

ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

May 17, 2021

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

Both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly were in session last week. The Senate will reconvene Monday, May 17 at 4 PM, and the House will reconvene Tuesday, May 18 at noon. Approximately two weeks remain in the spring 2021 legislative session. Nearly 800 bills await floor action in the opposite chamber, so lawmakers will be busy debating and voting on bills in addition to the work needed to complete a budget and redistricting maps. Other major issues that could be addressed before adjournment include energy overhaul legislation, ethics reform, and proposals to diversify the recreational marijuana industry.

ICCTA BILL LIST

***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

- May 21 Senate deadline for substantive House bills to pass out of committee
- May 28 Deadline for 3rd reading of substantive bills (both chambers)
- May 31 Memorial Day / Adjournment

FY 2022 BUDGET

Lawmakers are working on developing Illinois' operating budget for FY 2022. Illinois continues to receive positive news on how well the economy is recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to more people heading back to work and companies making sales, the economy is edging back to a sense of normalcy. Lawmakers are currently looking at filling a \$1.3 billion hole in the budget. Appropriations working groups are meeting to go through each of the over 12,000 spending lines in the budget. Meanwhile, the business community continues to demand that the General Assembly reject **Gov. JB Pritzker's** \$900+ million in "corporate tax loophole" closures.

House Majority Leader **Greg Harris** (D-Chicago) has said that one of the things lawmakers will do is use about \$690 million in federal COVID relief aid to pay the first installment of the state's \$2+ billion Municipal Liquidity Facilities debt owed to the Federal Reserve. It remains unclear how the state will get that done since the [U.S. Treasury announced](#) that federal relief funds cannot be used to pay off debt. Gov. Pritzker and members of the Illinois congressional delegation are asking Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to reverse course and allow a portion of Illinois's \$8.1 billion in federal COVID relief funds (exceeding the expected \$7.5 billion announced in March) to pay off debt incurred during the pandemic.

GOMB ISSUES REVISED, IMPROVED REVENUE ESTIMATES

The Governor's Office of Management and Budget has increased its General Funds revenue estimates by \$1.469 billion for FY21 and by \$842 million for FY22, compared to the estimates published with the Governor's introduced budget in February 2021. Strong year-to-date receipts in the state's main revenue sources (individual and corporate income tax and sales tax) have led GOMB to revise its estimates. The full report is available [here](#).

LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING

Democrat leaders developing the maps have been bringing other Democrats into the remap room to take a look at their new districts. Republicans have been in the press almost daily complaining the Democrats are not being transparent and are not drawing "fair" maps. On April 26, the U.S. Census Bureau announced the resident

population statistics for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, as well as congressional apportionment data from the 2020 Census. While this data is critical in determining the total number of U.S. Representatives for each state, community-specific population data is not yet available. The Census Bureau estimates that full data will be available late this summer or early fall.

MOD CAUCUS

Democratic state Rep. **Frances Ann Hurley** is joining the Illinois House leadership ranks, having been named a new whip of the Democratic Moderate Caucus (Mod Caucus). Speaker **Emanuel “Chris” Welch**’s team describes the group as “a relatively new caucus of like-minded members who advocate for a balanced, steady approach to lawmaking.”

OTHER BILLS OF INTEREST

[House Bill 12](#) (Costa Howard/Villivalam) would expand coverage of the Family and Medical Leave Act to education support professionals. Currently, to be eligible for FMLA an employee must have worked 1,250 hours during the previous year. This disqualifies many educational support staff from meeting the requirements of FMLA due to the limited number of days they work during a school year. HB 12 reduces the minimum threshold to 1,000 hours. Education support professionals are support staff in schools like secretaries, teachers’ aides, paraeducators, maintenance workers, school bus drivers and cafeteria workers.

[HB 36](#) (Stuart) is an effort to reduce the fee on small trailers back to \$18. The fee for small trailers in 2018 was \$18. That increased to \$118 as part of the capital construction bill enacted in 2019. Illinoisans have apparently decided not to comply. “According to the Secretary of State we had 150,000 fewer trailer license applicants last year compared to the previous year and I worry that we’re going to see that number continue to decrease as people don’t register their trailers,” Stuart said.

