

ICCTA Legislative Report

March 16, 2020

Capitol Update

Illinois lawmakers were scheduled to return to the State Capitol following Tuesday's primary election, but both chambers canceled session for March 18-20 due to the coronavirus outbreak. According to leadership, future session days will be determined on a week-by-week basis. The original session calendar requires legislation to be passed out of committee in the first chamber by Friday, March 27. We are waiting to hear how the General Assembly will handle existing deadlines moving forward. The General Assembly is scheduled to be in district for the spring holidays from April 4-21.

The possibility of canceling the March 17 primary was discussed but that has been walked back for now.

Governor Pritzker officially issued a disaster proclamation regarding COVID-19, which makes Illinois eligible for federal resources. The Secretary of State has canceled all tours and lobby days at the Capitol. It is possible the legislature could return before the scheduled holiday break to address "must-pass" legislation, such as the Hospital Assessment proposal. The state must submit its proposal to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) by April 1 for approval to be implemented by July 1 when the current assessment expires. Without the assessment, the state could lose \$3.5 billion in Medicaid funding. The Illinois Hospital Association's board meets on March 27, and legislators and administration people involved in the talks hope to have the IHA's tentative approval by then. That doesn't leave much of a window of opportunity before April 1 or 2, but these are wild times.

In the meantime, please call or email your state lawmakers to remind them of the importance of the Governor's proposed \$75 million set-aside for community college Monetary Award Program grants.

COVID-19 Update

As of Sunday evening, there are 93 cases of the virus in 13 counties in Illinois. There have been no deaths in Illinois attributed to the virus to date. Five additional counties are now reporting cases – Champaign, Clinton, Sangamon, Whiteside, and Winnebago counties. Other locations with cases include Chicago and Cook, Cumberland, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, St. Clair, and Woodford counties.

Governor Pritzker has asked that any indoor events which attract over 250 people be canceled, while mandating all outdoor events of 1,000 people or more be canceled or postponed. The Governor also ordered schools closed from March 17 through the end of March. On Sunday, the Governor announced all bars and restaurants in Illinois will be closed to the public for dining-in, beginning at close of business on Monday, March 16, through Monday, March 30. The state is working closely with restaurant owners and food delivery services to ensure kitchens can safely remain open to continue food delivery and put in place drive-thru and curbside pickup options for restaurants to continue to serve the public.

The Governor also announced he has directed state agencies to implement plans for a temporary reduction of government functions and workforce while maintaining core functions and essential operations. All state employees will continue to be paid during this period.

For information about how you, your school, workplace, and community can prepare, please visit [Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities](#). For general questions about COVID-19, call the hotline at 1-800-889-3931 or email dph.sick@illinois.gov. A list of local health departments can be found on the [IDPH website](#).

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ICCTA Legislative Report

March 25, 2020

Capitol Update

Illinois lawmakers were scheduled to return to the State Capitol following the March 17 primary election, but both chambers canceled session for March 18-20, and then cancelled session for the week of March 23. The original session calendar required legislation to be passed out of committee in the first chamber by this Friday, March 27. Today, the House announced that it has extended that deadline to April 24, with the deadline for bills to pass out of the House chamber extended to May 8 before the bills are sent to the Senate. These and other deadlines will be reviewed and extended as needed moving forward. We are waiting to hear how the Senate will handle existing deadlines.

The General Assembly was scheduled to be in district for the spring holidays from April 4-21, but members have been advised that they could be called to Springfield during that time to address urgent matters, such as the Hospital Assessment proposal. The state must submit its assessment proposal to the federal CMS by April 1 so that it can be reviewed and approved prior to July 1, when the current assessment expires. Without the assessment, the state could lose \$3.5 billion in Medicaid funding. Illinois is seeking an extension.

COVID-19 Update

Yesterday Gov. JB Pritzker stated that his 'stay at home' order could be extended beyond April 7. He explained that this deadline is not based on science, but is the end of his 30-day "disaster proclamation." The state of Illinois has developed a useful [website](https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx) for resources and updates on COVID-19 at <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx>.

Today the Governor just announced that the state tax filing deadline has been extended to July 15, aligning with the federal government. This will result in a significant delay in revenue for the state in the short term, in addition to the expected loss in revenue from lower payroll and sales tax receipts this fiscal year due to COVID-19. It is too early to measure the financial impact. The State Comptroller has announced that her office "will continue to make critical payments for debt service, state payrolls, K-12 schools, our social and human service providers, and required pension payments. We will prioritize state payments to our hospitals, doctors and everyday heroes on the front lines fighting COVID-19."

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today announced 330 new cases of coronavirus disease in Illinois, including three deaths. Currently, IDPH is reporting a total of 1,865 cases in 35 counties in Illinois. The age of cases ranges from younger than one to 99 years.

For community college-specific information on the COVID-19 crisis, visit the Illinois Community College Board's [Coronavirus: Guidance and Resources](#) page.

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ICCTA Legislative Report

April 15, 2020

Using his emergency rulemaking powers, Gov. JB Pritzker announced Monday that essential workers in Illinois who contract COVID-19 will now be covered by workers' compensation. This drastic rule change (adopted with less than 24 hours' notice) could significantly increase costs and require employers to pay for medical expenses and salary benefits if an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19. Proof the illness was contracted at the workplace is not required, as exposure will be "rebuttably presumed" to have arisen during the course of employment and "rebuttably presumed" to be causally connected to the hazards of COVID-19 essential work.

The text of the Emergency Amendment can be found here:

https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/iwcc/news/Documents/13APR20-Emergency_Amendment_Only-50IAC9030_70.pdf.

The essential workers (termed "COVID-19 First Responder or Front-Line Worker") covered under this emergency rule include: ... *the crucial personnel identified under the following headings in Section 1 Part 12 of Executive Order 2020-10 dated March 20, 2020: ... "Educational institutions"; ... "Day care centers for employees exempted by [Executive Order 2020-10]"....*

Gov. Pritzker also signed another Executive Order on Tuesday that impacts the ability to garnish wages and collect debt. [Executive Order 2020-25](#) suspends new summons for wage garnishment and deductions, as well as citations to discover assets for debt collection, for the duration of Illinois' disaster proclamation prompted by the coronavirus.

For community college-specific information on the COVID-19 crisis, visit the Illinois Community College Board's [Coronavirus: Guidance and Resources](#) page.

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ICCTA Legislative Report

April 26, 2020

CAPITOL UPDATE

Illinois House Cancels Session This Week: The Illinois House of Representatives has cancelled its session days scheduled for April 28-30. The deadline for House bills to move out of committees, which had previously been rescheduled for April 30, will be extended to May 7. The 3rd Reading deadline for House bills, which had previously been rescheduled for May 8, will be extended to May 15.

State Withdraws Emergency Workers Compensation Rule: The Illinois Workers Compensation Commission is withdrawing a [controversial rule](#) that would grant benefits to essential employees who become ill from COVID-19, even if the workers cannot prove they got the virus while on the job. This follows an April 23 ruling by a Sangamon County judge, who granted a [temporary restraining order](#) in response to a lawsuit filed by a coalition of business groups (including the Illinois Manufacturers Association and the Illinois Retail Merchants Association). The plaintiffs had alleged that the Commission exceeded its statutory authority by enacting substantive changes through a rule change, rather than through the legislative process. The Governor's office indicates that the Commission will reissue a revised emergency amendment at a later date.

