



ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report January 8, 2024

Happy New Year! Legislators return to Springfield for the second year of the 103rd General Assembly on **January 16, 2024**. Legislation for the 2024 spring session is actively being filed and will continue to be filed until the February 9 bill introduction deadline. Due to the state's March 19 primary election, the legislative agenda is expected to be relatively light after that date, and a few scheduled session days are likely to be canceled.

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The deadline to request a bill is Friday, January 19. The Legislative Reference Bureau is implementing a black-out period, during which it will not accept requests for bills or amendments, beginning at 5 PM on January 19 through noon on February 9.

- January 16: First Session Day for the 2nd year of the 103rd General Assembly
- January 19: Deadline – House & Senate Requests to the Legislative Reference Bureau
Begin LRB Black-Out Period until 2/9
- February 9: Deadline – Introduction of House & Senate Bills
LRB Amendment Requests Begin
- February 21: Governor's State of the State/Budget Address
- March 10: Deadline – Senate Bills out of Senate Committee
- March 19: Primary Election
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- April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
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- May 2: ICCTA Lobby Day
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

RECENT RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

* **Rep. Jonathan Carroll** (D-Northbrook) has resigned from his 57th House District seat. Carroll had previously announced that he would not seek re-election but had been expected to finish his term. **Tracy Katz Muhl** is running unopposed for the Democratic nomination. No Republican filed to run.

* Retired U.S. Marine Master Sergeant **Brandun Schweizer** has been selected to fill the vacancy left by House **Rep. Mike Marron**, who resigned the 104th House District. During his 21-year career with the Marines,

Schweizer served as an intelligence chief, Equal Opportunity advisor, and recruiter. After retirement, he joined the city of Danville as a code enforcement inspector. This district could see a strong push by House Democrats to win the seat in the November 5 general election.

* Republicans in the southwest suburbs of Chicago have selected **Nicole La Ha** to be the new state representative for the 82nd House District, filling the vacancy left after **Rep. John Egofske** resigned. La Ha is the third person to hold the seat since the start of 2023. Egofske replaced former Minority Leader **Jim Durkin**. La Ha is a former state Senate staffer and Homer Glen Village trustee. She previously announced that she would run for the 82nd district seat in the November election against Democrat Suzanne Akhras.

* The Joint Committee on Administrative Rules welcomed new member **Senator Napoleon Harris, III** (D-Dolton). Sen. Harris succeeds **Sen. Kimberly Lightford** (D-Maywood), who was appointed to JCAR in 2019 and recently resigned from the committee.

* **Jake Butcher**, chief of staff to **Senate President Don Harmon**, resigned at the end of 2023 to practice law. His successor is deputy chief of staff **Ashley Jenkins-Jordan**, who is the first African-American woman to hold the Senate COS position in Illinois.

2024 MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

Effective January 1, 2024, the new required minimum wage in Illinois will be \$14 an hour. This increase is in accordance with [Public Act 101-0001](#), enacted in 2019, that will raise the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour on January 1, 2025. Workers under the age of 18 who work fewer than 650 hours a year will now earn a minimum wage of \$12 an hour. More information about the minimum wage, including the implementation schedule and frequently asked questions, can be found on the [Illinois Department of Labor website](#).

OTHER BILLS EFFECTIVE IN THE NEW YEAR

Here are a few notable new laws out of 318 taking effect in 2024:

- [House Bill 2789](#): Prohibits state-funded libraries from banning or removing materials due to religious or partisan disapproval.
- [HB 1541](#): Prohibits utility companies from discontinuing gas or electric services for residential users due to nonpayment of bills on days when the temperature exceeds 90 degrees or there is a heat watch, advisory, or warning.
- [HB 2389](#): Clarifies no vehicle can be stopped or searched solely based on any objects placed or suspended between the driver and the front windshield that may obstruct the driver's view.
- [HB 2245](#): Requires Illinois car manufacturers to establish a vehicle theft hotline to facilitate the location of stolen vehicles via their existing global positioning systems.
- [HB 3924](#): Requires high schools to teach students about the dangers of fentanyl in all state-required health courses.
- [HB 1540](#): Prohibits the use of electronic cigarettes in public places and within 15 feet of entrances.
- [HB 3516](#): Allows employees up to 10 days of paid leave in any 12-month period to serve as an organ donor.
- [HB 2431](#): Provides people operating a motor vehicle may not use an electronic device to participate in video conferences or access social media sites.

- [Senate Bill 380](#): Provides a civil cause of action for fertility fraud against health care providers who knowingly or intentionally use their own human reproductive material without the patient's informed written consent for assisted reproductive treatment.

Here is a full list, [via Illinois Senate Democrats](#).

PAID LEAVE FOR ALL WORKERS ACT

The [Paid Leave for All Workers Act](#) allows Illinois workers to earn up to 40 hours of paid leave in a 12-month period. Workers will accrue one hour of leave for every 40 hours worked. After Gov. **JB Pritzker** signed the law, the city of Chicago and Cook County followed suit with new paid leave requirements of their own. There are significant differences between the three, but all three laws require covered employers to provide up to 40 hours per year of paid leave to eligible employees, though the Chicago ordinance also requires employers to provide paid sick leave. IDOL and the Chicago and Cook County counterparts will likely release additional guidance on these laws in the coming weeks and months. All employers are required to post information about the law.

DUAL CREDIT STUDY

A new study into dual credit, where a student earns high school and college credit simultaneously, shows that participation in Illinois dual credit programs increased among all underrepresented groups; however, the increases and expansion have not been proportionate or evenly experienced across the state. The report, called "[Dual Credit in Illinois: Student Access and Outcomes](#)," was conducted by the Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative, a research arm of the University of Illinois System's Discovery Partners Institute. The report recommends that the state continue investing in efforts to make dual credit programs more accessible and affordable, but that it focus on increasing dual credit offerings in districts that currently have the lowest participation rates, especially urban and suburban districts.

UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE WAGE GAP

Illinois university employees have led an unprecedented number of strikes this year, mostly related to wage negotiations, yet [new information](#) shows that university staff are paid significantly less than other state employees. As a result, AFSCME and its fellow unions will be seeking a legislative solution in the form of an appropriation specifically for wages.

ILLINIOS JOINS LAWSUIT AGAINST NCAA

The NCAA is forcing some athletes to sit out a year following multiple transfers. Illinois Attorney General **Kwame Raoul** and six other AGs have filed a federal antitrust lawsuit challenging the NCAA's transfer rules as an illegal restraint on college athletes' ability to market their labor and control their education. Currently, athletes who transfer among Division I schools must wait one year before competing in games, although many athletes have gained immediate eligibility thanks to a growing number of waivers and exceptions.

GOVERNOR NAMES NEW DCFS DIRECTOR

Heidi Mueller, who has been director of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice since 2016, was chosen to head the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services following a national search to replace **Marc Smith**, who had led the agency since April 2019. Smith, selected by Pritzker during his first year in office, announced last October that he was stepping down.

HFS STAFF TRANSITIONS

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services is undergoing several transitions this month. In addition to the departure of HFS director **Theresa Eagleson**, chief of staff **Ben Winnick** will step down and become a senior advisor. **Dana Kelly**, currently associate secretary at HFS, will become the new chief of staff.

IDFPR LAUNCHING COMPETITIVE BID FOR ONLINE LICENSING SYSTEM

The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation has begun launching a competitive bid for online software to handle the ongoing backlog in the state's professional licensing system. On December 8, Gov. Pritzker signed [HB 2394](#), which gave the department 90 days to procure a new online system that allows for existing licenses to be renewed and new licenses to be issued. After 90 days, the department will have another 90 days to get the new system up and running. IDFPR will soon publish a solicitation in [Bidbuy](#), the state's eProcurement system for vendors. The department will evaluate proposals and go through demonstrations to determine which licensing system will best fit the state's needs.

IDPH DELIVERS STATE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The final version of the Illinois Department of Public Health's new State Health Improvement Plan notes that Illinois needs to improve in the areas of maternal and infant health, mental health and substance use disorders, and for the first time identifies racism as a public health crisis. The plan aims to address inequities by forming an appointed advisory committee on racism in health care and building a more diverse health care workforce. Absent from the report is any mention of licensed overdose prevention sites or a plan of care for recent migrant populations that have arrived in Illinois in the last 15 months.

SCOTUS DECLINES TO BLOCK ILLINOIS ASSAULT WEAPON BAN

The U.S. Supreme Court has stepped back from blocking the state's assault weapon ban while the law continues to be challenged in a federal appeals court. Two lower courts previously also declined to block the law, which is being challenged by the National Association for Gun Rights, a Naperville gun store, and the gun store's owner on Second Amendment grounds.

MADIGAN RACKETEERING TRIAL DELAYED

The racketeering trial for former Illinois House Speaker **Michael Madigan** has been moved from April to October while the U.S. Supreme Court considers a separate case out of Indiana that could affect the Illinois matter. Madigan is among a handful of public corruption defendants in Chicago who have asked for their cases to be put on hold while the Supreme Court considers the corruption conviction of **James Snyder**, a former mayor of Portage, Indiana. The delay removes the risk of a re-trial.

ICC LOWERS UTILITY RATE HIKES REQUESTS

Regulators at the Illinois Commerce Commission have issued a series of rulings that set new rates for electric utilities Commonwealth Edison and Ameren. The ICC set ComEd's return on equity, or authorized profit rate, at 8.9% percent and Ameren's ROE at 8.7%. Both utilities had requested a 10.5% ROE. The ICC also rejected both electric utilities' integrated grid plans, saying both failed to comply with the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act and did not sufficiently incorporate customer affordability into their proposals. The regulators also denied a motion from People's Gas to revise their November decision on the utility's pipe replacement program and allow for an additional \$134 million in spending in 2024.

ILLINOIS HAS HIGHEST MEDICAID RENEWAL RATE AMONG STATES

As HFS approaches the halfway point in resuming customer Medicaid redeterminations following the end of the pandemic-era continuous Medicaid coverage requirement, Illinois has the highest renewal rate among states, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation's Medicaid Enrollment and Unwinding Tracker. The tracker relies on renewal data that the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services collects from states. According to the data tracker, at this stage of the unwinding process, Illinois and Maine have the highest renewal rates among all states, at 90%.

BROADBAND EXPANSION

Lawmakers on the Legislative Budget Oversight Commission heard a variety of perspectives on how best to use forthcoming federal resources to build equitable access to broadband internet and the potential challenges that may arise. The \$1.2 trillion federal infrastructure bill that passed in 2021 included \$42 billion for the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program, an initiative led by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to expand high-speed internet access in all 50 states and U.S. territories.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has submitted a five-year plan for how it intends to use the state's share of that funding (\$1.04 billion) to build out internet access for the state's unserved and underserved communities. The program is designed to first serve those with no access to the internet, then improve connections for those with slow access, and then finally provide high-speed gigabit access to community anchor institutions (CAIs) such as schools, libraries, and universities that can serve their surrounding communities. One of the major conflicts discussed during the hearing centered around the costs and benefits of fiber-optic networks versus fixed wireless options.

The Illinois Office of Broadband estimates that about 234,000 Illinois households are unserved, meaning they have no access to broadband internet, and another 132,000 households are underserved, meaning they lack access to the modern 100mbps down/20mbps up connections needed for day-to-day tasks or remote work.

