

## **ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report August 21, 2023**

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Illinois State Fair festivities generally provide a preview of each party's approach to the next general election, which is slated for November 2024. While the Democrats focused on the four criminal indictments facing former President Trump, the Republicans frequently cited the ongoing or pending trials of those in former House Speaker Michael Madigan's orbit. The Democrats contended that Illinois' rejection of Trump, along with its actions to bolster unions, protect abortion rights, and control guns, all contributed to Illinois being chosen as the site of the 2024 Democratic National Convention. Republicans criticized several of Gov. J.B. Pritzker's policies, such as the passage of a criminal justice reform law that eliminated cash bail and his veto of Senate Bill 76 (which would have allowed construction of new nuclear power in Illinois). Republicans hope to increase their footprint in 2024, as the Senate Republican Caucus holds just 19 seats compared to 40 for Democrats. The state House has a 78-40 Democratic majority, and Democrats hold all statewide elected offices.

### **NEW STATE LAWS AFFECTING HIGHER EDUCATION**

Gov. Pritzker has acted on all bills passed by the Illinois General Assembly during the spring 2023 session. A number of newly enacted state laws affect Illinois higher education.

**[Please CLICK HERE to review ICCTA's list of new state laws affecting Illinois higher education.](#)**

### **GOVERNOR'S VETOES**

The Governor has issued six vetoes or amendatory vetoes of legislation passed during the spring session:

- ❖ [Senate Bill 76](#): The bill is vetoed because the vague definitions in the bill, including the overly broad definition of advanced reactors, will open the door to the proliferation of large-scale nuclear reactors that are so costly to build that they will cause exorbitant ratepayer-funded bailouts. Additionally, it provides no regulatory protections or updates to address the health and safety of Illinois residents who would live and work around these new reactors.
- ❖ [House Bill 2507](#): The Governor has issued an Amendatory Veto due to a change that gave property tax breaks to private nursing home owners in Cook County. That break passes the tax burden to suburban Cook County homeowners and small businesses, with the most impact felt in the south suburbs. That property tax change risks driving up costs for residents and threatens local school funding.
- ❖ [House Bill 2878](#): The Governor has removed this provision through an Amendatory Veto that creates a local pathway for private industry to enter P3 agreements that skirts transparency and anti-corruption requirements established in state statute, including ethics, the Business Enterprise Program, campaign finance, and procurement laws. It also puts the state at greater risk of project failure by decreasing competition and reducing the opportunity for public input currently required under state law during the P3 project planning and implementation process.

- ❖ [House Bill 3445](#): In the Amendatory Veto Message of this omnibus energy bill, Gov. Pritzker states, “My administration appreciates the hard work of the sponsors of this legislation in the House and Senate. HB3445 contains many useful provisions to advance energy policy in Illinois. However, the right of first refusal language inserted by Senate Amendment 4 will raise costs for rate payers by giving incumbent utility providers in the MISO region a monopoly over new transmission lines. Eliminating competition will cause rates to increase in the MISO region, where there is currently over \$3.6 billion in planned transmission construction in the Ameren service territory. Without competition, Ameren ratepayers will pay for these transmission projects at a much higher cost. Competitively bidding transmission construction, instead of giving the utility a monopoly, has been shown to lower costs significantly. My administration is committed to working with stakeholders and our partners in the General Assembly to enact meaningful energy policy, however, I cannot support legislation that puts corporate profits over consumers.”
- ❖ [House Bill 3643](#): The bill is vetoed because it requires the Illinois State Board of Education to enter into a master food service contract that they cannot execute because this is a local school district responsibility. Local school districts, not ISBE, have the expertise and understanding of local needs required to enter into food service contracts based on federal USDA nutrition guidelines. The bill would restrict the capability that local school districts have to contract meal vendors based on their students’ unique local and cultural needs.
- ❖ [Senate Bill 1515](#): The bill is intended to increase protections for workers. However, due to irreconcilable drafting errors, the bill will have an adverse effect on the workers it seeks to protect.

#### **FALL 2023 VETO SESSION**

Veto session will be held **October 24 - 26 and November 7-9**. The veto of SB 76, which was approved by the General Assembly with a veto-proof majority, will likely be debated this fall.

#### **EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY RELEASES FIRST REPORT**

The inaugural report of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity provides a comprehensive picture of the initiative designed to support members of the incumbent (current) workforce in their pursuit of higher education credentials. ECACE is a multifaceted effort by 61 public and private higher education institutions, six state agencies (including the Illinois Community College Board), and community partners to create and align systems and programs to meet the state’s workforce needs in early childhood education and care settings. According to the report, enrollment in higher education programs by members of the current workforce increased from the baseline year by 17.9%. This represented nearly 500 additional enrolled students. The vast majority of current workforce members continued to be enrolled in bachelor’s degree and applied associate (AAS) programs. The number and proportion of enrolled current members of the early childhood education and care workforce are both expected to increase in academic year 2023.