Electronic Submission of Construction Bids Allowed: In response to concerns expressed by community colleges regarding compliance with the Illinois Public Community College Act ([110 ILCS 805/3-27.1](#)), Gov. JB Pritzker included Section 15 in his [Executive Order 2020-31](#) on April 24. Section 15 of the EO states:

Section 15. The provision of the Illinois Public Community College Act, 110 ILCS 805/3-27.1, prohibiting bids for construction purposes from being submitted electronically, is suspended.

COVID-19 Update

Stay-At-Home Order Extended Through May 30: On April 23, Gov. Pritzker announced that he would extend the state's stay-at-home order through May 30. The new order leaves most restrictions in place but loosens some restrictions in areas with very low risk of viral transmission. The Governor also warned that if crowds develop and people increasingly violate the order, restrictions will be reinstated.

The new Executive Order, which will be formally issued this week, will include the following modifications:

OUTDOOR RECREATION: State parks will begin a phased re-opening under guidance from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Fishing and boating in groups of no more than two people will be permitted. A list of parks that will be open on May 1 and additional guidelines can be found on the Illinois Department of Natural Resources website. Golf will be permitted under strict safety guidelines provided by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and when ensuring that social distancing is followed.

NEW ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES: Greenhouses, garden centers, and nurseries may re-open as essential businesses. These stores must follow social distancing requirements and require that employees and customers wear a face covering. Animal grooming services may also re-open.

NON-ESSENTIAL RETAIL: Retail stores not designated as non-essential businesses and operations may re-open to fulfill telephone and online orders through pick-up outside the store and delivery.

FACE COVERINGS: Beginning on May 1, individuals will be required to wear a face-covering or a mask when in a public place where they cannot maintain a six-foot social distance. In addition, face-coverings will be required in public indoor spaces, such as stores. This new requirement applies to all individuals over the age of two who are able to medically tolerate a face-covering or a mask.

ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES AND MANUFACTURING: Essential businesses and manufacturers will be required to provide face-coverings to all employees who are not able to maintain six feet of social distancing, as well as follow new requirements that maximize social distancing and prioritize the well-being of employees and customers. This will include occupancy limits for essential businesses and precautions such as staggering shifts and operating only essential lines for manufacturers.

SCHOOLS: Educational institutions may allow and establish procedures for pick-up of necessary supplies or student belongings. Dormitory move-outs must follow public health guidelines, including social distancing.

The Illinois Department of Public Health will also be issuing guidance to surgi-centers and hospitals to allow for certain elective surgeries for non-life-threatening conditions, starting on May 1. Facilities will need to meet specific criteria, including proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ensuring that enough overall space for COVID-19 patients remains available, and testing of elective surgery patients to ensure COVID-19 negative status.

Illinois Supreme Court to Conduct Oral Arguments via Videoconference: According to the National Center for State Courts, Illinois will join 26 other states in using videoconferencing to conduct oral arguments. This is the first time such technology has ever been embraced by the state's seven Supreme Court justices. The Court is scheduled to hear 11 cases this session: four on May 12, four on May 13, and three on May 14. Attorneys and members of the court will use Zoom to conduct oral arguments; members of the public can watch on the Supreme Court's YouTube page.

FEMA Issues Guidance on PPE Use in Non-Healthcare Settings: Recent [guidance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) summarizes how organizations should consider and manage their PPE needs while ensuring the protection of workers during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

For community college-specific information on the COVID-19 crisis, visit the Illinois Community College Board's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Updates and Resources](#) page.

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ICCTA Legislative Report

May 4, 2020

Capital Update

Last Friday, May 1, marked the first day of Gov. JB Pritzker's newly issued disaster proclamation and newly filed [Executive Order 2020-32](#) extending the stay-at-home order, with modifications, through May 30. During the Governor's daily press briefings, he continues to reiterate that we will remain under the stay-at-home guidance until Illinois experiences a consistent drop in newly reported cases over 14 days. This could also mean a decrease in positive tests as a percentage of total tests, as the state has increased its testing capability over a 24-hour period in excess of 10,000 tests during the preceding week. Testing will need to continue to increase as outbreaks persist at long-term care facilities and manufacturing facilities. While it appears Illinois has plateaued, it is not yet clear if we have peaked. Gov. Pritzker has alluded that he is looking at multiple factors to determine how he will proceed with a phased-in reopening. However, the specific criteria he will use when determining which direction to follow remains unknown. A more detailed roadmap from the administration could be coming soon.

The Illinois General Assembly has not yet convened during the pandemic, nor are they scheduled to return to Springfield. Before the end of Fiscal Year 2020 (June 30), members will need to pass a budget for FY 21 and take up other crucial measures. It is not yet clear when they will return or for how long. Several possibilities exist. Legislators could return to Springfield for the final two weeks of May, thereby needing only a simple majority to pass the budget. Although legislators are considered essential under the Governor's stay-at-home order, they could wait until after the stay-at-home order expires in June, when they would need a super-majority of votes to pass a budget. Yet another possibility would be for the members to return for one day to vote to enable remote voting. We expect more clarity on this in the coming days.

House Cancels Session This Week – From the Speaker's Chief of Staff, Jessica Basham: "First, please note that the session days scheduled for next week (Tuesday, May 5 through Friday, May 8) are cancelled. The deadline for House Bills out of Committees, which had previously been rescheduled for May 7, will be extended to Friday, May 15. The 3rd Reading deadline for House Bills, which had previously been rescheduled for May 15, will be extended to Friday, May 22. The deadline for Senate Bills out of Committees will be extended from May 15 to Friday, May 29, and the 3rd Reading deadline for Senate Bills will be extended from May 22 to Sunday, May 31."

COVID-19 Update

- **Contact Tracing** – Gov. Pritzker says that contact tracing – a way to track, warn, and quarantine individuals with significant contact with newly diagnosed COVID-19 patients – is critical to reopening Illinois. The biggest problem to implementation is finding enough workers and getting the technology set up. Dr. Ngozi Ezike, director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, cited estimates that there needs to be 30 contact tracers for every 100,000 people. That means more than 3,800 interviewers to handle necessary investigations to trace contacts during this pandemic.

- **IDPH Workplace Health and Safety Guidance** – Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-32 (the stay-at-home order), the [Illinois Department of Public Health issued guidance](#) instructing employees that their employers are required to comply, to the greatest extent feasible, with social distancing requirements. The following links were provided by IPDH for specific audiences:
 - [Businesses](#)
 - [Colleges & Universities](#)
 - [Community Settings](#)
 - [EMS & First Responders](#)
 - [Healthcare Facilities & Workers](#)
 - [Home](#)

