



ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report September 18, 2023

The 2024 election season is officially underway! Candidates are announcing campaigns all over the state and passing petitions to get on the March 19 primary ballot. We will have a better sense of who will be on the ballot after the filing period closes on December 4.

VETO SESSION PREVIEW

The fall 2023 veto session will take place **October 24-26 and November 7-9**. In addition to considering the legislation vetoed by the Governor, lawmakers will also be considering whether to renew the Invest in Kids Act Tax Credit Scholarship Program, set to expire at the end of this year. According to a press release issued by a coalition supporting the credit, over 41,000 scholarships have been offered since the inception of the program. If the General Assembly does not take action, 9,500 current recipients will lose their scholarships.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND APPOINTMENTS

Rep. **Jennifer Ladish-Douglass** (D-Elmhurst) has announced that she will not seek re-election. Ladish-Douglass defeated incumbent **Deanne Mazzochi** (R) in 2022 to represent the 45th House District.

Rep. **Justin Slaughter** has been chosen by his colleagues as the next House Chair of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus.

SEIU Healthcare organizer **Yolanda Morris** has been appointed to Sen. **Lakesia Collins'** former House seat. Morris was backed by Sen. Collins, who is also from SEIU. Morris worked with her union on the \$15 an hour minimum wage, and her work as a certified nursing assistant in nursing homes for more than 20 years was highlighted by SEIU Healthcare back in 2018.

Rep. **John Egofske**, who was appointed to replace former House Republican Leader **Jim Durkin**, has decided not to run again in 2024. He has endorsed **Nicole La Ha Zwiernan**, a former Homer Glen Trustee and special needs advocate. Egofske will continue as Mayor of Lemont.

Illinois Department of Human Services secretary **Grace Hou** has been named deputy governor for Health and Human Services, which oversees IDHS and the Departments of Children and Family Services, Healthcare and Family Services, Public Health, and related state agencies. Hou is currently leading a restructuring of the state's system of care for developmentally and mentally disabled individuals and will begin her new role on October 9. Hou replaces **Sol Flores**, who has been deputy governor since January 2019. Flores's final day will be October 13. **Dulce M. Quintero** will become acting secretary of IDHS.

Gov. **JB Pritzker** has appointed **Quiwana Bell** as the assistant secretary for the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention, which operates under IDHS. She will begin in her role on October 1. OFVP was created in 2021 following the passage of the Reimagine Public Safety Act, to take a "comprehensive approach to reducing

firearm violence through community investments to address root causes and provide those most at-risk with access to evidence-based and trauma-informed services.” The office has provided roughly \$215 million to 170 different community-based organizations across the state.

HOUSE STAFFERS SEEK UNION STATUS

More than 20 staffers in Illinois House Speaker **Emanuel “Chris” Welch**’s office have renewed their efforts to be recognized as a union. The employees, whose roles include research and legislative functions, formed the Illinois Legislative Staff Association earlier this year in a bid for higher wages and better benefits. They went public with their intentions to unionize in May but in a recent statement, the association said that the Speaker has not been willing to discuss the issue with the group despite requests it has made over the last nine months.

UNDERGRAD ENROLLMENT UP IN ILLINOIS

Universities across Illinois have released their ten-day figures. These numbers are the traditional benchmark for reporting enrollment at colleges and universities:

- Enrollment of first-year students at **University of Illinois System** universities hit a record number of 13,231 students – and 74% come from Illinois. Total undergraduate enrollment also reached a record high with 60,013 undergraduates.
- **Eastern Illinois University** reported strong numbers in targeted areas. International enrollment reached record highs with both the number of students (880) and the number of countries represented (60).
- **Illinois State University** welcomed its largest incoming class in 36 years with 4,147 freshmen, a 4% increase from last year. Total enrollment at ISU is at 20,989 – up by 1.5%. The student body is becoming more diverse, as approximately 41% of this year’s freshman class come from traditionally underrepresented groups.
- For the first time since 2014, enrollment at **Southern Illinois University Carbondale** has grown. Overall enrollment for fall 2023 is 11,359 — 252 students, or 2.3%, more than last year — the highest overall boost in the number of students in 21 years and highest percentage increase in over 30 years. The university also saw a 10.8% increase in new transfer students to 1,188. Part of that success can be attributed to Saluki Step Ahead agreements signed with more than 40 community colleges in Illinois, Missouri, and Texas since 2021. Saluki Step Ahead provides a seamless path for students who earn associate degrees in participating community colleges to obtain their SIU bachelor’s degrees online in select programs.
- **Western Illinois University**’s fall 2023 total new student (freshman, transfer and graduate for both Macomb and Quad Cities) enrollment is 2,145. WIU has 1,226 full-time freshmen – an increase of 152 students from last year. Western’s total fall 2023 enrollment is 7,073.