ISBE SURVEY SHOWS MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING IMPROVING IN ILLINOIS

Illinois school districts are making significant progress in phasing in universal mental health screening for students, according to a survey conducted by the Illinois State Board of Education. The report includes recommendations for how the state can continue to close gaps in mental health screening. These screeners, similar to those for physical, dental, and vision health, can help schools detect social-emotional and behavioral problems in students early so that staff can lend them support before a crisis occurs.

The report recommends that the state take a phased approach to universal mental health screening so that schools can build a solid infrastructure for mental health support at all levels. It also recommends that ISBE collect resources for schools that support a health culture and climate around mental health services in schools, release more guidance around screening tools, and develop a model policy for implementing universal mental health screening.

ILLINOIS POPULATION ESTIMATE INCREASED BY NEARLY 47,000

Illinois' future population estimates will be increased by nearly 47,000 after the U.S. Census Bureau approved a state request to include previously omitted residents of residence halls and group homes in future population estimates. Following the release of 2020 census results, Governor Pritzker and members of the state's congressional delegation requested an official Post-Census Group Quarters Review to investigate inaccuracies in the census data. The review found that 733 Group Quarters were missed or undercounted in the 2020 Census, omitting 46,400 individuals. The 46,400 will not be added to the official 2020 census numbers but will be accounted for in annual population estimates produced between now and the 2030 census, which may impact the state's share of \$675 billion in state and federal program funding.

STATE LAUNCHING NEW ASYLUM SEEKER LANDING ZONE, SHELTER SITE IN JANUARY

As part of its continuing efforts to support asylum seekers arriving in the city of Chicago, the state is launching a new intake center and shelter site this month, as well as an extension of a food services contract with the city. A new intake site will be established at the city's bus landing zone, consisting of six heated tents where asylum seekers can connect with wraparound services and receive help reaching their final destination. The state is funding the New Life Centers of Chicagoland and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago to support these sites. While work continues on a 220-person shelter at a former CVS Pharmacy location in Little Village, the state is also working with New Life Centers to operate a temporary shelter at a Chicago hotel to house the more than 2,500 new arrivals sent from Texas between December 20-27.

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

Illinois Community College Trustees Association

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report January 29, 2024

Illinois legislators do not return to the State Capitol until February 6. However, they continue to file legislation and they are working to identify their priorities. As a reminder, we have now entered the inaugural “blackout period,” during which time the Legislative Reference Bureau will not accept requests for new drafts or amendments. The blackout period will be lifted at the same time as the deadline to introduce new legislation on February 9.

Governor **JB Pritzker** is scheduled to deliver his Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposal to the Illinois General Assembly on Wednesday, February 21. The Governor’s Office of Management and Budget issued a report in November projecting that the state could face a budget deficit of \$891 million next year, assuming that revenue trends remain stable and the state continues making all of its required payments into its Rainy Day Fund and pension funds.

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

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

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INCUMBENTS FACING TOUGH PRIMARIES

Two challengers to House Democrat incumbents have been endorsed by the powerful Illinois AFL-CIO. Both challengers also reported receiving \$68,500 contributions. A growing number of endorsements and contributions are flowing to the challengers, including from pro-choice Personal PAC.

- ❖ **Rep. Mary Flowers** (D-Chicago), the longest-serving member of the General Assembly, faces a primary challenge from **Dr. Michael Crawford**, dean of the private university The Chicago School. Flowers was kicked off House Speaker **Chris Welch**'s leadership team for making a number of inappropriate comments, including telling a staffer they were dressed like a Nazi. She has served in the House since 1985.
- ❖ **Rep. Cyril Nichols** (D-Chicago), a former athletic administrator for the City Colleges of Chicago, has served in the House since he was appointed to replace former Rep. **Andre Thapedi** in 2021. He is challenged by **Lisa Davis**, an assistant Cook County Public Defender. Nichols drew ire from progressives in his caucus when a group of his supporters 'interrupted' a pro-LGBTQIA rally last month.

In the Senate, President **Don Harmon** is "all in" for appointed **Sen. Natalie Toro** (D-Chicago). Committees controlled by Harmon have already pumped nearly \$300,000 last quarter and dropped another \$500,000 this month, and the Senate Dems are paying several staffers on the ground in the district. Her toughest challenge comes from progressive-backed **Graciela Guzman**, who worked for former Sen. **Cristina Pacione-Zayas**. Guzman ended 2023 with \$65,000 in the bank.

Senate Republicans are directing donors to **Sen. Terri Bryant** (R-Murphysboro), who is facing a challenge from attorney **Wesley Kash**. Kash received over \$300,000 in cash from his father and grandmother but has not used it as of the end of the year. Bryant finished the year with around \$280,000 in the bank. Kash, who repaid \$50,000 in loans to his father, has around \$250,000.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE ANNOUNCES START TO 2024 INCOME TAX SEASON

The Illinois Department of Revenue will begin accepting and processing 2023 tax returns on January 29, the same date that the Internal Revenue Service begins accepting federal income tax returns. If a taxpayer electronically files an error-free return, they should receive a direct deposit refund in approximately four weeks. In 2023, IDOR received a total of nearly 6.2 million IL-1040 returns. Of those returns received, close to 5.6 million were filed electronically, or 90.3%. **The tax filing deadline is Monday, April 15, 2024.**

New Illinois Tax Credits this Year:

- ❖ **The Illinois Earned Income Tax Credit** was increased this year to 20% of the Federal EITC and expanded to include taxpayers 18 years of age or older (with or without qualifying child), those 65 years of age or older (without qualifying child), and those with an IRS-issued Individual Taxpayer Identification Number.
- ❖ **The Volunteer Emergency Worker Credit** is a new tax credit this year that is awarded to volunteer fire service emergency workers that apply, qualify, and are awarded the credit. It can be used to reduce the Illinois individual income tax owed by up to \$500. Credits are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

PROPOSAL TO CREATE PERMANENT CHILD INCOME TAX CREDIT

Every year, there are several efforts to expand portions of the state budget. This spring, there is already an effort underway to create a permanent \$300 Child Income Tax Credit. The new proposal has been scaled back from last year's \$700-per-child tax credit bill. Proponents say that even the downsized version would make a major difference. "We have the data that shows roughly 60 percent of the recipients of this benefit across the state would be Black and Brown households," said Rep. **Mary Beth Canty** (D-Arlington Heights) recently on WTTW's Chicago Tonight program. The idea is framed as a partial replacement for the now-expired but massive 2021 expansion of the federal Child Tax Credit. "Monthly checks of up to \$3,600 offered parents

reliable resources to pay for basic goods, like formula, diapers and school supplies, and basic necessities like shelter, utilities and food,” wrote **Natalie Foster** in a recent *Crain’s Chicago Business* op-ed.