- [Local Health Departments](#)
 - [Long Term Care Facilities](#)
 - [Schools](#)
 - [Tourism & Travel](#)
- **Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation Updates** – [Here are updates on recent Department actions related to COVID-19.](#)
 - **Lawmakers File Lawsuits Challenging Pritzker’s Authority to Issue a Successive Disaster Proclamation** – Lawsuits have been filed by State Rep. Darren Bailey in Clay County and State Rep. John Cabello in Winnebago County challenging the stay-at-home order on the grounds that the order exceeds Pritzker’s legal authority under the state Emergency Management Agency Act by extending the order beyond 30 days. The lawsuits are similar and are filed by the same attorney. In the Bailey lawsuit, the Clay County judge issued a temporary restraining order exempting Bailey, and only Bailey, from Pritzker’s executive order. The Illinois Attorney General’s office argued the lawsuit erroneously interprets the Act and “contradicts the long-standing practice by numerous governors of issuing multiple and often successive emergency disaster proclamations that have allowed them to continue exercising emergency powers for the duration of the disaster.” The AG’s office filed an appeal with the Illinois 5th District Appellate Court on Wednesday seeking to overturn the Clay County judge’s ruling.
 - **Federal Lawsuit Filed by a Church** – A federal judge has denied a temporary restraining order sought by Beloved Church in Lena. The church’s pastor had [filed suit](#) against Gov. Pritzker and other local law enforcement agencies, alleging that the government violated First Amendment rights by restricting residents and churches from meeting. The plaintiff, represented by former GOP Representative Peter Breen, also held in-person services on Sunday in defiance of the order. On the same day the lawsuit was filed, Pritzker modified his stay-at-home order to list the exercise of religion as an essential activity for which leaving the house is permitted -- but that all religious gatherings are still limited to 10 people or less.
 - **Lawsuit Filed in Cook County by the Town of Cicero** – A Cicero-based nursing home, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and Gov. Pritzker are named in a lawsuit filed by the Town of Cicero over an uncontrolled COVID-19 outbreak in the long-term care facility. They further allege IDPH “failed to act” despite being alerted two weeks ago. On April 1, City View reported its first two confirmed COVID-19 cases. By April 30, 175 residents and 41 staff have tested positive. Nine residents and one staff member have died. The plaintiff is seeking an injunction against the facility and wants IDPH to move patients out of the facility and into either the recently reopened Westlake Hospital in Melrose Park or the underutilized McCormick Place field hospital.

For community college-specific information on the COVID-19 crisis, visit the Illinois Community College Board's [Coronavirus: Updates and Resources](#) page.

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ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2020 SESSION REVIEW

The close of the 101st General Assembly has been unlike any other. The Illinois General Assembly began session in January, still riding high off a very productive 2019 session. The focus was to be more narrow in scope; tackling a comprehensive energy bill, reviewing the new gaming expansion law to incentivize a Chicago casino, protecting children in foster care, addressing the shortcomings within the Department of Children and Family Services, ethics and lobbying reform, and passing a balanced budget. Everything came to an abrupt halt when COVID-19 hit Illinois. The last day the General Assembly met was on March 5th. Eventually, the two chambers formed informal working groups to address several issues typically addressed in a committee setting. These groups met via conference calls for weeks, outside of public scrutiny.

Ultimately, the General Assembly produced a plan to enable lawmakers to safely return to Springfield for a three-day abbreviated session. Legislators and staff submitted to COVID-19 tests. Five legislators chose not to travel to Springfield due to health reasons or self-quarantining. The House convened in the BOS Convention Center. The Senate convened in the Capitol. The public had little meaningful access. Legislative action was available to the public through live streaming.

Before gaveling in on the first day of session, Governor Pritzker withdrew a controversial rule creating a new Class A misdemeanor for businesses not complying with the executive orders mandating closures. Opponents to the rule successfully argued creating legal enforcements like misdemeanors is beyond the scope of the Governor's executive power and is solely within the purview of the General Assembly. Pritzker then called on lawmakers to pass legislation enabling law enforcement to fine businesses, between \$75 and \$2,500, for not following the Restore Illinois plan. The legislature did not act on that request. Since the pandemic hit, Governor Pritzker has issued 37 Executive Orders. Because the legislature did not support enforcement of the Governor's actions, the Governor could struggle in the coming weeks to enforce his orders. Stakeholders will need to diligently monitor agency emergency rulemaking until the General Assembly returns on November 17th for veto session.

The three-day special session was ultimately extended for one day to provide lawmakers enough time to do their work. They passed 22 bills, all of which are expected to be signed by the Governor, including a budget, borrowing authority, and several measures related to COVID-19 for continuity of government and to support people whose lives have been disrupted by the pandemic.

BILLS PASSED DURING SPECIAL SESSION

Budget – [Senate Bill 264](#)

With only Democrat support, lawmakers passed a budget package authorizing \$40 billion in general revenue spending for FY21. This budget allows for spending at about the same level as the last budget.

Much of the spending remains tentative depending on the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic and potential congressional action that could send more financial aid to states. Lawmakers crafted the budget with a lot of unknowns, such as the depth of the economic hit from the virus, how much more the state will need to spend to respond to the virus, whether the voters will approve a graduated income tax in November, and if the state will receive support from the federal government.

Unlike the Governor's introduced budget in February, this budget does not presume the graduated income tax amendment will pass. The state is also projecting a \$2.7 billion shortfall for the current FY20, ending June 30 and a \$6.2 billion hole for FY21, even with approval of the graduated income tax. One key to making the budget work is a plan to borrow up to \$5 billion from the Federal Reserve's Municipal Liquidity Facility program. That program allows the central bank to purchase certain short-term debt from states to help them make up for the loss of revenue due to the pandemic. This will serve as a "bridge loan" until the state receives direct support in the next stimulus package from the federal government. Congress has not yet authorized such a package and there is sharp disagreement between congressional Republicans and Democrats over what that plan should look like. The General Assembly has also given the governor discretionary authority to set aside up to 15% of any line item or lump sum and 8% transferability between operational lines.

Highlights:

- The budget essentially calls for flat funding for most state programs, including **K-12 schools**, which will see no increase in their evidence-based funding over their current levels. Funding for **state universities and community colleges** is also held flat at current-year levels, as is funding for **MAP grants and AIM HIGH** grants.
- Flat spending also means local governments will not see a reduction of state tax collections from the **Local Government Distributive Fund**. Municipalities have complained for years they have been given less money from the fund than they are supposed to receive, putting a strain on their budgets. For FY21, LGDF revenue rates will increase slightly (by eliminating the 5% cut made in FY20). This budget marks the first time in several years LGDF has not been reduced.
- A few state agencies are slated for increases in the new budget, including the **Illinois Department of Public Health**, the agency coordinating much of the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Its total budget, including federal funds, is slated to grow 144%, to more than \$1.6 billion. Included in that figure is \$416 million in federal funds for testing and services provided by local health departments.
- **The Department on Aging** will see an additional \$58 million to raise wages for adult care providers, transportation, and homemaker service providers to \$14 per hour.
- **The Department of Children and Family Services** is also slated for a 20% increase in general revenue funding, or about \$170 million, to provide rate increases for foster care providers, to hire 123 investigative staff, and to address caseload growth.
- Another **\$1.8 billion is earmarked for the Illinois Emergency Management Agency**, and it gives Governor Pritzker authority to decide how it is spent, although the federal money comes with significant strings attached so it can be spent only for specific purposes.

- The package also sets up a **special fund to receive and disburse money from the federal CARES Act**, a \$2.2 trillion federal relief program that Congress approved earlier this year. Illinois expects to receive about \$2.8 billion for the current fiscal year and \$3.8 billion for FY21. This money is earmarked for direct aid to the **state's health care industry to help hospitals, nursing homes, mental health centers and other care providers absorb** the cost they have incurred for dealing with the pandemic. The funds will also be used for testing and contact tracing, education, affordable housing grants, airports, and small business grants. The budget allows for \$3.7 billion in supplemental appropriations for FY20, authorizing the spending of the federal CARES Act dollars.

Capital – [House Bill 64](#)

\$45.1 billion for capital appropriations, both new and re-appropriated from past budgets.