RETIREMENT OF OUTSTANDING STATE DEBT

Gov. Pritzker announced that \$449 million in tobacco bonds have been retired through a defeasance, benefiting taxpayers through debt service savings and interest earnings in an aggregate of \$50 million. The bonds represent what remained of a \$1.5 billion debt associated with the Great Recession, dating back to 2010, when the state was struggling with a multi-billion bill backlog.

CHICAGO'S 2024 BUDGET FORECAST REVEALS \$538 MILLION SHORTFALL

Chicago's financial outlook for the 2024 fiscal year was unveiled by Mayor Brandon Johnson, as he disclosed a budget gap of \$538 million. The mayor assured taxpayers that the base property tax levy would remain untouched. Johnson said that he anticipates increased expenditures in 2024, which include Chicago's promise to be a "Welcoming City" for asylum seekers transported by the state of Texas to Chicago, alongside expected rises in personnel, pension, and contractual costs. The mayor said that he hopes the General Assembly will be able to collaborate to seek federal support and to increase the state budget line for immigrant services.

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT OUTLINES PREPARATIONS FOR END OF CASH BAIL

Illinois will become the first state to completely abolish cash bail, effective September 18, 2023. The state Supreme Court has outlined many of its preparations for the implementation of the Pretrial Fairness Act, passed as part of [Public Act 101-0652](#) (Slaughter/Sims) and deemed constitutional by the court on July 18, 2023.

- ❖ One of those measures was the creation of the Illinois Judicial College Committee on Pretrial Education as a standing committee of the Illinois Judicial College. The CPE will provide judges, pretrial officers, and other judicial branch partners with ongoing continuing education to overview and discuss the substantive and procedural law, rules, materials, and pretrial resources.
- ❖ In August 2021, the Court also created the Office of Statewide Pretrial Services, which has quickly grown to a staff of approximately 170 and is operational in 70 counties in Illinois.
- ❖ The legislature created a \$10 million Public Defender Fund to be used by the Illinois Supreme Court to provide funding to all counties except Cook for public defenders and public defender services. The 101 counties will receive from \$77,000 up to \$147,555 using a formula based on several factors. This additional funding is expected to be transformative for public defenders and their clients across Illinois. It is expected to be distributed in the next few weeks.
- ❖ The ability to monitor and analyze the effectiveness of the Safe-T Act is contingent upon the ability to collect pretrial data and produce useful reports to the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, Chief Judges, stakeholders, and the public. OSPS and other AOIC divisions have been working to identify existing capabilities and gaps that need to be closed to allow data collection and reporting.
- ❖ The advent of pretrial reform prompted the amendment of 20 Illinois Supreme Court rules and the repeal of seven more. Those amendments were held in abeyance while the Court considered a challenge to the constitutionality of the Pretrial Fairness Act, and they will now take effect on September 18, with the commencement of the pretrial hearings contemplated by the Act. The Court's website also now provides forms for appeals from those hearings.

IDPH ENDORSES CDC RECOMMENDATION FOR UPDATED COVID-19 SHOTS

IDPH has endorsed the recommendation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for the newly FDA-approved COVID-19 shots for everyone over the age of 6 months. The federal agencies have given the green light for updated mRNA vaccines developed by Moderna and Pfizer that target the currently circulating strains of the COVID-19 virus. The federal guidance comes as data indicates an uptick in COVID-19 hospitalizations in Illinois and the nation, with a 7% increase statewide in the week ending September 2. These newly approved shots are considered safe when given at the same time as other vaccines for the flu and RSV.

EXECUTIVE INSPECTOR GENERAL REFERS 177 PPP FRAUD CASES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2022, the Office of the Illinois Executive Inspector General initiated a large-scale fraud investigation project to examine whether state employees improperly obtained federal Paycheck Protection Program loans. PPP loans were issued to provide relief to small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and were eligible for forgiveness if used for qualifying expenses. Using publicly available information, the OEIG identified PPP loans obtained by state employees. Because a preliminary review of the data revealed a large number of such loans, the OEIG initially focused the investigation on PPP loans of approximately \$20,000 or more. To be eligible for a PPP loan of that size, a business typically would have needed to generate approximately \$100,000 or more of annual net profit or gross income -- earned outside of the employee's full-time state work hours. Once the OEIG identified these PPP loans, it conducted further investigation to determine whether employees received those loans in a fraudulent manner. To date, the OEIG has initiated 438 such investigations, concluded 204 investigations, and of those, 177 were referred to law enforcement -- loan amounts total more than \$4.5 million in public funds. Most of the founded cases (132) have been among employees at the state Department of Human Services.

