



ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report May 8, 2023

As the Illinois General Assembly enters the final weeks of its spring 2023 session, the rush is on, with lawmakers scheduled to adjourn on May 19 for the summer. Last week, the Illinois House spent three days in Springfield, and the Illinois Senate was in session for four days. Both chambers continued to consider legislation at the committee level, continued with working groups to discuss the budget, and began considering legislation from the opposite chamber on the floor. The Senate released an agreed bill list with 107 House bills to expedite final passage of non-controversial legislation. One roll call will be taken on Wednesday for legislation on that list.

Both chambers return to session on Monday, May 8. May 11 is the 3rd Reading deadline for House bills in the Senate, and May 12 is the 3rd Reading deadline for Senate bills in the House. Two weeks remain until adjournment, but a number of major policy items are still taking shape. Some of those initiatives include environment proposals, Medicaid changes, cannabis omnibus, election omnibus, a revenue package, a state-based health exchange, a gaming bill, and a procurement package.

*****Please review [ICCTA's BILL LIST](#).**

It is vital that we know your positions so that legislation does not slip through unopposed.***

KEY SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- May 11: Deadline – Third Reading House bills in the Senate
- May 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate bills in the House
- May 19: Adjournment

ILLINOIS BUDGET PRESSURES INTENSIFY

Finalizing the state's Fiscal Year 2024 is getting harder, as a new revenue report released last week shows a drop in revenue. This will likely be taken as a warning signal that the state cannot substantially boost spending beyond current levels – and there are a lot of new asks on the table. The Illinois legislature's fiscal arm, the Commission on Government Forecasting & Accountability, says that revenues from non-federal state sources declined 21.5% in April, compared to the same month a year ago, plummeting by about \$1.9 billion. Leading the drop was a massive \$1.7 billion decline in individual income tax receipts, which declined from around \$5.4 billion in April 2022 to \$3.7 billion this year. April 2023's total \$6.8 billion in state revenue was still the second-largest monthly figure in state history, second only to April 2022. But the latest numbers were enough to induce the commission to lower its expected revenues for FY 2023 by \$728 million, to \$51.2 billion. COGFA did not, however, make significant changes to the FY24 revenue number, and that forecast remains about \$500 million higher than that projected by Gov. JB Pritzker's budget office. COGFA also says that the figures do not represent an economic collapse but instead signal a return to a relatively stable picture now that the impact of

COVID stimulus has passed. Gov. Pritzker has suggested that the new report was not unexpected and validates his policy of using much of the windfall of the past two years for savings and debt relief, not new spending. His office also says that its revenue estimates are still lower than even the commission's revised figures.

Adding to the challenge, Illinois received billions during the pandemic, and much of those federal funds will end after federal and state emergency orders expire on May 11. As a result, many programs funded by federal relief dollars will no longer have a revenue source – and will seek state dollars. The Governor's Office of Management and Budget said that most of the federal aid went toward one-time expenditures, such as paying down debt and adding to the state's rainy day fund.

In the Senate Appropriations Committee meeting last Wednesday, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services estimated that the FY24 estimated cost to provide healthcare coverage to noncitizens who are otherwise ineligible for Medicaid benefits has been revised upward to \$1.1 billion for the upcoming fiscal year (up from an estimated \$990 million at the end of March). The new estimate is now \$880 million beyond the \$220 million estimate originally included in the Governor's February 2023 budget proposal. HFS also estimated that to include the 19-41 year-old population in the healthcare program for FY24 would cost an additional \$380 million.

Also last week, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle visited with lawmakers in Springfield to ask for an additional \$1.8 million to help Cook County pay for the healthcare costs of asylum seekers. In addition to those already under its care, Cook County is bracing for an influx of new migrants once the federal rules allowing the United States to turn away asylum seekers end on May 11. Outgoing Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot is also asking the state for more funds to assist with the transportation and housing needs of migrants. The *Chicago Sun-Times* reports that Chicago has a \$700 million budget surplus. Legislators will likely factor that unexpected positive news into their budget allocations for the city.

Advocates also came to Springfield last Wednesday to push for state funding to help build a new St. Anthony's hospital in Little Village. The Chicago City Council approved the move earlier this year, but advocates say they need more funding for the project.

HOUSE HIGHER ED APPROPRIATIONS CHAIR CALLS FOR ADDITIONAL HIGHER ED FUNDING

Gov. Pritzker's proposed FY24 budget includes a 7% increase in overall funding for the state's higher education institutions, but according to Rep. La Shawn Ford (D-Chicago), that may not be enough to handle ballooning expenses.