BIMP – [House Bill 357](#)

The budget implementation bill creates a new Coronavirus Business Interruption Grant program to provide federal funding to qualified businesses. The bill also creates the Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund, the State Coronavirus Urgent Remediation Emergency Fund, and the Local Coronavirus Urgent Remediation Emergency Funds to allow for expenditure of federal coronavirus relief dollars.

Borrowing – [Senate Bill 2099](#)

Authorizes the state to borrow \$5 billion (referenced above) to cover expenses during the COVID-19 crisis.

Property Tax Relief – [Senate Bill 685](#)

Allows counties to waive fees and penalties for late property tax payments up to 120 days. It also renews exemptions for a year and addresses property tax sales and tax scavenger sales.

Graduated Income Tax Ballot Language – [Senate Joint Resolution 1](#)

The Illinois Constitution Amendment Act requires the General Assembly to prepare a brief explanation of the proposed amendment, a brief argument in favor, a brief argument against, and the form in which the amendment will appear on the ballot in a pamphlet that will be distributed to voters. Each household with a registered voter will receive the language found in [Senate Joint Resolution 1](#) by mail.

Elections: Vote-by-Mail program – [Senate Bill 1863](#) & [House Bill 2238](#) (trailer provisions)

Lawmakers approved an expanded vote-by-mail program amid public health concerns over elections during the COVID-19 outbreak. Under the proposal, any person who has voted in the past two years (2018 General Election, 2019 Consolidated Election, or 2020 Primary Election) will receive an application for a ballot in their mailbox. General Election Day, November 3, 2020, will be a state holiday for schools and state offices. Those facilities will be available for polling places. In-person voting, either early or on Election Day, is still allowed. Local election authorities can set up drop-boxes for depositing ballots and can also develop curbside voting. Part of this program is an effort to educate the public about their voting options. This expanded vote-by-mail program only applies to the 2020 General Election.

Workers Compensation – [House Bill 2455](#)

Following the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission's withdrawal of a rule to presumptively assume essential workers contracted COVID-19 while on the job, business interests and organized labor negotiated an agreement. Under HB 2455, essential workers in Illinois will qualify for workers' compensation if they contract COVID-19 on the job. However, businesses will also be allowed to rebut the claims by showing they followed public health guidance. The bill also extends unemployment insurance benefits for 20 weeks. Paid sick leave was not included in the agreed final version.

Labor – [Senate Bill 471](#)

This bill includes accommodations for frontline workers and first responders, as well as workers at racetracks and racinos under collective bargaining. Firefighters, law enforcement, and paramedics, will be eligible for an additional 60 days of paid disability if affected by COVID. Assaulting a retail worker for giving safety guidance will now be an aggravated charge. Collective bargaining rights are extended to horse racetrack, casino, or racino workers.

Gaming – [Senate Bill 516](#)

Under the gaming expansion bill enacted last year, lawmakers authorized six more land-based casinos, including one in Chicago. However, according to the bill, in addition to the taxes and fees that all casinos pay, the Chicago casino would be required to pay an additional 33.3 percent "privilege tax." That would bring the effective tax rate on a Chicago casino to roughly 72 percent. A feasibility study concluded a Chicago casino would not be viable under the tax structure originally passed. Chicago Mayor Lightfoot has been advocating for this gaming changes to support a Chicago casino since the feasibility study was released nearly one year ago.

Changes in Senate Bill 516 are meant to "make this work for Chicago," House sponsor Rep. Bob Rife (D-Blue Island) said on the floor before the vote. The tax structure will now be graduated — the more money a casino makes, the more it will have to pay in city and state taxes.

The measure also extends the licensing process for a casino in Danville, requires the Department of Agriculture to purchase one or more video gaming terminals to be installed at the state fairgrounds in Springfield and DuQuoin, and cleaned up/delayed some sports betting deadlines at the request of the Illinois Gaming Board.

Gaming in Illinois is designed to fund the vertical capital bill passed last year, as well as the Chicago public safety pensions. It is estimated the Chicago casino will pay \$145 million in licensing fees and \$700 million in reconciliation payments over six years once it opens. The Chicago casino alone is expected to provide over a billion dollars to the state's capital program in just the short term.

Education Omnibus – [Senate Bill 1569](#)

Codifying changes for education during the COVID-19 pandemic, lawmakers addressed issues related to remote learning and blended remote learning requirements when a governor declares a disaster due to a public health emergency. Another provision deals with waving certain requirements for someone

seeking an educator license during a public health emergency. The measure also deems any diploma from this school year in Illinois valid.

Debt Limit for School Districts – [Senate Bill 1937](#)

Addresses the ability of a school district to issue bonds.

Sunset Extensions: Regulations Set to Expire – [House Bill 2174](#)

This bill extends the sunset of several regulations by one year. Some of the regulations included are the Telecommunications Article of the Public Utilities Act; provisions of the Cable and Video Competition Article of the Public Utilities Act; and the Transportation Network Providers Act (i.e. Uber and Lyft).

Government Administration Extensions – [Senate Bill 1857](#)

This bill extends certain statutes pertaining to government administration, including a provision of the Illinois procurement code concerning design-bid-build construction.

Healthcare Omnibus – [Senate Bill 1864](#)

SB 1864 creates the Health Care Affordability Act and permits the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (DHFS) to take necessary actions to address the COVID-19 public health emergency to the extent such actions are required, approved, or authorized by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, the major legislative issues in health care were telehealth payment parity, prescription drug affordability, and limiting prior authorization tools. After the Governor issued Executive Order 2020-07 and an emergency rule to ensure patients had access to medical care during the stay-at-home period, advocates for telehealth parity saw an opportunity to pursue permanent requirements for reimbursement at the same level as in-person services.

An earlier version of SB 1864 included telehealth language which would have extended the Governor's executive order until the end of 2020. These services would also have been exempt in most cases from cost-sharing measures like copayments or deductibles. This language was instead amended to Senate Bill 671 to be considered on its own, codifying the telehealth executive order through the end of the year. The House passed SB 671, but it was not called for consideration in the Senate.

The approved version of SB 1864, however, loosens certain regulations for the DHFS (the state's Medicaid agency) during the COVID-19 public health emergency. That includes making it easier for people to prove eligibility for the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the similar state program, All Kids. It also allows applicants to submit applications over the phone in lieu of a physical signature.

SB 1864 also calls for the Department of Insurance and HFS to study how state government may help people who lack health insurance and how to make health insurance more affordable for low-income and middle-income residents. The bill claims 835,000 Illinoisans are uninsured. The agencies must

submit their findings — which will also collect data on the geography, race and ethnicity of the uninsured — by the end of February 2021.

The bill also establishes a state task force on kidney disease prevention that will develop a plan by the end of next year to raise awareness about early detection, promote health equity, and reduce the burden of kidney disease through the state.

Hospital Assessment – [Senate Bill 2541](#)

Senate Bill 2541 codifies the hospital assessment program for Medicaid funding through December 31, 2022. The bill raises the hospital tax by \$146 million to bring an additional \$242 million to Illinois hospitals. The total value of the program is \$3.8 billion which includes \$1.65 billion in payments from hospitals. The new assessment program also maintains the 18% live rates in the current assessment and creates directed payments by shifting 25% of the assessment spend into 2 pools of directed payments (one fixed pool to protect safety-net and critical access hospitals and another fixed rate for all other hospitals to be acuity-sensitive in order to reward higher acuity care). Medicaid physician services rates increase by \$150 million annually (increase of 60% Medicare fee schedule), and the plan shifts \$400 million in spend from inpatient rates to outpatient rates. The new assessment also maintains the remaining 57% of the assessment spend in static pass-through payments, FFS supplemental payments, & GME payments. It also maintains the current “transition” payments of \$263 million present in the current assessment spending.