COMPLAINT ALLEGES COMED VIOLATED STATE LAW BY RAISING CUSTOMER FEES

A group of businesses filed a complaint with state regulators last week alleging that Chicago electric company ComEd improperly raised customer bills this summer. The complaint -- centered on a portion of the 2021 Climate and Equitable Jobs Act that allows utilities to recoup carbon mitigation investments -- alleges the utility failed to follow the proper regulatory channels laid out in Gov. Pritzker's marquee climate policy. The complaint was filed by the Chemical Industry Council of Illinois, a trade group that lobbies for chemical businesses, alleging that the change in billing will cost its roughly 100 member companies about \$100 million combined between June 2023 and May 2024. Eight other groups are also listed as complainants, including Loyola Academy, a suburban Catholic school. The Illinois Commerce Commission will consider the complaint, which could set a precedent allowing the oversight agency to have tighter control over how fees are calculated.

While businesses filed the complaint, the CFRA charge appears on residential customers' bills as well. ComEd serves 3.8 million residential customers and 400,000 non-residential customers, according to data from the ICC. For residential customers, this fee currently accounts for around 7% of total monthly bills, depending on local taxes and electric usage.

LG STRATTON LED ILLINOIS DELEGATION TO JAPAN

Lt. Governor **Juliana Stratton** led a delegation of state officials and business leaders to Japan from September 10-12 at the 53rd Annual Joint Meeting of the Japan-Midwest U.S. Associations Conference in Tokyo. At that event, governors and economic development leaders from the Midwest met with governors and corporate executives from Japan. The Lieutenant Governor's first international delegation focused on strengthening economic cooperation between Illinois and Japan. Joining Stratton and her staff were **Kristin Richards**, director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and representatives from several Illinois business interests including the Illinois Realtors and the Illinois Manufacturer's Association.

ILLINOIS PAUSES COPAY REQUIREMENT FOR NONCITIZENS

In June, HFS announced that it would roll back several health care provisions for noncitizens between the ages of 42 and 64 covered by the HBIA program, as well as those over 65 who are covered by the HBIS program.

Among those changes, HFS would require copays from enrollees who were not eligible for a federal match. That would mean inpatient visits could cost \$250, and an emergency visit could impose a \$100 copay. But on September 5, HFS sent out a notice to providers, writing that co-pays have not been implemented yet, and cost-sharing from providers should be completed before patients are asked to dole out co-pays or coinsurance. HFS is also instructing health care providers to refund any co-pays they already collected. **Omar Shaker**, HFS' chief of administrative rules, told a legislative oversight committee last week that the department ultimately plans to reinstate the copay policy, but it does not yet have the systems in place to properly administer it.

PRITZKER, GOTION ANNOUNCE \$2 BILLION EV BATTERY FACILITY IN MANTENO

Illinois' first electric vehicle battery manufacturer will begin operating in Manteno in 2024, bringing 2,600 jobs to Kankakee County and kickstarting the green energy economy in the state. The Governor's office said that the gigafactory was made possible through a \$536 million Reimaging Energy and Vehicles Illinois tax credit package. About \$213 million of that amount will go toward payroll tax credits. Gotion will be the first recipient of Invest in Illinois funding, in the amount of \$125 million under the Governor's discretionary purview. Gotion will also receive a local property tax abatement for 30 years.

INCOBRASA INDUSTRIES BREAKS GROUND ON \$250 MILLION MANUFACTURING FACILITY EXPANSION

Gov. Pritzker and DCEO officials joined state and local leaders to celebrate the groundbreaking of Incobrasa Industries LTD's expanded manufacturing facility in Gilman. The expansion represents more than \$250 million in capital investment and will create 40 new full-time jobs while retaining 200 jobs. The Gilman plant processes soybeans to produce animal feed, packaged vegetable oil, and biodiesel. This expansion will enable the company to make use of the vast supply of soybeans that are available in Illinois, which is the largest soybean producer in the United States. The project will include a 50-acre solar array that will have the capacity to generate 5 megawatts of energy, which can be used to provide power directly to the plant or to feed the grid.

UPSIDE FOODS' FIRST COMMERCIAL-SCALE CULTIVATED MEAT PRODUCTION PLANT SET FOR GLENVIEW

UPSIDE Foods – a leading cultivated meat, poultry and seafood company -- will locate its first commercial-scale production facility in Glenview. As the first cultivated meat company to receive FDA approval, UPSIDE's new Glenview facility marks a major milestone for cultivated meat production, supporting Illinois' ecosystem and adding to the state's dominance in the food processing industry. Bolstered by one of the first EDGE for Start Ups agreements, the company will invest at least \$141 million and create a minimum of 75 new jobs.

