

ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

May 25, 2021

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

Last week the Illinois Senate convened from Monday through Friday and the House convened from Tuesday through Friday. Legislators spent most of their time moving bills and amendments through committees and meeting in working groups to discuss details on the big issues such as the new legislative maps, the state budget, energy overhaul, ethics reform, and recreational marijuana.

The deadline to pass bills out of the second chamber is this Friday, May 28, leaving little time for the chamber of origin to consider legislation for concurrence before the scheduled adjournment on Memorial Day, May 31. Both the House and the Senate are heavily relying on agreed bill lists – both in committees and for floor votes. Lawmakers returned to Springfield yesterday (Monday, May 24) and will remain in session every day until May 31.

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 28 Deadline for 3rd reading of substantive bills (both chambers)
- May 31 Memorial Day / Adjournment

LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING

New maps for the Illinois House and Senate were released late Friday. [Click here](#) for the new Illinois House maps. [Click here to see](#) the Senate maps. To compare them to the existing maps, click [here](#) for the Chicago-area and [here](#) for the rest of the state.

There will be four hearings on the proposed maps:

- Tuesday, May 25 at 4:00 PM – Joint House and Senate Hearing
- Tuesday, May 25 at 6:00 PM – House Hearing
- Wednesday, May 26 at 4:00 PM – Joint House and Senate Hearing
- Wednesday, May 26 at 6:00 PM – Senate Hearing

FY 2022 BUDGET

Governor Pritzker, Comptroller Mendoza, and General Assembly leaders announced that they will be presenting a **budget** that does not rely on money from the federal American Rescue Plan Act to pay off the remaining \$2 billion of emergency borrowing, thanks partly to Illinois's strong economic rebound. The state borrowed \$3.2 billion from the federal Municipal Liquidity Facility for cash management and to pay for essential state operations at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The loan was scheduled to be repaid in three installments by December 2023. Instead, the Comptroller will utilize the state's revenue overperformance to pay off the debt in its entirety within the next budget year. Early repayment of the borrowing will save taxpayers up to \$100 million in interest costs.

With state funds paying off the debt, Gov. Pritzker and Democratic leaders say that it is essential to **close corporate tax loopholes** to find \$1.3 billion in order to avoid budget cuts in education, higher education, and

human services. Republicans disagree with this point, arguing that programs labeled as “tax loopholes” are meant to help small businesses and families. The **\$8.1 billion coming to Illinois from ARPA** will be distributed in a spending plan to help communities recover via affordable housing, mental health and substance use services, and upgrades to safety net hospitals.

ETHICS REFORM

Two competing **ethics bills** have been filed in the Senate. Sen. John Curran (Downers Grove-R) introduced [Senate Bill 1350](#) as the Republican ethics reform proposal. [SB 4](#), introduced by Sen. Ann Gillespie (Arlington Heights-D), is the Democrats' proposal for ethics reform and is pending on the Senate floor for a vote, despite passing committee unanimously about a month ago. Each bill has similar proposals to accomplish the same goals, but there are some key differences. SB 4 has been the subject of negotiations between the chairs of the Senate and House ethics committees. Sen. Gillespie indicated that further changes may be made before the bill comes up for a vote. House Speaker Welch recently stated he is confident ethics reform will get done this session.

RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA

[House Bill 1443](#), a **marijuana licensing bill**, is a follow-up to the landmark bill that passed in 2019 legalizing and regulating the sale and use of recreational marijuana. Under that law, dispensaries already licensed to sell medical marijuana immediately became eligible to apply for recreational-use licenses, while several other licenses were set aside for “social equity” applicants. If HB 1443 becomes law, there is hope that a long-awaited lottery will take place and that two additional lotteries for cannabis licenses would also be held: one that focuses specifically for social equity applicants, and another that would accommodate those who were left out of last year’s lottery because of scoring mishaps. The bill passed out of the House Executive Committee by a vote of 15-0. It now heads to the full House for consideration.

