow for greater capacity limits at businesses and social gatherings), hospitals must also maintain 20% or greater ICU bed availability, and hospitalizations for COVID-19 must hold steady or decline over a 28-day monitoring period.

Suburban Cook County will join the rest of the state outside Chicago in expanding coronavirus vaccine eligibility today (Monday, April 12), to everyone 16 and older. Chicago, which gets its own supply from the federal government, will follow suit on April 19. **More than 20% of the total Illinois population has been fully vaccinated.** As of Thursday, **42.37% of residents 16 and older have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine.**

The wider effort to vaccinate comes as the state continues to see a **third surge of COVID-19 cases**. Gov. JB Pritzker announced **rapid response vaccination teams** and other additional resources will be sent to six counties in response to early warning signs of COVID-19 resurgence. Teams will deploy to Fulton, Tazewell, and Woodford counties in Region 2, and Jo Daviess County in Region 1, with single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Additional vaccine will also be provided to existing sites in Peoria and McLean Counties.

TRANSITIONING STUDENTS TO THE CLASSROOM

Gov. Pritzker and other state officials have laid out a plan for how they intend to spend \$7 billion in federal funding over the next several years to help students transition back to in-person learning after the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund program is sending \$7.8 billion to Illinois for education, with \$7 billion being sent directly to school districts over three years. To assist districts, the Illinois P-20 council has released the 180-page [Learning Renewal Resource Guide](#), which includes expert recommendations on how those funds can be best spent to help students.

Illinois **public universities** are calling on the Illinois Department of Public Health to make COVID-19 vaccinations required for attendance at colleges and universities this fall. The Illinois Board of Higher Education has not responded to the request.

COVID CIVIL LIABILITY PROTECTION

Senate Minority Leader **Dan McConchie** has filed a new amendment to [Senate Bill 2140](#), which would provide civil liability protection to people working for businesses, manufacturers, schools, institutions of higher education, units of local government and religious institutions. Due to powerful opposition groups, this bill is unlikely to advance out of the Judiciary Committee before the deadline.

ATTEMPT TO CHANGE “AT-WILL” EMPLOYMENT RULES

[House Bill 3530](#) eliminates Illinois’ employment at will doctrine and replaces it with a “just cause” standard for disciplining and terminating employees. Due to opposition from the business community, the bill is back in Rules Committee for continued negotiations.

PRITZKER PERMANENTLY EXPANDS VOTING

Voting methods that were temporarily expanded for COVID-19 safety reasons during the 2020 general election season have been made permanent under a bill signed Friday by Gov. Pritzker. [HB 1871](#) allows elections officials across the state to maintain ballot drop boxes, where mail-in ballots can be submitted without postage. It also allows them to operate curbside voting locations where individuals can complete ballots in their vehicle. Finally, it gives authorization to the State Board of Elections to distribute any remaining funds from the federal Help America Vote Act to local authorities for ballot drop box maintenance. HB 1871 passed out of both chambers with

Republican opposition, who criticized the bill's costs and potential election integrity issues concerning ballot drop box security.

BIOMETRIC DATA BILLS

Illinois' Biometric Information Privacy Act has been in effect since 2008. The law requires businesses and private entities to notify and obtain consent from employees and customers before collecting biometric information, such as fingerprints. They are also prohibited from selling that data. [HB 559](#) makes biometric agreements less public and gives employers 30 days to correct a violation. There have been hundreds of class action lawsuits filed against employers for biometric law violations.

The Senate Judiciary Committee on Privacy is holding a **subject matter only** hearing on April 12 to discuss several privacy bills, including [SB 300](#) (allowing right of actions for violations of biometric information privacy) and [SB 602](#) (requiring entities to inform subjects of biometric information collected during initial collection).

CLEAN ENERGY BILLS

Climate Jobs Illinois is pushing the Climate Union Jobs Act, aimed at keeping nuclear plants open in Illinois while increasing funding for new wind and solar development. The bill would require developers of renewable projects to use union labor if they are receiving state money and set diversity employment goals. State funding would be supported by new surcharges by electric ratepayers. That funding would support \$50 million annually to install solar energy in 3,300 Illinois schools and \$30 million annually to convert school buses to electric. The bill also ends formula rate-setting.

ACA MARKETPLACE ENROLLMENT

Illinoisans are signing up for ACA Health Insurance Marketplace plans at nearly twice the rate of this time last year, according to federal CMS numbers released this week. Nearly 15,000 Illinois consumers purchased and enrolled in health plans since February, when President Biden signed an executive order to open the ACA Marketplace for a new Special Enrollment in response to COVID-19. Unlike other SEPs, consumers are not required to provide proof of a qualifying life event, such as getting married, having a baby, or losing job-based coverage to enroll. The SEP in response to COVID-19 runs through August 15, 2021.

STATE ELECTIONS OFFICIAL PLACED ON ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

State Board of Elections director **Steve Sandvoss** reported an attempted online extortion attempt last week to the Illinois State Police. The attempt scheme "appeared typical of many such online scams," board officials said. The board voted unanimously to be cautious and place Sandvoss on paid administrative leave because the attempt targeted a top official within the agency.

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

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