

## ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

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May 4, 2021

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

*The members of the Illinois General Assembly convened in Springfield last Tuesday through Thursday. After a very busy 3rd-reading-deadline rush, last week was much less hectic as legislators shifted their focus from passing bills to meeting in legislative working groups and reviewing map-making drafts. Over **800 bills** have been passed by at least one chamber and are now active in the second chamber. The House and Senate will convene this week to begin committee work on those bills. With only four more weeks before the scheduled May 31 adjournment of the spring session, there are still a lot of significant issues to be addressed, including the state budget, redistricting, ethics reform, and an energy package.*

### 2021 KEY SESSION DATES

- 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

### BUDGET UPDATE: BILL BACKLOG DOWN TO 30-DAY CYCLE

Illinois' backlog of unpaid bills is down to about \$3.5 billion. The drop in the backlog — which, at its highest point, stood at \$16.7 billion in 2017 — means the state can now pay its bills as they come in and move closer to paying off its debts within a normal 30-day cycle. This backlog does not include the roughly \$3.6 billion borrowed from the Federal Reserve to pay medical bills accrued during the pandemic. The funds that the state will receive through the American Rescue Plan must first be used to pay off that borrowing. The Comptroller's office hopes that the reduction in the backlog could be good for the state's credit rating.

### 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.\*\*\***

[House Bill 158](#) (Lilly/Hunter), the Black Caucus' **healthcare pillar** bill, has been signed into law. The bill contains a variety of provisions aimed at eliminating inequities in Illinois' health care system, especially for racial and ethnic minorities. The bill makes dozens of changes, creating a certification process for community health care workers and doulas, adjusting prescription monitoring programs meant to curb the opioid epidemic, creating a sickle cell anemia treatment and prevention program, etc. A similar version of this bill failed to pass in the previous General Assembly's lame duck session. The version signed into law does not contain provisions that would have scrapped the state's current Medicaid managed care system. An amendment was also added to the bill that expanded Illinois Department on Aging training requirements around dementia. Republicans in both the House and Senate opposed the bill, raising questions over its costs. Many of the bill's provisions are subject to appropriation, meaning they must be continually funded in the future. The bill is effective immediately.

[Senate Bill 1965](#) / [HB 3922](#) (Lightford/Ford) would make **Juneteenth National Freedom Day** the 13<sup>th</sup> official state holiday. If signed into law (Pritzker has indicated he supports the initiative), June 19 would be a school holiday and a paid day off for all state employees. If June 19 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the holiday would be on the following Monday. It is not on the federal holiday calendar.

[SB 564](#) (Ellman) would require **history education** taught in 8<sup>th</sup> grade public schools, including the study of the contributions made by Muslims and Muslim Americans to society. It would also establish January 17 as a holiday commemorating the birthday of Muhammad Ali, one of the greatest American boxers and a convert to Islam. The bipartisan bill passed the Senate 46-3.

[SB 4](#) (Gillespie), a **comprehensive ethics reform bill**, has cleared the Senate. The bill would ban legislators from lobbying for pay at the state or municipal levels. It also makes consultants register as lobbyists; bans mayors and local elected officials from lobbying or consulting; bans former officers of the Executive branch, or General Assembly from lobbying for six months after leaving their office or for the remainder of their elected term if they leave office early; bans in-person and virtual fundraising in Sangamon County during session days as well as the day before and the day after; expands economic interest reports and includes all judges to the reporting requirements; and sets base amounts for economic interest reporting tied to the Consumer Price Index updated every five years.

[SB 808](#) (Murphy/Guzzardi) would eliminate the current requirement for **teacher candidates** to film themselves while in the classroom with students. SB 808 passed the Senate 47-5.

### **CENSUS REAPPORTIONMENT AND REDISTRICTING**

The U.S. Census Bureau has announced that **Illinois will lose one seat** in the U.S. House of Representatives. Illinois lost 7,833 residents since 2010, for a total population of 12,822,739. At present, Illinois sends 18 members to Congress; under the new reapportionment, the delegation will drop to 17 members. Of the state's current U.S. House members, 13 are Democrats and five are Republicans. Reapportionment is the step that takes place before the mapmaking process. Each state gets at least one seat; after that, the remaining 385 seats are distributed according to population, with the aim to have about the same number of people in each district. California, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia are also losing one seat each. Florida, Colorado, Montana, North Carolina, and Oregon will be receiving one additional seat, while Texas will be receiving two. **Reapportionment is different from redistricting data**, which is a more granular breakdown of demographic data across Illinois. Release of redistricting data is still months away.

The next big question for the Illinois congressional delegation is: Which member of Congress will lose their district? Look for the new map, drawn by super-majority Democrats, to pit Illinois Republicans against each other in primaries to make up the one-seat loss. Rep. Adam Kinzinger has said that if Democrats carve up his district, he may instead run for senator or governor in 2022. Whether GOP Reps. Rodney Davis and Darin LaHood make statewide bids also may depend on the remap. Downstate freshman Rep. Mary Miller is also at risk in a remap. Democrats will also want to draw districts with more Democrats in it for Rep. Lauren Underwood and the 17<sup>th</sup> Congressional District (a seat currently held by retiring Rep. Cheri Bustos).