BALLY'S OPENS CHICAGO'S FIRST CASINO AS TEMPORARY SITE AT MEDINAH TEMPLE

Bally's Chicago finally got the green light from the Illinois Gaming Board to launch the city's long-sought first casino. Medinah Temple in River North opened last weekend. Bally's successfully completed two days of practice gaming sessions under the watchful eyes of regulatory staff and an outside auditing firm Wednesday and Thursday, earning the casino a temporary operating permit from the Gaming Board. Proceeds from the practice sessions will be donated to local Chicago charities during a ribbon-cutting ceremony later this month. In addition, Bally's must pay the Gaming Board more than \$135 million in upfront fees within 30 days, which will be used to fund infrastructure projects statewide.

Rhode Island-based Bally's won a heated competition last year, besting four other proposals with its plan to build a \$1.74 billion casino at the site of Tribune Publishing's Freedom Center printing plant in River West. It

plans to open the permanent casino in 2026. Medinah Temple will serve as a temporary casino for up to three years while the permanent facility is built. Bally's Chicago will be open seven days a week from 8 AM to 4 AM.

CHICAGO PUBLIC TRANSIT ACTION PLAN UNVEILED

A new report offers solutions to bolster the long-term sustainability of public transit in the Chicago area as the region's transit agencies contend with fewer riders and a massive budget shortfall worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning has released a plan that it claims will keep the Chicago Transit Authority, Metra, and the suburban bus system Pace (which have been relying on federal COVID relief funds) financially afloat and affordable for riders. The plan includes recommendations for new revenue sources, incentives to bolster ridership – such as reduced fare cards and universal fare passes – and a complete restructuring of the governing boards tasked with keeping the buses and trains running. The draft plan will go before the planning agency's board for a vote next month before it is sent to the Governor and lawmakers by January 1, 2024. The General Assembly will then decide how to proceed.

ILLINOIS JOINS GLOBAL CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT OPIOID RECOVERY

The Chicago skyline was lit purple to honor those in recovery from September 8-14, in recognition of September as National Recovery Month. Illinois residents were encouraged to join over 13,000 IDHS staff and wear purple throughout the month to celebrate family and friends who are in recovery. Events such as training, speaking engagements, memorials, and online activities will be hosted by IDHS' community partners during Recovery Month. These events are critical to addressing and removing the stigma associated with overdose deaths and encouraging the public to support families and communities in remembrance of those who have lost their lives.

SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING AWARDED TO ILLINOIS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service has awarded over \$544,000 in Fiscal Year 2023 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funding to Illinois. With this grant, the Illinois Department of Agriculture will fund eight projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crop products and create new market opportunities for the state's specialty crop producers. Among IDOA's projects is \$50,000 for the Gardeneers' Growing Food + Equitable Justice Project, where gardeneers will partner with schools in under-resourced communities. Additional funded projects focus on areas including urban agriculture, disease mitigation in cucurbits, and the shelf life of strawberries.

2023 ILLINOIS STATE FAIR SETS HISTORIC ATTENDANCE RECORDS

The more than 700,000 attendees over the 11-day event made the 2023 Illinois State Fair the most highly attended fair since industry standards were enacted. Planning is now underway for the 2024 Illinois State Fair, which will run August 8-18.

ILLINOIS-WISCONSIN TEST CROSS-BORDER INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS

The Illinois/Wisconsin Interoperable Communications Exercise took place in the North Dunes Nature Preserve and Adeline Jay Geo-Karis Illinois Beach State Park in Zion, Illinois on September 13. This cross-border exercise is intended to test emergency communication capabilities with response personnel from Illinois and Wisconsin. The Cybersecurity Infrastructure and Security Agency evaluated the participating agencies during the exercise.

IDOI JOINS COALITION SEEKING TO PROTECT CONSUMERS

The Illinois Department of Insurance joined five other state Departments of Insurance last week to increase protections for millions of health insurance consumers. The state DOIs sent a signed letter in support of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' proposed rule to restrict Short-Term Limited Duration Insurance and fixed indemnity insurance plans which do not provide comprehensive health coverage and are not subject to the same regulatory standards as comprehensive health coverage. STLDI is a type of health insurance that is designed to fill temporary gaps in coverage when an individual is transitioning from one source of coverage to another. The product was never designed to be more than "GAP" insurance, and it fills a market that must be covered. These basic facts were left out of the letter. Currently, Illinois has 15 STLDI issuers.

OSFM ANNOUNCES \$4 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR SMALL EQUIPMENT GRANT PROGRAM

The Office of the State Fire Marshal has announced that the application period is open for the Small Equipment Grant Program. The OSFM will award \$4 million to eligible fire departments and ambulance services for the purchase of small firefighting and ambulance equipment. All interested departments should send an application to OSFM electronically or postmarked no later than December 15. The Small Equipment Grant Program was established to provide grants of up to \$26,000 to eligible departments. A total of \$1.5 million was awarded to 64 fire departments/districts and EMS providers across the state in March.

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