"Our public universities are critical to equip our young people with the education and tools they need to be competitive in the 21st century. Over the course of hearings with the higher Ed officials it has been abundantly clear that the institutions need to be fully funded so that they can meet the needs of their students. So today I stand here as the Chair of [House] Higher Education Appropriations in support of an increase past the 7 percent that the governor has proposed across the board for all our public universities," Ford said at a May 3 press conference.

Ford was joined by Rep. Carol Ammons (D-Champaign), who represents the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. She serves on the Illinois Board of Higher Education's Commission on Equitable Public University Funding, where she has worked with higher education officials to find a more sustainable funding model. Ammons said that due to declining state funding coupled with inflation and other economic factors,

state funding of higher education is nearly 50% less than it was in 2000. Ford added that some of the financial stress for these institutions has come in part from the increasing cost of doing business overall as well as declining enrollment.

“COMED FOUR” FOUND GUILTY ON ALL COUNTS

Former lobbyist Michael McClain, former ComEd CEO Anne Pramaggiore, retired ComEd vice president John Hooker, and former ComEd lobbyist Jay Doherty have been found guilty of every count of a nine-count indictment. The four were convicted of conspiracy and bribery to influence and reward former House Speaker Michael Madigan by arranging for jobs and contracts for his political allies and workers, and falsifying documents. Much of the case centered on the line between legal lobbying and illegal bribery. Following the verdict, acting U.S. Attorney Morris “Sonny” Pasqual warned those involved in business and politics to seek advice on where the legal lines are because anyone who crosses into bribery “will be on our radar.” Sentencing will occur in January 2024, with the counts ranging from 5 year to 20 years in prison.

The verdict could bolster prosecutors’ case against Madigan, who, in the course of the trial, was revealed as the initial target of the feds’ investigation which opened in late 2014. After the verdict was read, one of the jurors said they came to believe the speaker’s involvement with ComEd “was key.” “He really did cause this all to happen,” she said. “If it wouldn’t have been for him, these people would not have been in the position that they would need to commit crimes in the first place.”

PROPOSED ELECTED CHICAGO SCHOOL BOARD MAP RELEASED

The Senate Democrats have released a proposed map of the 20 new elected districts for the Chicago school board. A map must be adopted by July 1. Chicago is the only school board in the state with an appointed school board. That changes in November 2024, when 10 districts will be elected and the mayor will then appoint 10 members and the president. The entire board will be elected beginning in November 2026.

SPEAKER’S STAFF SEEKS TO UNIONIZE

A group of House Democrat staffers have formed a union and seek to be recognized by the Illinois Labor Relations Board. The Board denied their application in March based on a state law that prohibits various employees of specific entities from unionizing, including the General Assembly. The staffers have asked the House Speaker to voluntarily recognize them, although there is a question whether the law prohibits such action. The staff indicated that they do not intend to strike before the end of session and will continue to seek recognition. According to the statement from the Illinois Legislative Staff Association, which represents employees of the Research and Appropriations staff of the House Speaker’s office, “Many employees struggle to pay their bills, are forced to work overtime hours with little compensation, and work extra jobs to make ends meet. These conditions have led to unsustainable staff turnover and have impeded our ability to serve the people of Illinois. Nearly 70% of staff have signed in support of unionization in order to address these issues.”

NO ILLINOIS COUNTIES SEE ELEVATED COVID-19 CASES WEEK BEFORE EMERGENCY ENDS

All Illinois counties are now rated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as having low community level for COVID-19 risk -- just days before the national and state COVID-19 public health emergencies are set to end. The World Health Organization has also announced that the global health emergency related to COVID-19

has ended. After the national public health emergency ends, the CDC will no longer be tracking or reporting COVID-19 cases at the community level. The Illinois Department of Public Health will continue to report weekly COVID-19 hospital admissions, cases, and deaths, as well as vaccination rates.

STATE-BASED HEALTH INSURANCE EXCHANGE PROPOSED

State Rep. Robyn Gabel (D-Evanston) has filed House Amendment #4 to [House Bill 579](#), which is the Pritzker administration's proposal to authorize the Illinois Department of Insurance to operate a state-based health insurance exchange. Similar health exchanges have been established in 18 other states, and three more states are attempting to pass similar bills this year. The recently filed amendment has not yet been assigned to a House committee. The amendment calls for a state-based exchange using the federal platform in 2025 and a fully operational state-based exchange in 2026. Industry leaders are concerned about the state's capacity to stand up and operate a state-based exchange so quickly.

PRITZKER OFFERS SUPPORT FOR MEDICAID ENROLLEES AS PANDEMIC PROTECTIONS END

As the COVID-19 pandemic protections come to an end, the state of Illinois is taking steps to prevent a Medicaid "coverage cliff" situation where many enrollees would lose health care coverage. During the pandemic, Medicaid enrollees received continuous coverage without the need to re-enroll and go through the redetermination process that evaluates their eligibility for health benefits. Both the federal and state emergency declarations for COVID-19 will end on May 11.