ENERGY OVERHAUL

After two years of negotiations, stakeholders are meeting regularly to discuss an **energy overhaul bill**. Exelon continues to push for \$586 million in subsidies to support its nuclear fleet, as opposed to Gov. Pritzker’s offer of \$70 million a year. Exelon is now also saying that it will need to close two more nuclear plants, in addition to the Byron and Dresden plants slated for closures this fall, without the subsidies. Nuclear energy is an essential part of any plan for the state to reach its carbon-free energy goal by 2050.

“SHOT AND A BEER” VACCINE PROMOTIONS

[SB 104](#) (Feigenholtz-D/Zalewski-D) – the **“shot and a beer”** bill – would allow a bar to offer a single drink of alcoholic liquor at no cost to a customer as part of a publicly advertised promotion to encourage participation in any COVID-19 vaccination program if the customer provides proof of COVID-19 vaccination received at any time.

“WORKERS RIGHTS” CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

[House Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 34](#) cleared the House Labor & Commerce Committee 21-3-1, while [Senate Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 11](#) passed the Senate Executive Committee 12-3 and the full Senate 49-7. Both resolutions are proposed constitutional amendments that would **prohibit “right to work”** laws and ordinances.

NON-COMPETE CLAUSES

[SB 1838](#) (Hunter-D) was amended this week to expand the Illinois Freedom to Work Act to employees at salaries below \$75,000 and makes changes to **non-compete clauses**. The senate bill is on third reading in the Senate.

COVID-19 & VACCINE UPDATE

Illinois' 7-day case positivity rate continues to decrease and has fallen from 2.5% last week to **2.1%** this week. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the state has identified a total of 1,377,249 cases of COVID-19, including 22,650 deaths.

In addition, **65% of Illinois adults have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and 49% of Illinois adults are fully vaccinated**, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Illinois is now in the "bridge phase" with full reopening planned for June 11.

The state is no longer requiring fully vaccinated people to wear face masks in most situations, putting Illinois in line with new federal guidance. Gov. Pritzker issued a [new executive order](#) to update state policy. Chicago's health department issued a statement "strongly advis[ing] businesses to verify that individuals are fully vaccinated" and to keep masking policies in place until Chicago lifts all pandemic restrictions.

ISBE BOARD TO REQUIRE SCHOOLS TO BE FULL-TIME IN THE FALL

The Illinois State Board of Education unanimously passed a resolution last Wednesday calling on all public schools to return to in-person learning during the upcoming school year. The resolution does not institute any mandates or requirements for Illinois schools to follow but shows unified support from ISBE for an upcoming decision by State Superintendent Carmen Ayala. In a weekly blog posted to the ISBE website, Superintendent Ayala said that she plans to make the mandate official "at the conclusion of the current academic year," meaning the change will not take effect until next school year.

The CDC has said it will issue updated guidance for schools "in the coming weeks" to help with planning for the fall. In the meantime, the CDC has said that schools should still require face coverings for the rest of this school year, even as fully vaccinated people are allowed to unmask in more public settings.

\$20.7 BILLION CONSTRUCTION PLAN THROUGH REBUILD ILLINOIS

Gov. Pritzker has announced the release of a \$20.7 billion multi-year plan to improve Illinois' roads and bridges over the next six years. Based on current funding levels, the [FY2022-27 Proposed Highway Improvement Program](#) aims to improve 2,779 miles of roads and 7.9 million square feet of bridge deck. Also included in the plan are \$5.7 billion for highway reconstruction and preservation, \$4.8 billion for bridge improvements, \$2.5 billion for strategic expansion, \$1.4 billion for system support such as engineering and land acquisition, and \$1.2 billion for safety and system modernizations. Of the \$20.7 billion over the six years of the program, \$3.32 billion has been identified for the upcoming fiscal year.

FULL AMTRAK SERVICE RESUMES IN ILLINOIS

Full Amtrak service will resume in Illinois beginning July 19. In accordance with CDC guidance, face masks are still required on public transit, including trains, to prevent community spread of COVID-19.

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

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