#### **FEDERAL AGENCIES LAUNCH SCHOOL SAFETY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

Several federal departments have launched a school safety awareness campaign to highlight federal resources and evidence-based practices available at [www.schoolsafety.gov](http://www.schoolsafety.gov). The effort involves the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security, Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice. As part of the campaign, the Biden administration will release a range of resources, including a video, communications toolkit, and infographics,

to help schools learn more about how to improve school safety, access support, and share information about the campaign with others.

### **UPDATES ON APPOINTMENTS, ELECTIONS, AND INDICTMENTS**

State Rep. **Lakesia Collins** was sworn in last week as the newest Senator for the 5th District after committee persons selected her to replace retired Sen. **Patricia Van Pelt** (D-Chicago). Rep. **Omar Williams** was also vying for the appointment.

House Assistant Majority Leader and Chair of the Labor & Commerce Committee **Marcus C. Evans, Jr.** was selected as the next vice president of the National Conference of State Legislatures. He will subsequently become the president-elect, then president. NCSL is a bi-partisan, non-political policy focused organization. House Speaker **Chris Welch** and Minority Leader **Tony McCombie** both supported Leader Evans.

The Cook County Democrats have released their listed of slated candidates for the 2024 primary election. Of note, Illinois Supreme Court-appointed incumbent **Joy Cunningham** was slated instead of Appellate Court Justice **Jesse Reyes**. Also, **Mariyana Spyropoulos** was slated over incumbent Circuit Court Clerk **Iris Martinez**. Slated to replace outgoing State's Attorney Kim Foxx is **Clayton Harris, III**. Expect a primary challenge for the State's Attorney's office from **Eileen O'Neill Burke**.

The obstruction of justice and perjury trial of **Tim Mapes**, the longtime chief of staff for indicted former Speaker Madigan, continues in Chicago.

### **UPCOMING HEARING ON IMMIGRANT HEALTHCARE RULEMAKING**

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services will hold a public hearing on proposed rules amendments to Special Eligibility Groups at 11 AM on Tuesday, September 5, via WebEx. The hearing concerns proposed enrollment limitations and copays on two programs that provide medical assistance to noncitizens ages 42-64 (Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults) and 65 and older (Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors ) who meet income criteria and do not qualify for federally matched Medicaid assistance.

### **ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN**

The Illinois Supreme Court has ruled 4-3 to uphold the state's assault weapons ban (the Protect Illinois Communities Act). The law prevents the manufacture and sale in Illinois of high-powered rifles, high-capacity magazines, and devices used to make guns fire more rapidly. The suit from state Rep. **Dan Caulkins**, R-Decatur, was part of a flurry of challenges to the constitutionality of the law after it was signed by Gov. Pritzker on January 10. The law remains in effect in Illinois despite other challenges at the federal level. Anyone who already owned one of the banned weapons prior to the law's January 10 effective date will be able to keep it but will be required to register it with the Illinois State Police.

The 7th Circuit federal appeals court heard oral arguments in a case based on the law's compliance with the U.S. Constitution on June 29. This pending federal case, which is widely expected to end up before the U.S. Supreme Court, will ultimately overrule any state court decisions.

## **IDNR LAUNCHES BLUEPRINT TO HELP COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has released a climate action plan to serve as a blueprint for reducing the agency's carbon footprint and achieving Gov. Pritzker's greenhouse gas reduction goals by 2050. Plans include a pollinator-friendly solar installation, electric charging stations in state parks, and greater use of electric vehicles and equipment.

## **ILLINOIS EPA ANNOUNCES DATES OF NEXT EV REBATE PROGRAM FUNDING ROUND**

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has announced that the next funding round for Illinois' Electric Vehicle Rebate Program will open Wednesday, November 1, 2023 and run through Wednesday, January 31, 2024. EV purchasers must apply for a rebate within 90 days of the vehicle purchase date. Individuals who purchase a new or used all-electric vehicle from an Illinois licensed dealer, meet all other eligibility requirements, and apply during the rebate cycle will be eligible for a rebate as long as funds are available, not to exceed \$12 million.

## **LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT ADVISORY BOARD REPORT**

The Lead Service Line Replacement Advisory Board approved a report that provides recommendations to the General Assembly and Governor Pritzker concerning lead service line replacement. The report includes recommendations from two working groups: a technical working group, which focused on implementation challenges; and a financing working group, which focused on financial and revenue considerations.

## **BIDEN APPROVES PRITZKER'S ILLINOIS SEVERE WEATHER DISASTER DECLARATION**

President Biden has signed a [Disaster Declaration](#) allowing the Federal Emergency Management Agency to offer assistance for residents in Cook County who were impacted by severe weather in July. FEMA's aid could include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and businesses owners recover from the effects of the storms.

## **CHOATE DIRECTOR REPLACED**

Bryant Davis, who served as the Choate Developmental Center's top administrator since 2014, has been replaced by Stephany Hoehner, who has worked as a project manager at the facility since March. In March, IDHS secretary Grace Hou unveiled a plan to move more than half of Choate's 225 residents with developmental disabilities out within three years and improve safety at the center for those who remained.

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

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