TIF Extensions – [Senate Bill 2052](#)

This bill extends numerous local TIF districts throughout the state.

Local Government Omnibus – [House Bill 2096](#)

This bill largely pertains to the ability of townships to operate when the Governor declares a disaster under the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act.

Will County Toll Bridge – [Senate Bill 531](#)

Allows Will County to setup a toll schedule to build a bridge that will divert traffic from I-80 in a certain community.

Changes to Government Operations During Pandemic – [Senate Bill 2135](#)

Senate Bill 2135 is a broad piece of legislation creating a limited oversight panel of the governor’s Restore Illinois plan. This measure was only able to pass after two controversial provisions were removed. The removed measures would have temporarily delayed Freedom of Information Act law requirements and allowed the General Assembly to meet remotely during a pandemic.

As passed, the bill creates a Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission to “participate in and provide input on plans to revive the various sectors of the state’s economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.” The commission will consist of 14 lawmakers (8 Democrats and 6 Republicans) in collaboration with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). Meetings may be

convened to address revitalization efforts for the various sectors of the state's economy. DCEO will be required to provide monthly reports to the General Assembly regarding "current and proposed" revitalization efforts. The first report is due July 1.

There were several other changes contained in the sprawling bill, including changes to the Park District Aquarium and Museum Act affecting how many days a zoological park or museum must be open to the public without charge.

Another notable provision gives the secretary of state's office emergency authority to extend deadlines for the remainder of any health-related declaration of disaster and up to 120 days after. The law will be on the books until Jan. 1, 2021. Those deadlines include expiration dates of driver's licenses, driving permits, identification cards, disabled parking placards and decals and vehicle registrations. It also includes expiration dates of professional licenses, registrations, certifications, and commissions issued by the secretary.

The bill creates a 10-person task force of members representing the Department of Insurance and the insurance industry to study business interruption insurance policies and any need for changes based on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses. There will also be a study of broadband access for Illinois residents, with a goal of expanding the state broadband competitive matching grant program and increasing affordable access.

The bill also codifies an executive order signed by Pritzker allowing remote notarization until 30 days after the governor's disaster declaration has ended.

Sexual Assault Treatment – [Senate Bill 557](#)

This bill temporarily allows federally qualified health centers to perform rape kit examinations "at a time when a visit to the emergency room may be too daunting," according to sponsor State Rep. Kelly Cassidy.

Liquor Omnibus – [House Bill 2682](#)

As soon as Gov. Pritzker signs HB 2682, bars and restaurants will be able to sell pre-mixed cocktails or other mixed drinks for carry-out or deliver them so long as they are in tamper-proof, sealed containers, and there are age checks. Drivers will be required to store mixed drinks in a trunk or other inaccessible compartment. The cocktails-to-go initiative will be repealed one year after the governor signs the bill.

This measure includes other provisions aimed at assisting businesses impacted by COVID-19, such as automatic renewal and extension of liquor licenses and waiving late filing fees for a license holder whose business was suspended in any capacity due to the pandemic.

Senate Rule Change – [Senate Resolution 1201](#)

Upon the conclusion of the 2020 special session, Senate President Harmon introduced Senate Resolution 1201 to amend the Senate rules. The rules were amended to create a standing committee on

accountability and ethics and removing a standalone pension committee, to enable the leaders to establish a process for remote committee work, and to allow a member to participate remotely “in times of pestilence or public danger” so long as a quorum of members is physically present.

UPCOMING DATES OF INTEREST

- **General Election Day** – November 3
- **Veto session** – November 17- 19 **and** December 1-3

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ICCTA GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

November 23, 2020

Conversations about Speaker Madigan dominated this past week. A few months ago, federal prosecutors and ComEd entered into a deferred prosecution agreement to resolve a criminal investigation into a years-long bribery scheme concerning historical lobbying practices. Under the DPA, ComEd agreed to pay a \$200 million fine due to charges of arranging jobs, vendor subcontracts, and monetary payments associated with those jobs and subcontracts for various associates of “Public Official A” (identified as House Speaker Michael Madigan). The Department of Justice alleges the purpose of those bribes was to influence and reward the Speaker’s efforts to assist ComEd with their legislation.

The DPA led to last week’s [indictments](#) of Mike McClain, a former State Representative turned lobbyist and close confidante of the Speaker, former ComEd CEO Anne Pramaggiore, and two other lobbyists - John Hooker and Jay Doherty - for their role in the ComEd bribery scheme. All four have inner-circle ties to the Speaker. Federal prosecutors have not yet charged the Speaker with any wrongdoing, though their sights are clearly set on Madigan. However, the morning after the indictments, Madigan released a nearly [1,000-word statement](#) denying awareness of any bribery attempt or any wrongdoing. The statement did nothing to dissuade now 18 members of the House Democrat caucus to call for a new Speaker. Representatives who have publicly stated their desire for new leadership include in the following:

Jonathan Carroll
Kelly Cassidy
Deb Conroy
Margaret Croke
Daniel Didech
Eva-Dina Delgado

Robyn Gabel
Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz
Will Guzzardi
Terra Costa Howard
Stephanie Kifowit
Lindsey LaPointe

Anna Moeller
Bob Morgan
Anne Stava-Murray
Maurice West
Ann Williams
Sam Yingling

The House Democrats will have 73 seats in January for the 102nd General Assembly. That means at least 14 are needed to deprive Madigan of the 60 he must have for reelection. Currently, there are four more members than the opposition needed to prevent Madigan from obtaining 60 votes – and more are expected to step forward. The Speaker was calling the members of his caucus to ask if they support him. Late Friday, Speaker Madigan refused to drop out of the race for Speaker and released the following statement: “The decision on the next speaker of the Illinois House will be made at a caucus, after a full discussion of the issues facing our state and the qualifications of the candidates. I plan to be a candidate for speaker, and today I confirmed that I continue to have support from a **significant** number of House Democratic caucus members.” Emphasis added – “significant” isn’t 60.

If not Madigan, who can get 60 Democratic votes to become speaker? Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, chairperson of the State Government Administration committee, has already put her hat in the ring. Other names: Majority Leader Greg Harris, Assistant Majority Leader Kelly Burke, Appropriations-Public Safety Chair Kelly Cassidy, Assistant Majority Leader Will Davis, Deputy Majority Leader Jehan Gordon-Booth, Assistant Majority

Leader Jay Hoffman, Executive Committee Chair Emanuel “Chris” Welch, and Energy and Environment Chair Ann Williams.

House Republican Leader Jim Durkin held a press conference yesterday complaining Democrats were “stalling” the efforts of the House Special Investigative Committee tasked with investigating the Speaker’s actions in the ComEd bribery scandal. Durkin said if Madigan won’t resign on his own, the committee needs to meet again. The three Democrats on the committee issued a statement saying the GOP was trying to “rush things along.” Chair of the committee, Rep. Emanuel “Chris” Welch, says the committee is still waiting on documents before it can meet.

Governor JB Pritzker addressed the indictment and Madigan’s statement during his daily coronavirus briefing: “If Speaker Madigan wants to continue in a position of enormous public trust with such a serious ethical cloud hanging over his head, then he has to at the very least, be willing to stand in front of the press and the people and answer every last question to their satisfaction.” Written statements, Pritzker said, “are not going to cut it. If the speaker cannot commit to that level of transparency, then the time has come for him to resign as speaker.”