IBHE AWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION CAPITAL GRANTS

The Illinois Board of Higher Education has awarded \$400 million in grants to 45 Illinois colleges and universities as part of the Independent Colleges Capital Investment Grant Program. The program provides financial assistance to private, not-for-profit colleges and universities in Illinois for the construction, repair, and renovation of infrastructure on campuses to provide equitable learning experiences to students across the state. The largest recipients of the grants were Northwestern University (\$48.9 million), DePaul University (\$43 million), and Loyola University (\$36.7 million).

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION SEEKS \$653M BUDGET INCREASE

The Illinois State Board of Education has endorsed an FY25 budget request that includes a \$653 million increase in funding for PreK-12 public schools. PreK-12 education spending currently makes up about 1/5 of the state’s entire General Revenue Fund budget. The proposed increase, if approved, would bring the state’s total GRF spending on public education to just over \$11 billion. The proposed budget includes a \$350 million increase in Evidence-Based Funding, the minimum increase required under a 2018 law that calls for gradually increasing the state’s share of the cost of public education while focusing new money on the state’s most poorly funded districts.

ISBE’s request also includes about \$300 million in new or increased funding for several specific categories of school expenses. The largest of those is a proposed \$112 million increase, or nearly 26%, for a program that reimburses school districts for the cost of providing transportation to students with disabilities. The package also calls for a \$75 million increase in early childhood education funding to continue Gov. Pritzker’s Smart Start Illinois initiative, a multi-year program that seeks to eliminate early childhood and preschool “deserts” for 3- and 4-year-old children by 2027.

In addition, ISBE’s budget plan calls for addressing the pressures some districts are facing due to the large number of international migrants arriving in Illinois. The proposal calls for \$35 million in new funding for a line item called “supporting newcomers.” That money would be available for such expenses as hiring bilingual teachers, paraprofessionals and other staff; buying materials written in the students’ native languages; providing additional before- and after-school programming; and providing other supports for children and families.

DCFS SUPPORTS NEW TRANSITIONAL RESIDENTIAL FACILITY FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Unlimited Potential House and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services recently announced the grand opening of UP House’s new campus and its transitional living facility, Logan’s Place, that offers housing, education, and support services for young women in the care of DCFS as they begin their journey toward independent living. The new campus will support up to 50 young women aged 17½ to 21. Staff will offer mentorship and individualized attention.

Once all 21 currently available beds at the facility are occupied, DCFS will invest \$3 million a year to pay for the costs of room and board and program fees. Residents will also have access to educational resources through partnerships with Moraine Valley Community College and South Suburban College and participate in job readiness training and vocational programs to explore various career paths.

ISBE ADOPTS NEW LITERACY PLAN

ISBE has adopted the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, a roadmap for the state to enhance and unify literacy instruction. The plan outlines seven parts of literacy instruction, including comprehension and writing, but highlights the need for teaching phonics and the need to use “evidence-based” instruction.

ILLINOISANS CAN CLAIM UNPAID WAGES USING NEW DOL WEBSITE

The U.S. Department of Labor is currently holding more than \$5 million in wages owed to more than 7,000 Illinois workers, and the department has launched a new website in an effort to return it. When an employee is underpaid for the work they do, the DOL’s Wage and Hour Division can launch an investigation. If it finds that the employee is owed money, known as back pay, the department collects the unpaid wages and attempts to distribute it to the employee. The new [Workers Owed Wages](#) website attempts to connect workers with potential unclaimed back pay.

SOS ALERTS BUSINESSES TO REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

New federal laws require Illinois small businesses to report more information to the federal government about who benefits from their business. The federal Corporate Transparency Act, which went into effect January 1, establishes a national registry of the beneficial owners of businesses to prevent money laundering, corruption, and financial terrorism. Businesses are required to report their beneficiaries to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, a bureau within the U.S. Treasury. The Illinois Secretary of State’s Department of Business Services has sent mailers to registered businesses to inform them of the new requirements. That department will also host quarterly information webinars with the U.S. Department of the Treasury beginning in February.

IL SUPREME COURT HOLDS ANTITRUST ACT APPLIES TO STAFFING AGENCIES

In *State of Illinois ex. rel. Kwame Raoul v. Elite Staffing, Inc.*, the Illinois Supreme Court unanimously determined staffing agencies – a fast-growing industry that employs nearly a million Illinoisans – are not exempt from the state’s antitrust law. Illinois Attorney General **Kwame Raoul** had filed a lawsuit against three staffing agencies that provided temporary workers to the same home improvement business. The Court ruled against the staffing agencies for using their mutual client to coordinate no-poach agreements, which created a secondary agreement to pay temp staffers less than the market rate. The three companies at issue – Elite Staffing Inc., based in Chicago, Midway Staffing Inc. and Metro Staffing Inc., both headquartered in Chicago suburbs – all had contracted with a construction company also located in the suburbs. According to the Court’s ruling, the legislators who passed the state’s antitrust law did not intend to allow employers to enter into agreements that keep wages lower and prevent workers from switching jobs.