### **COVID-19 & VACCINE UPDATE**

New COVID cases are stabilizing with a current statewide positivity rate of 3.3%.

Illinois has administered **nearly 9.5 million vaccine doses**, while just over **one-third (32.54%)** of the state's population has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Over half of the state's eligible population has received at least one dose. The state could reach the "bridge" phase of reopening next week, which will increase capacity limits at bars and restaurants and raise the cap for indoor social events to 250 people and outdoor to 500. Chicago is reopening the United Center and other outdoor venues.

The next step in the vaccine rollout is addressing vaccine hesitancy and enhancing community outreach. The number of people requesting vaccine appointments has dropped considerably. The Governor's office has

launched a state navigator program to boost vaccine access to low-income and vulnerable communities in cooperation with the Illinois Public Health Association, the Illinois Primary Health Care Association, and OSF Healthcare System.

As more of the state's population receives the vaccine, the state is considering beginning to shift from a "mass vaccination" approach to "**convenience vaccination**" strategy. This next phase could include allowing residents to get **vaccinated by their primary care physician** rather than needing to visit a mass vaccination site or pharmacy provider and allowing walk-in vaccinations at all vaccination sites.

The Illinois Department of Public Health is working on a program to allow residents vaccinated against COVID-19 to show a voluntary electronic certification from the state.

Chicago Public Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady is moving closer to announcing a bigger reopening plan. A vaccine passport, or a "**Vax Pass,**" is likely to be part of it. The Vax Pass would give those who are fully vaccinated access to concerts and other events in Chicago. The goal is to encourage vaccination, particularly in younger people, in exchange for attendance at concerts or other events.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday issued **new guidance on outdoor mask use** for fully vaccinated Americans. Persons who are fully vaccinated may now take their masks off at small outdoor gatherings, or when dining outside with friends from multiple households. The CDC is telling unvaccinated people that they still need to wear a mask at such gatherings. But life has not returned completely to normal for fully vaccinated people. The federal health agency says even fully vaccinated individuals should avoid large indoor gatherings. The CDC did not define how many people would be in a large gathering. Gov. J.B. Pritzker will revise his statewide mask mandate to align with new federal guidelines.

### **GOVERNOR RELEASED ENERGY OVERHAUL PROPOSAL**

Governor Pritzker announced his version of an energy bill, [the Consumers and Climate First Act](#), to mandate phase out of coal power plants by 2030 and natural gas plants by 2045 while providing short-term support of Exelon's Byron and Dresden nuclear plants. The phaseout would be prompted with \$8 per ton carbon charges on emissions from fossil fuel plants. The bill also pushes for electrification of transportation by offering \$4,000 rebates for electric vehicle customers and requiring utilities to submit transportation electrification plans to the ICC. The administration pledges to meet the goal of 100% clean energy by 2050, increasing the Renewable Portfolio Standard by 40% by 2030, and obtaining 1 million registered electric vehicles by 2030. Representative Kam Buckner and Senator Celina Villanueva will sponsor the bills.

### **GAMING UPDATE**

Illinois has overtaken Pennsylvania to become the third largest sports wagering market in the US, after New Jersey and Nevada. Illinois also now has 39,149 video gaming machines operating at 7,532 active licensed locations. A total of 104 new location licenses were approved at the most recent Illinois Gaming Board meeting.

The Illinois House Executive Committee, under the leadership of committee chair and House gaming negotiator Rep. Bob Rife, heard testimony on several ideas to change state gaming laws. No bills were considered for a vote, but the testimony will be used to help develop gaming proposals ahead of the May 31 scheduled end of session. Some of the topics included allowing iGaming, banning towns from creating push taxes, banning sweepstakes machines, and permitting college sports betting. Rife wants lawmakers and companies to look at gaming as an issue that can be revisited in each legislative session instead of one large gaming package every 20 years.

### **INDEPENDENT REPORT ON THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK AT LASALLE VETERANS HOME**

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs has released an independent report requested by the Governor's office last fall to fully investigate a COVID-19 outbreak at the LaSalle Veterans home that led to 36 deaths. The report details systemic mismanagement from the top down to the home's leadership, which created an "inefficient, reactive and chaotic" response to controlling the virus. The 50-page report says then-VA Director Linda Chapa LaVia "abdicated" her responsibilities, leaving things to a non-medical chief of staff who preferred to let each home manage itself, while issuing rules contradictory to health guidelines and failing to seek outside help as the outbreak grew.

### **LAKE SHORE CAUCUS**

A group of legislators have formed the Lake Shore Drive Caucus to focus on the impact of climate change on erosion along Lake Shore Drive.

### **ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES**

Illinois will award \$9 million in grants to electrify school buses in the Chicagoland and Metro East areas as part of the funding from the multi-billion dollar settlement in the federal Volkswagen settlement. The administration will revamp its [VW Beneficiary Mitigation Plan](#) to replace diesel engines with all-electric school buses, public transit, and infrastructure projects.

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

### **Illinois Community College Trustees Association**

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