Election Update

All the votes have now been counted. The State Board of Elections will certify the results by December 4. The Senate increased its Democrat supermajority by one – 41 Dem, 18 GOP – adding Karina Villa (D) to the caucus after she won the seat vacated by Senator Jim Oberweis to run for Congress. Oberweis ultimately lost the 14th congressional district to incumbent Rep. Lauren Underwood (D) by more than 5,000 votes. In a statement, Oberweis stated he is pursuing a “discovery recount” in an effort to “be certain the final vote count is correct.”

In the House, late vote counting recently resulted in a defeat for GOP Rep. John Cabello. House Republicans ended the election cycle with a net gain of one seat. Other GOP Reps defeated include Grant Wehrli and Allen Skillicorn. Defeated Democrat Reps include Nathan Reitz, Monica Bristow, Mary Edly-Allen, and Diane Pappas. Democrats hold on to supermajority status with 73 Democrats and 45 Republicans (71 votes is a supermajority).

Governor’s Office of Management and Budget Released Five-Year Forecast

Governor JB Pritzker’s Office of Management and Budget (GOMB) has released their [Illinois Economic and Fiscal Policy Report](#), showing a \$3.9 billion deficit this fiscal year. The report goes on to outline the long-term economic and fiscal policy objectives of the state, along with economic and fiscal policy intentions for the upcoming state fiscal year and for the subsequent four fiscal years. [More information about the November 13 report is in the Governor’s press release.](#)

Chicago Budget

In the City of Chicago, Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s proposed \$94 million property tax increase was approved by the Finance Committee, a prerequisite before she presents the budget plan to the full City Council. Lightfoot says the tax increase is necessary to close a \$1.2 billion budget deficit. The budget also includes plans to spend \$3.7 billion over five years on infrastructure projects. The city would borrow \$1.4 billion to fund the projects over the next two years, with additional borrowing to come.

COVID-19 Update

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today reported 8,322 new confirmed and probable cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Illinois, including 47 additional deaths. Within the past 24 hours, laboratories reported 91,562 specimens for a total 9,892,981. As of last night, 6,171 in Illinois were reported to be in the hospital with COVID-19. Of those, 1,206 patients were in the ICU and 635 patients with COVID-19 were on ventilators. The preliminary seven-day statewide positivity for cases as a percent of total test from November 16 – November 22, 2020 is 10.9%. The preliminary seven-day statewide test positivity from November 16 – November 22, 2020 is 12.7%. All but one of Illinois' 102 counties are at warning level.

All information pertaining to the Coronavirus Response from the Governor's office and agencies can be found [here](#). DCEO regularly updates its [Frequently Asked Questions document \(available via this link\)](#).

Governor Pritzker moved the whole state to [Tier 3 mitigations](#) of the recovery plan this week for an indefinite time. Beginning Friday, there is limited capacity at retail, personal care services, fitness clubs, and other businesses. Casinos, museums, and theaters must close. Indoor sports and recreational activities are prohibited. The governor warned another stay-at-home order could be issued if COVID cases do not begin declining. Pritzker reported COVID-19 is now the third-largest cause of death in Illinois with the last seven-day death rate per 100,000 residents at 1.2 percent in rural areas, .5 percent in metro areas.

Seven governors in the Midwest joined to urge residents to stay home this Thanksgiving and gather with family via Zoom. Governor Pritzker joined his colleagues from Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Indiana, Minnesota, and Kentucky in the joint plea.

The Illinois Federation of Teachers union is asking Governor Pritzker to close schools across the state and set thresholds for school districts to decide on opening school buildings. The Governor's latest mitigations still allow local school districts to decide on attendance.

Secretary of State Jesse White has closed Driver Services facilities statewide until December 7.

The statewide unemployment rate fell to 6.8 percent in October, down 3.6 percentage points.

IDPH Published Vaccination Distribution Plan

IDPH has published their [COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Planning Guide](#). The guide is designed to provide a plan for the distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available.

IDOT Created New Communication Tool

IDOT announced the launch of *Telegram*, an e-newsletter to inform the public about agency projects, programs, and activities impacting communities, across the state. To subscribe to *Telegram*, visit [IDOT's in Motion website](#) and sign up for the "General Interest" option or other areas of interest to you. Once subscribed, you will start receiving biweekly email dispatches that include information on: upcoming IDOT projects and safety improvements; planning and programming efforts; snow and ice response; employment opportunities with IDOT; and, opportunities to partner with IDOT and other transportation agencies.

HFS Announced Equity-Centric Healthcare Transformation Plan

Building on Governor Pritzker's renewal of the Hospital Assessment Program earlier this year, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) unveiled a new equity-centric healthcare plan that addresses social and structural determinants of health. HFS partnered with the University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Public Health and community organizations to create the plan which presents a major shift in providing healthcare delivery. If implemented [the proposed plan](#) will fund pilot projects and planning grants to address both healthcare and social determinants of health, emphasize collaboration with community-based organizations plus one unrelated healthcare provider, and ensure that health equity is a measurable, primary focus of each project. Pending feedback and input from the General Assembly, the proposed funding mix would begin with an annual pool of \$150 million to start a realignment of state resources.

Pritzker Announced \$750,000 Investment to Expand High-Speed Internet

Governor Pritzker and DCEO announced a new Digital Equity Package to address gaps in digital access, adoption, and affordability for high-speed internet access. The comprehensive approach is designed to help communities identify and address existing broadband equity gaps, as well as to leverage new and existing sources of funding for long-term broadband equity. New plans to spearhead digital equity for Illinois build on Governor Pritzker's bold Connect Illinois program, a \$420 million investment to bring universal access throughout the state by 2024. For more information, [view the DCEO press release](#).

Funding for Discovery Partners Institutes and Illinois Innovation Network

Governor Pritzker released \$142 million to launch new facilities for the Discovery Partners Institute and the Illinois Innovation Network, created to accelerate job creation and economic growth through education, research, and discovery. The funding comes from the Rebuild Illinois program and matching state grants with university, private, and philanthropic sources. This round of funding supports DPI's headquarters in Chicago and IIN facilities at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago State University, Eastern Illinois University, and Governors State University.

Regulatory Update

Numerous Executive Orders and emergency rules have been issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Executive Orders from the Governor can be accessed at <https://www2.illinois.gov/government/executive-orders>. Due to a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the Springfield area, the **JCAR meeting scheduled for November 17 was cancelled**. Agencies with proposed rulemakings on the November agenda will be free to adopt them after the Second Notice periods for those rulemakings have expired. The next JCAR meeting is scheduled for December 15 in Springfield.

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

By Jessica Nardulli, ICCTA Legislative Counsel

December 21, 2020

The Illinois Senate released its 2021 Legislative Calendar (attached to this email). Dates are subject to change, and we continue to wait for a calendar from the Illinois House of Representatives. The Senate also altered its **committee structure for appropriations**. Instead of two committees, the Senate will have just one appropriations committee, chaired by **Sen. Elgie Sims** (D-Chicago), which will have 14 subcommittees. Each subcommittee will have jurisdiction over individual agencies. For the full list of subcommittees and assigned chairpersons and agencies, please scroll to the end of this update.

Late Friday last week, **the 19 Representatives** publicly in opposition to reelecting House Speaker Michael Madigan released a letter stating they are “unified in our belief that our caucus needs new leadership.” The statement followed a letter the 19 received from six of their Democrat colleagues who asked them “to come together as a family” and talk about a “path forward for us all.” The 19 have made it clear they are not going back on their pledge not to vote for Madigan. The Speaker remains six votes shy of the 60 he needs.