SOLAR COMPANY TO BUILD SECOND HEADQUARTERS IN CHICAGO

The nation’s largest solar company, Nexamp, will open its second national headquarters in Chicago as part of a \$2 billion investment in the state. Gov. Pritzker said that the company’s investments will bring nearly 4,000 jobs to the state and lead to the development of clean energy projects that will generate 3000 megawatts of energy, or the equivalent of more than 50,000 households. As part of its Illinois investment, Nexamp is partnering with the City Colleges of Chicago to create a workforce development program for local students looking to get a job in the solar energy industry. As they expand their Chicago operations, the company will target traditionally underserved communities and underemployed individuals for job opportunities.

PROPOSAL TO BAN NATURAL GAS CONNECTIONS IN NEW CONSTRUCTION IN CHICAGO

The Chicago City Council is considering an ordinance that would effectively ban the use of natural gas in most new buildings. The Clean and Affordable Buildings ordinance would establish a lower emissions threshold for energy sources in new buildings, essentially prohibiting the future use of natural gas. Proponents of the ordinance argue the lower threshold plays a key role in slashing emissions and reducing high gas bills in Chicago, while keeping environmental policy in line with other major cities. Citizens Utility Board executive director **Sarah Moskowitz** said that Chicagoans could save between \$11,000 and \$24,000 over 20 years by making their homes entirely electric. But Peoples Gas, the natural gas utility serving the city, says that making Chicagoans use all-electric heat could cost them double what they would pay for natural gas while increasing emissions because of limited output from renewables.

IDOT AWARDED FUNDS TO FIX CHARGERS

The Illinois Department of Transportation was awarded \$7.1 million in federal funds to fix electric vehicle chargers available to the public statewide. The funding, made possible through the Federal Highway Administration's Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Accessibility Program, helps support Gov. Pritzker's goal to have 1 million EVs on the road in Illinois by 2030.

ILLINOIS POWER AGENCY DRAFT STUDY

The Illinois Power Agency has released the preliminary draft version of its 2024 Policy Study analyzing three policy proposals made during the spring 2023 session of the Illinois General Assembly. The Policy Study focuses on energy storage systems, an offshore wind project in Lake Michigan, and a high voltage direct current transmission facility.

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

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report February 5, 2024

The Illinois General Assembly is scheduled to convene on Tuesday, February 6. Legislation is beginning to move through the process, as bills slowly get assigned to committees. Several committees are currently scheduled to meet this week. Expect action to remain slow and even some committees will be cancelled, as members realize some legislation is not quite ready for prime time. The deadline to introduce new legislation is this Friday, February 9.

The biggest anticipated item is the state's Fiscal Year 2025 budget. **Governor JB Pritzker** is scheduled to deliver his budget proposal in conjunction with his State of the State address to the General Assembly on Wednesday, February 21. The Governor's Office of Management and Budget issued a report in November projecting that the state could face a budget deficit next year of \$891 million, assuming revenue trends remain stable, and the state continues making all of its required payments into its rainy-day fund and pension funds.

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GOP LEADERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

Rep. Amy Elik (R-Alton) and **Rep. Dan Ugaste** (R-Geneva) have been selected to join House Republican **Leader Tony McCombie's** (R-Savanna) leadership team.

EFFORT CONTINUES TO KEEP FORMER PRESIDENT TRUMP OFF ILLINOIS BALLOT

A bid to block former President **Donald Trump** from Illinois' March 19 primary ballot has moved to state court, where challengers to the likely 2024 Republican nominee are hoping to move quickly in a case expected to make its way to the Illinois Supreme Court. The Illinois State Board of Elections unanimously voted to reject the challenge to Trump's candidacy, setting the stage for the new court battle. A group of objectors went on to file a petition for judicial review in Cook County Circuit Court, insisting that Trump should be barred from the ballot "for having engaged in insurrection having previously sworn an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution." The state election board rejected the challenge on the grounds that the panel lacked statutory authority to determine whether Trump violated the 14th Amendment, which prohibits insurrectionists from seeking public office.

REVISITING BIPA

Sen. **Bill Cunningham** (D-Chicago) has introduced [Senate Bill 2979](#) to reform Illinois's controversial Biometric Information Privacy Act in an effort to safeguard businesses and employees from costly lawsuits. BIPA protects individuals' privacy rights by imposing strict requirements on how businesses and other organizations can collect, store, and use biometric data. Following several court rulings in the past several years, the application of the law has expanded, leading critics in the business community to argue that it opened them up to significant legal liability. The legislation proposes reforms to address this issue by limiting the number of claims that can be brought against a company for a single biometric identifier collected in the same manner. Instead of facing penalties on a per-collection basis, businesses would accrue liability on a per-employee basis, mitigating the financial burden of multiple claims. Additionally, the bill modernizes the process of obtaining consent by allowing the use of electronic signatures, a practice that has become commonplace since BIPA was initially enacted in 2008.

PAID LEAVE FOR ALL WORKERS ACT WEBINARS

The Illinois Department of Labor is continuing to host webinars about the new Paid Leave for All Workers Act. The webinars will be held on the following dates:

- Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 10 a.m. CT;
- Thursday, February 22, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. CT;
- Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. CT; and,
- Thursday, March 21, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. CT.

Beginning January 1, 2024, employers are required to post a physical notice on the premises where other notices are posted that summarizes the Act and includes information about filing a complaint.

HEALTH BENEFITS FOR IMMIGRANT ADULTS AND SENIORS PROGRAM UPDATE

New copays and coinsurance for existing enrollees in the Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors and Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults programs will go into effect on February 1. Most services covered by the HBIA and HBIS programs, which provide health care coverage for individuals who would be eligible for Medicaid coverage if not for their immigration status, will continue to be free for customers, including primary care visits, prescription medications, and vaccinations at a pharmacy or doctor's office. The new copays and coinsurance will apply to the use of non-emergency hospital or surgical center services, like nonemergent elective surgeries, physical therapy, and lab work. Many HBIA and HBIS participants will be transitioning to managed care plans over the next several months.