[HB 40](#) (Hurley/Cunningham) would change how students using special education services age out of the program. Under current Illinois law, special needs students lose their eligibility and are removed from school the day before they turn 22. HB 40 allows students in special education to be eligible for services throughout the entire school year in which they turn 22, allowing them to graduate at the same time as their peer group.

[Senate Bill 817](#) (Simmons/Harris) was amended to prohibit all Illinois schools from making dress code requirements that prohibit hairstyles historically associated with race, ethnicity or hair texture. The legislation specifically cites braids, locks and twists as hairstyles protected by the statute. Many Democrats expressed opposition to an earlier version of the bill that would have withheld the allocation of dollars from the state’s evidence-based funding model for education from school districts that were non-compliant with the bill – that provision has been removed. The bill cleared the Senate 40-13 and now heads to the House.

COVID-19 & VACCINE UPDATE

Illinois is seeing the lowest number of COVID-19 cases and other metrics since the beginning of the pandemic. The 7-day case positivity rate decreased from 3.0% last week to 2.4% this week.

Beginning Friday, May 14, Illinois entered the “[Bridge Phase](#),” which is the next-to-last phase of Gov. Pritzker’s coronavirus reopening plan and is a precursor to all restrictions being lifted. Under Bridge Phase, there are expanded capacity limits for businesses, dining, offices, events, conferences and gatherings. The last phase, Phase 5, could happen as soon as June 11.

Updated guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention remove the need for masks or social distancing for those who are fully vaccinated and also allow those individuals to go without a mask in crowds

outdoors. The Governor has announced that he will revise his statewide mask mandate to align with the new federal guidance. The city of Chicago will also “broadly” follow the CDC’s instructions.

How to determine who is fully vaccinated, and keeping track of capacity limits, is largely being left up to individual businesses. Chicago has considered the idea of vaccine passports for some events, but Gov. Pritzker has rejected the idea of requiring such a passport.

The number of Illinois residents who have been fully vaccinated is nearing 40% of the total population. More than 64% of those 18 and up have received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine.

The Pritzker administration is hoping incentives like free tickets to Six Flags Great America amusement parks in Gurnee and Rockford will help breathe new life into the vaccination effort. The Illinois National Guard is also planning vaccination clinics at the Gurnee theme park the first weekend in June, with more to come if turnout is good. Demand for shots could increase in the coming days as providers began administering Pfizer’s two-dose vaccine to children ages 12 to 15 last Thursday.

CONGRESS CONSIDERING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS

Congressional leadership on both sides of the aisle are discussing a potential infrastructure package. President Biden previously released the [American Jobs Plan](#), which proposes to spend nearly \$2.3 trillion on various priorities, including surface transportation, broadband expansion, and water and wastewater infrastructure. Senate Republicans subsequently [proposed their own framework](#) for a potential infrastructure package, which would spend \$568 billion in five years.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS RAPID TESTS TO BE USED AT SCHOOLS THIS FALL

In an effort to ensure that in-person learning can fully resume as quickly and safely as possible, the Illinois Department of Public Health announced a \$225 million investment to expand access to covidSHIELD testing to middle and high schools across the state at low or no cost. The covidSHIELD test, which was developed by the University of Illinois, is a saliva-based test that quickly detects the virus that causes COVID-19, including in people who are not exhibiting symptoms. Test results are available within 12-24 hours after the sample reaches the lab. The specimens will be collected at each participating school, and parental consent is required.

ILLINOIS LAUNCHES TOURISM CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTING ROAD TRIPS

As the number of Illinoisans vaccinated for COVID-19 increases, Illinois is launching a new tourism campaign highlighting driving as a safe way to enjoy state businesses, parks, and other attractions. Gov. Pritzker unveiled the “Time for Me to Drive” campaign at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. He said that vaccines have provided a safe way for many to return to life as normal this summer. The Illinois Tourism Office within the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is also offering 60 unique itineraries to help visitors plan their trip to the state. DCEO is working with stakeholders and convention and visitor bureaus around Illinois to develop additional tourism and hospitality recovery plans.

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

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