On Monday, December 14, the **House Special Investigative Committee** reconvened to continue its charter to determine whether the Speaker acted in “conduct unbecoming of a legislator” due to bribery allegations against Madigan stemming from the federal ComEd investigation. The lengthy hearing didn’t reveal new information but was certainly explosive. Ultimately, a vote to issue subpoenas failed, partisan tempers flared, the motion to charge Madigan with wrongdoing failed, and the committee adjourned. Gov. JB Pritzker said he was “really disappointed” Speaker Madigan did not take advantage of the “forum” presented by the special House committee investigating him.

Rep. Emanuel “Chris” Welch, chair of the House Special Investigative Committee, was the lead vote-getter amongst members of the **House Black Caucus** for the four coveted leadership spots reserved for members of the Black Caucus. Welch received 17 votes of the 21 voting members (one member didn’t vote), **Reps. Mary Flowers and Marcus Evans** were elected with 14 votes each, and **Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth** received 13 votes. The remaining candidates – Rep. Will Davis, Rep. Lamont Robinson, and Rep. Nick Smith – fell short of the cutoff. In Speaker Madigan’s effort to receive the endorsement of the Black Caucus, Madigan committed an additional seat on his leadership team, increasing Black Caucus seats from 3 to 4 members for the 102nd General Assembly. Black Caucus members of the leadership team for the 101st GA include Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, former Rep. Art Turner, and Rep. Will Davis.

The House Black Caucus voted unanimously to elect Rep. **Kambium “Kam” Buckner** as chair, replacing **Rep. Camille Lilly**, whose term has ended. **Rep. Maurice West** was elected secretary of the Black Caucus, also unanimously.

Pritzker Proposes \$700 Million in Cuts

Governor Pritzker has proposed over [\\$700 million](#) in cuts to executive branch agencies for the current fiscal year. The proposed cuts are within the purview of the Governor to manage without help from the General Assembly. The Governor acknowledged these cuts aren't a full solution to the budget deficit and committed to working with the legislature for "additional and more permanent" budget solutions.

Implementation of some of the saving measures has already begun. The plan includes **hiring freezes, grant reductions, and operational savings**. Governor Pritzker announced ongoing negotiations with AFSCME and other employee unions to identify \$75 million in personnel costs adjustments, which could include **furlough days**, as part of the total cuts; and the creation of a Department of Corrections "**facilities closure work group**" to identify savings due to the lower offender population. Additionally, the state will delay by three months a promised rate hike for community care workers that was scheduled to take effect January 1 and will temporarily halt all vehicle purchases. Most grants will be frozen, but some grants issued by the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity will be cut 5 percent.

The current FY21 budget depends on a \$5 billion federal bailout to be balanced – which has yet to materialize. Because the state income tax filing was moved to July, which is the current fiscal year, those unanticipated revenues brings the projected deficit for the current fiscal year to \$3.9 billion, which has been lowered by \$2 billion because the state is borrowing that money from the Federal Reserve. That leaves the state with a \$1.9 billion hole to fill by June 30. The Governor's proposed cuts closes the hole a bit more to \$1.2 billion. Federal aid would help close the gap, but current bipartisan negotiations on a federal stimulus package do not currently include new aid for states.

During one of Pritzker's daily briefings, he was asked if he would consider **raising the state's 4.95%** flat income tax rate. Pritzker said he is focused on the cuts — for now.

COVID-19 Update & VACCINES

Last Friday the Illinois Department of Public Health reported 7,377 new confirmed and probable cases of coronavirus disease in Illinois, including 181 additional deaths. Currently, IDPH is reporting a total of 886,805 cases, including 15,015 deaths. Laboratories have also reported a total of 12,259,595 test specimens. As of Friday night, 4,690 in Illinois were reported to be in the hospital with COVID-19. Of those, 1,023 patients were in the ICU, and 589 patients with COVID-19 were on ventilators. The preliminary seven-day statewide positivity for cases as a percent of total test from 12/11 – 12/17 is 8.0%. The preliminary seven-day statewide test positivity from 12/11 – 12/17 is 9.7%.

All information pertaining to the Coronavirus Response from the Governor's office and agencies can be found [here](#). DCEO regularly updates its [Frequently Asked Questions document \(available via this link\)](#).

Governor Pritzker clarified last week he **will not reduce mitigations on regions until after the holidays**, even if those regions have already qualified for reduced mitigations, as have Region 1 (Northwest IL: Rockford, DeKalb, Galena), Region 6 (East-Central IL: Champaign, Charleston, Effingham), and Region 9 (McHenry and Lake counties).

On Monday, December 14, Illinois received the first shipment of the **Pfizer coronavirus vaccine**. The state received approximately 43,000 doses in the first shipment and expects additional shipments in the coming weeks. Most doses in this shipment were delivered from the Illinois Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) to Regional Hospital Coordination Centers around the state that serve as pick up locations for local health departments to begin distribution to healthcare workers in their jurisdictions, with the remaining portion going directly to predetermined local health departments. Chicago, Cook County, Lake County, Madison County, and St. Clair County received direct shipments from the federal government. These direct shipments account for the state's initial expected allocation of 109,000 doses. This week, vaccines are being administered in 96 hospitals associated with the 50 counties that have highest COVID-19 death rates per capita. Every hospital will be providing vaccinations to health care workers next week. The state expects to get vaccine doses from Moderna in roughly two weeks, which will help bolster vaccination rates in the coming weeks.

Governor Pritzker began his daily COVID-19 briefing last Wednesday by saying anticipated shipments of the vaccine nationwide in the next two weeks have been cut in half, "which will likely cut our state's projected Pfizer shipments this month in half." Officials in multiple states received the same alert. A spokesperson from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services disagreed, arguing the distribution plan remains on track. On Thursday, Pfizer released a statement saying the company faced no production issues and had more doses available than were being distributed. "We have millions more doses sitting in our warehouse but, as of now, we have not received any shipment instructions for additional doses," the statement read.

With more than **655,000 health care workers across the state**, the vaccination of front-line workers is expected to take months – followed by nursing home residents and staff. But the question is then who is next in line? Teachers, firefighters, and camp counselors, among others, all say they should be next – **who is most "essential?"** The CDC began to settle that yesterday (Sunday, December 20), when an advisory panel recommended who should follow medical workers and nursing home residents.

Here are the distribution plans for the [state](#), [Cook County](#), and [Chicago](#). Eventually, the general public will be able to access the vaccine from your local primary care physician, health clinic, and some pharmacies like Walgreens and CVS.

Governor Pritzker joined a bipartisan group of midwestern governors to urge citizens to remain safe heading into the holiday season. Other participating governors are from Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

Governor Re-Issues Disaster Proclamation and Executive Orders Related to COVID-19

Late Friday, December 11, Governor Pritzker reissued the [Disaster Proclamation](#) for an additional 30 days and filed [Executive Order 2020-74](#) which reissued most executive orders, extending a majority of the provisions through January 9, 2021.

New Minimum Rate Rates to Take Effect on 1/1/2021

On January 1, 2021, the minimum wage will increase to \$11 per hour as part of the schedule of increases signed into law in 2019 providing a path to \$15 minimum wage by 2025. Minimum wage earners received two increases in 2020 to \$9.25 an hour on January 1, followed by an increase to \$10 an hour on July 1. The minimum wage will continue to increase an additional \$1 an hour each January 1 until it reaches \$15 an hour in 2025. Workers who are under 18 years old and work fewer than 650 hours in a year will earn a minimum wage of \$8.50 per hour beginning January 1. The youth minimum wage rate will gradually rise to \$13 an hour by 2025.