STATE PARTNERS WITH GOOGLE TO LAUNCH NEW CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PORTAL

Gov. Pritzker, executives from Google Public Sector, and state legislators recently gathered at Google's Fulton Market office in Chicago to announce the launch of a new centralized portal, powered by Google AI and cloud computing technology, for children's mental health care. The portal, called BEACON, is slated to launch this summer. The Governor said that a centralized hub will make finding behavioral health resources much easier for parents and providers. The platform will be accessible to parents, relevant health care providers, and educators to monitor what services children may be eligible for from the state. The announcement of BEACON follows last year's release of the "Blueprint for Transformation," an executive report on children's mental health care commissioned by Gov. Pritzker's Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative.

CHICAGO WATER INNOVATION HUB RECEIVES \$160 MILLION FEDERAL GREAT LAKES GRANT

A Chicago-area water innovation hub, Current, has been selected to receive a \$160 million innovation grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation Regional Innovation Engine program for its Great Lakes ReNEW initiative. ReNEW, which was backed by six Great Lakes States, is also supported by Argonne National Laboratory, the University of Chicago, and over 50 other partner organizations and focuses on sustainable water innovation solutions. The focus of ReNEW's application was removing forever chemicals, including PFAS, from the water supply to ensure long-term safe water consumption for the Great Lakes Region. Under ReNEW's proposal, chemicals and minerals removed from wastewater would also be repurposed by American manufacturers for battery production and other materials-heavy products.

Beyond research, ReNEW will also connect partners across workforce development systems, from community-based organizations to credentialing programs, community colleges, and universities to provide training and careers for individuals most affected by joblessness and systemic barriers to participation.

LT. GOV. STRATTON LAUNCHES HEALING-CENTERED TASK FORCE

Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton has unveiled the Illinois Healing-Centered Task Force, a new initiative established by [SB 646](#), aimed at steering Illinois towards becoming a more trauma-informed and healing-centered state by collaborating with community stakeholders. The IHCTF's mission includes coordinating existing projects, identifying the repercussions of intergenerational trauma, and formulating preventive solutions. Moreover, it will gather community feedback to inform legislators on integrating trauma-informed principles into policymaking.

ILLINOIS LAWMAKERS, EXPERTS HOPE TO TACKLE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKER SHORTAGE

Industry leaders recently told a joint committee of state lawmakers that over 25% of adults in Illinois reported significant symptoms of anxiety or depression last year. However, there are not enough providers to meet the growing demand for care. State lawmakers expressed a desire to pass plans this spring to help recruit and retain behavioral health care providers – namely mental health care, addiction recovery, and trauma support services.

SPARTA'S WORLD SHOOTING COMPLEX TO HOST GRAND AMERICAN EVENT

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Amateur Trapshooting Association have signed a contract extension that clears the way for the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta to host the ATA Grand American through 2036. The Grand American, the largest and oldest shooting event of its kind, features more than 20 events and attracts more than 5,000 competitors and spectators from across the globe annually. The event, which was first hosted at the World Shooting Complex in 2006, has an estimated

economic impact of \$25 million to \$30 million annually. The 2024 Grand American is set for July 31 to August 10. More than 4 million targets will be thrown during the event.

NEW ILLINOIS HIGHWAY MAP

The Illinois Department of Transportation has released a new Illinois Official Highway Map. The map includes route updates, detailed sections devoted to cities from Zion and Cairo, as well as a feature that shows mileage between towns and marked route junctions to assist travelers as they explore Illinois.

DCEO, IMEC LAUNCH MADE IN ILLINOIS GRANT PROGRAM

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center have announced a \$1 million funding initiative aimed at invigorating the state's manufacturing sector. The Made in Illinois grant program will provide up to \$50,000 in matching grant funding to small- and mid-sized manufacturers in Illinois to fuel innovation and strategic advancements within their industries. To qualify for the program, companies must be Illinois manufacturers with 5-250 employees, operating in the state for at least three years, and with documented sales revenue within the last 12 months. Applications are open until March 31, 2024.

CEI LAUNCHES TRAINING ACADEMY FOR STATE EMPLOYEES

The Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion has launched an online training academy to equip state employees with the knowledge to foster equity and inclusion within the state's procurement processes. The inaugural offering, titled "CEI's Role in Procurement: A Comprehensive Review," is hosted on OneNet. Participants with Illinois.gov email credentials will delve into the core tenets of CEI's mission, statutory background, and its role in shaping the state's procurement landscape.

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





ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report -- Illinois Joint State of the State and Budget Address

February 21, 2024

Gov. **J.B. Pritzker's** sixth annual budget address, delivered to the Illinois General Assembly at noon today, emphasized an optimistic future for the state despite making some "hard choices" in the Fiscal Year 2025 spending plan.

Speaking before a joint session of the Illinois House of Representatives and Senate, Pritzker touted the state's fiscal recovery and achievements in early childhood education, economic development, and supporting vulnerable populations. He also proposed targeted investments and reforms in health care, children's services, and housing as part of the [proposed \\$52.7 billion FY25 budget](#).

"Illinois' budget is balanced, and it builds upon all of the progress we have made, paying our pensions in full, investing more in our public schools, social services, and healthcare while addressing the immediate and unique needs of the coming fiscal year," he said. (Gov. Pritzker's prepared comments are available [HERE](#).)

He also reflected on the accomplishments of the past five years, including elimination of the state's bill backlog, an investment of \$2 billion in the state's Rainy Day Fund, record-breaking film and TV production revenue, all-time high tourism numbers, strong energy reliability, and more.