The Illinois HFS has announced that it has automatically renewed coverage for 51% of the 113,600 cases scheduled for renewal this June. Gov. Pritzker says that individuals scheduled for a June renewal date can expect mailed notices begin to arrive in mailboxes this week, informing enrollees of whether they were automatically renewed or if they must submit a renewal form by June 1. Illinois Medicaid enrollment increased from 2.9 million to roughly 3.9 million during the pandemic. HFS director Theresa Eagleson said that the department is working with community-based resources to help ease this transition. In order to protect enrollee's continuous coverage, HFS launched the Ready to Renew outreach campaign in March, including print, digital, and broadcast ads to inform the public about upcoming changes to the program. Medicaid customers who do not respond to notices to renew will lose their benefits a month after their renewal date.

BILL RESTRICTING LIBRARY BOOK BANS HEADS TO GOVERNOR'S DESK

[HB 2789](#), an initiative of Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias, would block libraries from receiving state grants if they ban books. It would require that as a condition of qualifying for those grants, libraries adopt either a written policy prohibiting the practice of banning books or the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, which includes a statement that "(m)aterials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." The bill has passed both chambers and will soon be send to Gov. Pritzker, who is expected to sign it. The SOS office oversees the Illinois State Library and administers several grant programs for public and school libraries.

ILLINOIS IMMIGRANT TASK FORCE REPORT RELEASED

The Illinois Immigrant Impact Task Force has released a report examining various issues affecting immigrant, refugee, and limited English proficiency communities, sharing recommendations the state can take to improve services to immigrant communities. The Task Force identified 13 issues, ranging from citizenship assistance,

business development, education access, discrimination prevention, immigration detention, COVID-19 relief, language access programs, and more. The report concludes with recommendations for policymakers and community leaders to better support immigrant communities in Illinois. These recommendations include increasing funding for language access services, expanding access to healthcare, and creating new programs to support immigrant entrepreneurs.

ILLINOIS CANNABIS TAXES 2ND HIGHEST IN U.S.

Illinois collects more cannabis tax revenue than any state but California, pulling in \$562 million last year, but it also has the highest tax in the country at nearly 40% with local taxes. Michigan, which has a tax rate of 10%, had overall higher sales than Illinois and took in \$326 million in taxes. A recent report estimates Illinois' combined medical and recreational sales will increase to \$2.3 billion, while Michigan grows to \$2.5 billion.

IPA ELECTRIC PROCUREMENT WEBSITE DEBUTS

The Illinois Power Agency launched a new electricity procurement page to serve as a resource to learn about the IPA's competitive electricity procurement processes, national and statewide electricity prices, electricity supply options for customers in Illinois, and a municipal aggregation program for Illinois municipalities.

DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE ANNOUNCES MENTAL HEALTH PARITY CAMPAIGN

The Illinois Department of Insurance has announced a new ad campaign highlighting mental health parity. The radio, digital, and social media ads aim to raise awareness about mental health parity to help Illinoisans better understand their rights related to health insurance coverage for mental health and substance use disorders under the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, which requires health insurers to provide coverage for mental health and substance use disorders that is no more restrictive than coverage for physical health conditions. DOI is responsible for ensuring compliance and imposing fines for violations.

ILLINOIS CAR INSURANCE RATES RISE \$527 MILLION

The five biggest auto insurers in Illinois have raised rates a whopping \$527 million since January. Those insurers are State Farm, Allstate, Progressive, Geico and Country Financial, which together make up 62% of the Illinois market.

FENTANYL DEATHS SURGES 279%

The rate of drug overdose deaths linked to fentanyl has skyrocketed over the last five years, while the rate of deaths by heroin has dropped. The rate of overdose deaths involving fentanyl spiked by 279% between 2016 and 2021 to 21.6 per 100,000, according to a report by the National Center for Health Statistics' National Vital Statistics System. Meanwhile, drugs that used to make up the majority of overdose deaths, heroin and oxycodone, saw declines in their rates of death. The CDC says that the decrease in heroin-related deaths is linked to increased treatments for people who use heroin. In 2021, among all age groups, fentanyl was the drug with the highest overdose death rates with rates highest among those aged 35 to 44.

ASSISTED SUICIDE LEGISLATION PROPOSED

Assisted suicide has been a topic of conversation in the Illinois General Assembly for more than a decade. It appears that there will be a coordinated effort by the advocacy group Compassion & Choices and the America Civil Liberties Union to approve assisted suicide legislation in Illinois prior to adjournment. According to the C&C website regarding the status of end-of-life legislation in Illinois, an amendment to the Illinois Power of Attorney Act was enacted in 2022, allowing for proof of agency (powers of attorney) to be stored on electronic devices.

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