Cook County has a higher minimum wage than the state, currently \$13 an hour. The current city of Chicago minimum wage is \$13.50 an hour for small employers (4 to 20 employees) and \$14 an hour for large employers (21 or more employees).

Unemployment Update

The Illinois Department of Employment Security announced 138,359 new unemployment claims were filed during the week of December 6 in Illinois (the state unemployment rate is approximately 7%). For comparison, during the same timeframe last year, 15,076 people filed claims in Illinois. Since March, there have been more than 2.4 million total claims in Illinois. Illinois numbers have not been this high since April 6, when there were over 201,000 new claims filed the week of March 30. There were 107,616 new unemployment claims filed the week of November 29.

Unfunded Pension Liability -- \$144 Billion

A [Special Pension Briefing](#) released by the bipartisan and bicameral Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability revealed the unfunded liabilities across the state's public employee pension systems totaled \$144.4 billion on June 30. The Teachers Retirement System, whose unfunded liabilities amounted to \$83.3 billion, represents 57.7% of the combined total. On average, the funded ratio is nearly 40%. One of the main drivers of the underfunding continues to be the actuarially insufficient state contributions determined by the current pension funding policy under P.A. 88-593 – meaning that if all actuarial assumptions are met, unfunded liabilities will continue to increase because the state isn't contributing enough to stop the growth of the unfunded liability.

The state legislature budgeted about \$9.8 billion for pension payments in the current fiscal year. COGFA estimates that will need to go up another \$800 million dollars next year just to fully fund pensions.

Veteran's Affairs Committee Hearing on LaSalle Home COVID-19 Outbreak

A House committee heard testimony last Wednesday from Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs officials, including Director Linda Chapa LaVia, to get at the root cause of the COVID-19 outbreak at the LaSalle Veterans' Home that sickened more than 200 workers and residents and killed 33 residents. Officials testified control efforts have curbed the spread of the outbreak since the deadly outbreak began last month. Despite that progress, lawmakers on the committee raised concerns about the state's response – in particular, the nearly two-week delay from when the initial outbreak was reported to the first on-site visit by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. There are currently 16 residents still positive for the virus out of the 93 total residents remaining at LaSalle, and one positive employee, according to an IDVA spokesperson. Lawyers representing families of some of the deceased veterans have launched investigations that could lead to lawsuits filed on their behalf.

2020 Census Results

Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Human Services today announced the results of the 2020 Census in Illinois. Illinois surpassed the 2010 self-response rate of 70.5 percent, finishing at **71.4 percent**. For more information about the 2020 Census and the final numbers, visit the [Illinois Census 2020 Homepage](#).

Sports Betting Announced Record Handle in October

With all five of its mobile sports betting operators available online for the entire month for the first time since operators went live in March, the Illinois Gaming Board announced a record handle of **\$434.6 million** in October. The figure was 42.4 percent higher than the \$305.2 million reported in September, when both PointsBet and William Hill launched operations mid-month.

Illinois Partners with ALDI to Provide Online Grocery Access for SNAP Recipients

Illinois residents have a new retail option for using Electronic Benefit Transfer and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (EBT SNAP) online through Instacart. In a new partnership with ALDI, participants will be able to access fresh food and pantry staples from ALDI via Instacart's same-day delivery and pick-up services. Illinois' initial Online SNAP EBT option launched in June 2020, including Amazon and Walmart.

Mercy Hospital to Remain Open for Now

Illinois regulators unanimously rejected historic Mercy Hospital's request to close. Regulators feared patients would have less access to medical care, especially in a pandemic, and noted Mercy's emergency department in particular is critical to the surrounding communities, treating nearly 60,000 patients. It's one of the busiest emergency departments in Chicago. The vote was unusual. The board rarely rejects hospital closures. The vote came after months of protests from physicians, health care advocates and community organizers against the closure. Located in the Bronzeville neighborhood, most of Mercy's patients are Black. Doctors also treat many Cantonese-speaking patients from nearby neighborhoods, including Chinatown. During the board meeting, a representative for Gov. Pritzker spoke on his behalf, saying the governor opposes Mercy's closure.

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEES

Subcommittee on Education- SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR MANAR, VC BELT

Illinois Board of Education
Illinois Math & Science Academy
IL Ed Labor Relations Board

Subcommittee on Higher Education- SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR BENNETT

Board of Higher Education
Student Assistance Commission
Chicago State University
Community College Board
Eastern Illinois University
Governor's State University
Illinois State University
Northeastern Illinois University
Northern Illinois University
Southern Illinois University
University of Illinois
Western Illinois University

Subcommittee on Human Services- SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR FEIGENHOLTZ

Department of Human Services
Department of Children and Family Services
Council on Developmental Disabilities
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Commission
Guardianship & Advocacy Commission

Subcommittee on Health- SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR MORRISON

Department of Healthcare & Family Services
Department of Public Health
Department on Aging
Department of Veterans Affairs
Illinois Coroner Training Board

Subcommittee on Criminal Justice- SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR HUNTER

Department of Corrections
Department of Juvenile Justice
Criminal Justice Information Authority
Prisoner Review Board

Subcommittee on State Law Enforcement-SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR MUNOZ, VC JOHNSON
Department of State Police
Law Enforcement Training Standards Board
State Police Merit Board

Subcommittee on Emergency Management-SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR ELLMAN
Office of the State Fire Marshall
Illinois Emergency Management Agency
Department of Military Affairs

Subcommittee on General Services-SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR AQUINO
Central Management Services
Department of Innovation & Technology
Department of Human Rights
Board of Elections
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum
Arts Council
Court of Claims
University Civil Service Commission
Human Rights Commission
Legislative Commissions (COGFA/JCAR/LEC/LIG/LIS/LRU/LRB/Architect of Capitol)
Procurement Policy Board
Civil Service Committee
EEC/EIG
SERS (ops only)

Subcommittee on Revenue and Finance-SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR STEANS
Department of Revenue
Department of the Lottery
Office of Management & Budget
Property Tax Appeals Board
Racing Board
Gaming Board
Independent Tax Tribunal
Metropolitan Pier & Expo Authority
Sports Facility Authority
Illinois Finance Authority

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Environment & Energy-SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR KOEHLER, VC HASTINGS
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Agriculture
Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Commerce Commission

Illinois Power Agency
Drycleaner Environmental Response Trust Fund Council

Subcommittee on Business Regulation & Labor-SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR HOLMES, VC JONES

Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
Department of Employment Security
Department of Financial & Professional Regulation
Department of Insurance
Department of Labor
Worker's Compensation Commission
Liquor Control Commission
Labor Relations Board

Subcommittee on Judiciary-SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR CROWE

Supreme Court
Appellate Defender
Appellate Prosecutor
Judicial Inquiry Board
Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission

Subcommittee on Constitutional Offices-SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR MURPHY, VC HARRIS

Office of the Governor
Office of the Lt. Governor
Office of the Attorney General
Office of the Secretary of State
Office of the Comptroller
Office of the Treasurer
Office of the Auditor General

Subcommittee on Government Infrastructure-SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR VILLIVALAM, VC HUNTER

Department of Transportation
Toll Highway Authority
Capitol Development Board