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

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

HIGHER EDUCATION INVESTMENTS

FY25 Proposed Budget: \$2.55 billion General Funds

- Increases the Monetary Award Program by \$10 million, to a total of \$711 million – a 77% increase in 6 years
 - In FY25, a projected 146,000 students will benefit from MAP grants, up from 128,864 in 2019.
- Increases general funds by 2% for public universities (\$24.6 million) and community college (\$6 million) operating costs
- Continues funding to support community college investments in dual credit and non-credit workforce grant programs
- The Common Application to simplify admissions process to transfer students from community college students is extended with \$450,000
- Maintains teacher pipeline program funding for Golden Apple Scholars (\$10.75 million), Golden Apple Accelerators (\$5 million), and Minority Teachers of Illinois (\$8 million)

- \$20 million in continued funding for the Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare (PATH) Workforce Program

PUBLIC PENSION FUNDING

The FY25 budget proposal fully funds the state’s \$10.1 billion certified pension contribution from General Funds

- The state contributed an additional \$700 million above certified amounts to the systems across FY22 and FY23
 - These contributions will save taxpayers an estimated \$2.4 billion by FY45.
- Illinois is benefitting from reductions in its pension liabilities from the pension buyout program –so far reducing liability by an estimated \$2.0 billion.
 - FY25 contribution to SERS is estimated to be \$40 million lower and to TRS \$96 million lower than it would have been without the program.

Current Pension Funding Plan

- In 1994, Gov. **Jim Edgar** and the General Assembly enacted a 50-year plan to achieve 90% funding of the retirement systems’ liabilities by 2045. Under the current plan, the state’s remaining unfunded pension liabilities in FY45 would total an estimated \$33.6 billion. Pension contributions are scheduled to grow from \$11 billion today to over \$18 billion by 2045 – growing roughly 2.6% per year. Contributions drop off drastically after FY45. Under the current funding statute, actual performance that deviates from actuarial assumptions must be made up by 2045. The ‘runway’ to get caught up shortens the closer to 2045 Illinois gets. To illustrate, if there is a large drop in the stock market that impacts the systems’ investment returns in FY43, the State would be required to contribute the full shortfall to reach 90% funding in FY45, the one remaining year under the Illinois funding plan.

Proposal to Manage Illinois’ Pension Funding Commitment

1. Increase statutory funded ratio goal from Edgar’s 90% to 100% funded.
 - a. Adding three additional years to the funding payment plan (FY48) will get Illinois on a path to 100% funded like peer states.
 - b. Provides a plan to pay off the remaining \$33.6 billion in unfunded liabilities.
 - c. Will position the state for long-term fiscal stability.
2. Increase the state’s annual pension contributions when legacy debts are paid off.
 - a. In FY30, the 2017 \$6 billion Backlog Borrowing General Obligation Bonds will be retired.
 - b. In FY33, the 2003 \$10 billion pension funding General Obligation Bonds will be retired.
 - c. The Governor is proposing to dedicate half of the revenue being used to pay off the 2017 & 2003 bonds to make additional payments to the state’s pension systems when the debts are paid off.
 - d. Making the decision this year to dedicate these future savings to increase the pension contributions in FY30 through FY40 above what is currently required will save taxpayers an estimated \$5.1 billion by FY45.
3. Address challenge of a shortening “runway” through fixed length amortization strips beginning in 2035.
 - a. As the systems approach 100% funding and the end of the ramp, this proposal will soften the potential shock to the state budget from short-term negative returns.

- b. As noted by the State Actuary, creating layers of fixed length amortization strips to address annual over-or underperformance is a practice commonly used by public pension systems in other states.
4. Review and, if necessary, adjust the Tier 2 pensionable earnings cap to the Social Security Wage Base for employees not coordinated with Social Security.
 - a. Most Teachers Retirement System and State University Retirement System members and a limited number of State Employee Retirement System members are not covered by Social Security and must rely more heavily on their state pensions for a secure retirement.
 - b. As part of an overall review of funding the state's pension debts, the Governor encourages the boards of the affected retirement systems and the legislature to review and adjust, if necessary, the structure of the Tier 2 pensionable earnings cap for employees not coordinated with Social Security to ensure that the systems are and remain compliant with federal law.

FY25 PROPOSED CAPITAL BUDGET

The Governor's [proposed capital budget](#) includes \$3 billion in new bond fund appropriations to enhance Rebuild Illinois. The new capital proposal includes the following:

- \$500 million for new quantum-related investments
- \$139 million to DCEO for economic improvement programs, including:
 - \$50 million to Prime Sites
 - \$40 million for Sites Development
 - \$25 million for public infrastructure
 - \$24 million to Manufacturing Training Academies
- \$900 million for maintenance and modernization of Department of Corrections facilities
- \$575 million for deferred maintenance and construction at higher education facilities
 - \$450 million for universities
 - \$125 million for community colleges
- \$157 million for additional funding to support construction of the new DPH laboratory in the Chicago area and rehabilitation of the Carbondale laboratory
- \$513 million for deferred maintenance and construction at state facilities
- \$100 million to DCFS for a multi-year capital grant program to improve capacity for youth placement by increasing bed capacity system-wide
- \$65 million for the Capital Development Board to complete a new DoIT central computing facility
- \$60 million to DoIT to complete various technology projects
- \$20 million for a new Department of Military Affairs Illinois National Guard readiness center in Peoria

OTHER PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- Builds on five years of historic fiscal progress with balanced budgets, nine credit rating upgrades, \$2 billion Rainy Day Fund, eliminated bill backlog, and a GDP that exceeds \$1 trillion.
- Continues transformative investments in early childhood education and childcare, K-12 education, higher education, and efforts to fight poverty.
- FY24 revised estimated spending reflects proposed spring supplemental appropriations of \$1.183 billion and proposed transfers.
- Estimated FY24 budgetary surplus of \$273 million, with \$205 million set aside in Budget Stabilization Fund.

