

ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

April 19, 2021

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

The Illinois General Assembly reconvened in person last week at the State Capitol, following a two-week spring break. The House was in session four days – Tuesday through Friday. The Senate was in session three days – Tuesday through Thursday. Friday, April 16, was the deadline to pass substantive Senate Bills out of Senate committees.

Both chambers will return to session on Tuesday, April 20, at noon. The deadline to file a floor amendment to a Senate Bill in the Senate was Friday, April 16. The deadline to file a floor amendment to a House Bill in the House is Tuesday, April 20, at 4 PM. Friday, April 23 is the deadline to pass substantive bills out of their chamber of origin. Members have been advised to anticipate long days on the floor.

2021 KEY SESSION DATES

- 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

BILLS OF INTEREST

*****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.***

The Senate Higher Education Committee approved [Senate Bill 1832](#) (Pacione-Zayas), which allows community colleges to offer **bachelor degrees in early childhood**. The sponsor committed to bring an amendment back to the committee.

Senator Martwick has filed an **omnibus pension amendment** on [SB 1056](#). The amendment is currently pending in the Senate Assignments Committee.

Legislation to **elect the Chicago School Board** advanced this week. The Senate Executive Committee approved [SB 2497](#) (Martwick), which now heads to the full Senate for consideration. Companion legislation, [House Bill 2908](#) (Hernandez), passed the House by a vote of 71-39-3. HB 2908 now heads to the Senate. Senate Majority Leader Lightford filed Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot's legislation to create a hybrid appointed/elected Chicago School Board as an amendment to [SB 827](#). That amendment is pending in the Senate Assignments Committee.

The House Executive Committee unanimously approved [HB 642](#) (DeLuca), which statutorily enacts 10-year **Legislative Leader term limits**. Both the House and Senate Rules currently impose a 10-year term limit --though that requirement is not law. HB 642 heads to the full House for consideration.

The Senate has created an **Agreed Bill List** for non-controversial Senate Bills. This process allows for the bills to be considered on one roll call. Senators must notify the Secretary of the Senate if there are any bills for which they wish to be recorded as a "no" or "present" vote. Action on the Agreed Bill List is expected towards the end of next week.

CAMPAIGN FUNDRAISING REPORTS

Quarterly fundraising reports were due last week. Former House Speaker Michael Madigan spent more than \$2.5 million out of his campaign on legal fees this year. New House Speaker Chris Welch raised more than \$1.2 million in the first quarter of the year. House Democrats have \$967,000 cash, while House Republicans have \$196.92. (The House GOP will be switching to a new committee, so that may play a role in the low number. The new committee, House Republican Majority, reported \$48,000 in contributions. The HRO subsequently filed an A-1 for \$219,000.) Senate Democrats have \$1.1 million on hand, while Senate Republicans have about \$210,000. The Democratic Party of Illinois has \$2.6 million cash. The Illinois Republican Party has \$75,000 cash.

COVID-19 & VACCINE UPDATE

Like much of the nation, Illinois is once again experiencing a surge in COVID-19 with new cases, hospitalizations, ICU admissions and ventilator usage all on the rise. **Illinois' case positivity is 4.0%.**

The emergence and prevalence of **COVID variants** in central Illinois is concerning health officials. In the Peoria area, of 323 positive tests collected last month, 50 percent were the more contagious British B.117 variant. Even more alarming for health officials, 16 cases were the Brazilian P.1 variant -- which is vaccine-resistant and more contagious.

In accordance with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Illinois Department of Public Health has paused the use of the **Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine**. Federal officials are reviewing data involving six reported U.S. cases of rare, severe blood clots in individuals who received the J&J vaccine. In total, 6.8 million Americans have received the one-shot vaccine. Illinois was expecting 17,000 doses of the J&J vaccine this week and another 5,800 next week. IDPH is urging providers to use the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine for any existing appointments impacted by the pause. Beginning Tuesday, the state will allocate 50,000 first doses of Pfizer and Moderna to the city of Chicago over the next seven days.

More than **26% of Illinoisans are now fully vaccinated**, according to IDPH. Vaccine eligibility expanded Monday to all persons over the age of 16. Illinois is averaging administering 125,212 doses of vaccine each day.

The Illinois High School Association announced that under IDPH updates, students competing in low-risk outdoor sports and activities are no longer required to wear **masks while competing**. In-season IHSA sports and activities impacted by this update include bass fishing, baseball, softball, tennis, and track & field. Students must continue to wear masks in these sports and activities when they are not actively competing (e.g., athletes on the bench). An updated version of the IDPH All-Sports Policy can be found [here](#).

Also of note, Senator Lightford tested positive for COVID-19 last week while in Springfield. She returned home and is participating remotely in committee hearings and session. A member of the Governor's staff and a member of Speaker Welch's staff also tested positive for COVID-19 last week.

FEDERAL COVID FUNDS

Gov. JB Pritzker, along with Speaker Welch and Senate President Harmon, penned an op-ed last week outlining their collective priorities for spending federal COVID relief funds. All three leaders agree that Illinois "needs to stay the course by managing our state and federal funds responsibly." To that end, their first priority is to pay off the state's remaining \$2.5 billion in COVID-related short-term borrowing. They are also dedicated to "spurring job creation and economic growth through accelerating infrastructure plans for rebuilding Illinois, supporting small businesses, and making sure educational and health care institutions thrive."

LEGISLATIVE SALARIES

Cook County Judge Allen Walker ruled late last week that two former Illinois state Senators – Michael Noland and James Clayborne, Jr. – are entitled to receive portions of their legislative salaries that were withheld by the Illinois Comptroller following the passage of a law to freeze cost-of-living increases and implement furlough days. Judge Walker ruled that the former legislators “were entitled to a clear right to receive wrongfully withheld portions of salaries.” The Illinois Constitution protects legislators’ salaries from being diminished during a term of service. Comptroller Mendoza has pledged to appeal the decision.

CYBERATTACK ON ATTORNEY GENERAL COMPUTERS

The computer systems at the offices of the Illinois Attorney General were breached last weekend. The agency is cooperating with investigators. No further information about the breach was released.

ZERO EMISSION GAS POWER PLANT

Net Power plans to build two natural gas power plants that will capture emissions and bury them underground. One of the world’s first zero emissions power plants may be built in Decatur in conjunction with Archer Daniels Midland, with the hopes of beginning operations in 2025. Richland Community College is expected to play a major role in training the technicians needed for facility operations.

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

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