



ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report
April 29, 2024
APRIL IS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH

Members of the Illinois General Assembly were working in their home districts last week. Both chambers will convene tomorrow through the rest of the week and plan on being in session nearly every weekday in May. This week is the deadline for House bills to pass out of Senate committees and Senate bills to pass out of House committees. Each chamber has passed more than 300 bills to the other side. It is expected to be a hectic week as only one week was allowed for this work. The scheduled adjournment is May 24, but the rest of May has been reserved for “budget contingent session.”

Despite last week’s hype about the Chicago Bears’ proposal for a new lakefront domed stadium, legislative leaders and the Governor are expressing skepticism about its prospects.

*****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 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- 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*

MOODY’S REVISES ILLINOIS’ OUTLOOK TO POSITIVE

Moody's Ratings has revised Illinois' outlook to positive from stable. The rating agency also affirmed the state's A3 issuer rating and the A3 rating on Illinois' general obligation debt and Build Illinois sales tax bonds. In addition, it assigned a rating of A3 to \$1.8 billion of forthcoming Illinois GO bonds. Moody’s noted, “Revision of the outlook to positive is driven by continued improvement in fund balance and budget reserves, which has been supported by stability in revenue and state decisions to shore up financial health.” Illinois remains Moody’s lowest-rated state, but it is well above the near-junk rating with a “negative” outlook assigned during the state’s 2015-2017 budget impasse. The reason the state did not receive a higher rating, Moody’s noted, is because of its outstanding debt – namely its \$141 billion in unfunded pension liabilities.

ILLINOIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS SEE ANOTHER YEAR OF ENROLLMENT DECLINES

Enrollment at Illinois public schools this year dropped by nearly 10,000 students from the previous year. That includes 1,787 fewer students at 104 suburban public-school districts in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, and

McHenry counties, according to fall enrollment figures released by the Illinois State Board of Education last week. It continues a trend that has seen enrollment drop by nearly 200,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade statewide over the past decade. That represents a 9.8% decline since the 2015 school year. Among the 104 suburban school districts, enrollment is down 6.9% during the same time frame. All told, the fall enrollment figures released by ISBE last week showed the statewide public school head count at 1,766,547 students this year, down from 1,775,941 in 2023. The same snapshot in 2015 showed 1,959,250 students enrolled across Illinois public schools.

MONICA GORDON SELECTED TO RUN FOR COOK COUNTY CLERK

Cook County Democrats have selected Cedric Giles, who had served as chief deputy in the Cook County Clerk's office, to fill the rest of the term of the late Karen Yarbrough. Cook County Commissioner Monica Gordon was selected from more than a dozen candidates to campaign for the seat on the November ballot. Gordon is a former chair of the Prairie State College Board of Trustees.

ONLINE NOTARY SERVICES

Illinoisans who need a notary public can now access those services online through a new "E-Notary" portal launched by the Secretary of State's office. Notaries are state-appointed officials who administer oaths, certify documents, and act as witnesses to document signings for items such as affidavits and bills of sale. Until now, notary services could be performed remotely so long as the parties involved were in Illinois and the notary physically signed and sealed the notarized document. Now, the process can occur fully online through one of 12 notarization service providers listed on the Illinois Secretary of State's website at www.ilsos.gov. All parties can now participate remotely, and notaries are allowed to use electronic signatures and seals. Individuals using e-notary services must have a valid ID and access to a device supporting audio-video communication.

US EPA ISSUES FINAL NATIONAL PFAS PRIMARY DRINKING WATER REGULATION

On April 10, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued its final National Primary Drinking Water Regulation regarding six per- and polyfluorinated substances. The regulation sets enforceable maximum contaminant levels for six PFAS. The final rule requires public water systems to complete the initial monitoring for PFAS by 2027, followed by ongoing monitoring for compliance. Water systems are also required to provide the public with information regarding the level of PFAS in their drinking water starting in 2027. By 2029, water systems must implement solutions to reduce PFAS if monitoring shows PFAS in drinking water exceeding the MCLs. In addition, \$1 billion in funding is available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help states and territories implement PFAS testing and treatment for public water systems, and help owners of private wells address PFAS contamination. Illinois has been allotted \$21.81 million for eligible projects.

ILLINOIS JOINS 'AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL' CHALLENGE

Illinois has committed to the America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge, a Biden Administration initiative aimed at conserving and restoring the nation's freshwater systems, including rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has announced its involvement following a Water Summit at the White House, where new conservation targets were set. The initiative hopes to protect, restore, and reconnect 8 million acres of wetlands and 100,000 miles of rivers and streams across the country.

STATE RECEIVES \$156M GRANT FOR SOLAR POWER INITIATIVES

Illinois has been awarded a \$156 million grant from the U.S. EPA to enhance solar power development across the state. The state was one of 60 'Solar for All' grant recipients. This funding, part of the EPA's Solar for All initiative, will be administered by the Illinois Finance Authority/Climate Bank and aims to increase solar installations in low-income and disadvantaged communities. Grant funds will support programs focused on increasing access to solar energy in underserved areas, improving the affordability of clean energy, and creating jobs within the green energy sector.

PRITZKER, IRRPP RELEASE REPORT DETAILING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HOMELESSNESS

Governor JB Pritzker has announced a new action plan aimed at tackling the disproportionate impact of homelessness on the Black community in Illinois. The report, developed in collaboration with the University of Illinois Chicago's Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy, shows that Black Illinoisans are eight times more likely to experience homelessness than their white counterparts. Pritzker highlighted efforts that the state has already taken to combat homelessness, including his 'Home Illinois' program. His proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025 includes an additional \$50 million for the program, bringing the total to \$250 million.

IEMA-OHS ANNOUNCES FEDERAL SECURITY GRANTS

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency and Office of Homeland Security has announced the availability of federal grant opportunities for non-profit organizations to strengthen safety and security measures. These grants are part of the FY24 Nonprofit Security Grant Program, funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Eligible 501(c)(3) organizations at high risk of terrorist attacks can apply for up to \$150,000 per site, with a cap of \$450,000 for organizations with multiple sites. Funds from both grant programs are specifically allocated for target-hardening activities, which include the installation of security equipment and the hiring of contracted security personnel at properties occupied by the nonprofits.

\$30 MILLION GRANT OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has launched \$30 million in funding for the Rebuild Illinois Downtowns and Main Streets Capital (\$20 million) and Research in Illinois to Spur Economic Recovery (\$10 million) programs to revitalize commercial corridors and downtown areas throughout the state and accelerate local economic recovery initiatives. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity process.

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