- Proposed FY25 General Funds expenditures total \$52.695 billion, a \$752 million (<2%) increase from FY24 estimated spending.
- The proposed budget reflects full payment of the certified FY25 pension contribution.
- FY25 Government Services recommended budget reflects direct funding of enterprise-wide IT budget lines to the Illinois Department of Technology and current estimates of employee and retiree health insurance liabilities.
- Estimated FY25 budgetary surplus of \$298 million, with an estimated \$170 million reserved in the Budget Stabilization Fund.

FY24 AND FY25 REVISED REVENUE OUTLOOK

- FY24 General Funds revenue forecast is revised to \$52.216 billion, a \$199 million revision upwards from November 2023 forecast
 - While economic activity is stable, it is not outperforming expectations by much
- Federal Reserve acted to raise interest rates to slow inflation, that move also slowed the overall economic growth rate
- While several aspects of the national economy remain stronger than expected, the economic activity does not always impact the state's taxable base:
 - Home sales linked closely to state sales tax revenues –negatively impacted by higher interest rates
 - Consumption patterns are switching back towards services
 - Corporate profits have leveled out
- FY24 and FY25 revenue forecast built on S&P Global December baseline economic forecast

NEWLY PROPOSED REVENUE FUNDS SUMMARY

- General Funds FY25 revenues are estimated to total \$52.993 billion, a \$777 million, or 1.5%, increase from revised FY24 estimates.
- FY25 individual income taxes are forecasted to grow \$979 million, or 3.8%.
- FY25 Other Transfers-in are expected to drop by \$563 million due to the one-time nature of certain FY24 transfers.
- FY25 Federal revenue forecast \$339 million below FY24 due to one-time retroactive Medicaid claim draws in FY24.
- FY25 revenue forecast benefits from several proposed revenue adjustments, including:
 - Increase in Sports Wagering Tax from 15% to 35% -\$200 million
 - Continue the limit on the Corporate Net Operating Loss Deduction, but increase the cap to \$500,000 in allowable loss -- \$526 million
 - Cap Sales Tax Retailers' Discount -- \$101 million state/\$85 million local governments
 - Transfer mass transit costs from sales taxes to Road Fund -- \$175 million

SMART START ILLINOIS: INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

This multi-year program provides a comprehensive approach to investments in preparing children to be lifelong learners. Year 2 investments include:

- \$13 million to launch the Illinois Department of Early Childhood
- \$75 million in additional Illinois State Board of Education's Early Childhood Block Grant funding
 - Adds an additional 5,000 slots in preschool deserts

- Increases block grant to \$748 million, \$254 million more than 2019
- \$200 million investment in funding for Early Childhood Workforce Compensation Contracts
- \$5 million increase for the continued expansion of the Illinois Department of Human Services' Home Visiting Program

Other Early Childhood Investments include:

- \$36.5 million to support higher participation in the Child Care Assistance Program
- \$5 million in state funds for Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity scholarships to replace discontinued federal funds
- \$3.5 million for the 2nd year of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library early childhood literacy program
-

K-12 FUNDING

FY25 ISBE Proposed Budget: \$17.38 billion All Funds, \$10.814 billion General Funds (\$449 million ISBE General Funds increase)

- Increases Evidence-Based Funding \$350 million, bringing EBF to \$8.6 billion
- Includes a \$30.7 million increase, for a total of \$1.1 billion, in grants for transportation and special education
- Includes \$10.2 million increase for Career and Technical Education Programs
- Includes \$45 million for the 2nd year of Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program

STATE-BASED MARKETPLACE – EXPANDING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE

Public Act 103-0103, signed into law by Governor Pritzker in June 2023, authorized the creation of a state-based marketplace for Illinois, which gives the state the authority to create a more consumer-focused health insurance exchange specific to Illinoisans.

- SBM will go live for plan year 2026
 - ACA Open Enrollment Period begins November 1, 2025.
 - During the interim year, the state will advertise, provide consumer assistance, begin staffing and building IT infrastructure for the marketplace.
- The proposed FY25 budget includes funding to ensure the success of this roll out:
 - Agency funding will support staffing, consumer assistance navigators, marketing and advertising, and costs for an enrollment website.
 - \$17.8 million to the Department of Insurance
 - \$6 million to Department of Healthcare and Family Services
 - Funding increases to \$6 million for Get Covered Illinois, to expand the State's marketing and outreach effort to assist consumers in accessing affordable healthcare.
 - Close collaboration between DOI and HFS will ensure a smooth transition for individuals moving between Medicaid and the marketplace, avoiding potentially devastating coverage gaps.

HOME ILLINOIS - PREVENTING AND ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN ILLINOIS

HOME ILLINOIS, housed at DHS, targets the prevention of homelessness, provides crisis response, expands housing support and increases job opportunities for the homeless. The proposed FY25 request increases the Home Illinois line by \$50 million and includes:

- \$35 million to maintain court-based rental assistance.

- More than \$181 million to support unhoused populations seeking shelter and services, inclusive of \$52.4 million to the Emergency and Transitional Housing Program.
- \$25 million in Rapid ReHousing services, including short-term rental assistance and targeted support services for households for up to two years.
- \$42 million to maintain funding for current supportive housing for individuals.
- More than \$33 million to provide street outreach, medical respite, re-entry services, access to counsel, and other shelter diversion supports.
- \$5 million is included in IDHS' budget to convert temporary shelters to sustainable community assets.

CONTINUING THE CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

The proposed FY25 budget includes almost \$35 million to continue funding and implementing recommendations from the Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative, a collaborative and coordinated effort across six state agencies (DHS, HFS, ISBE, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, and Department of Public Health) and their community partners.

- \$1.5 million for BEACON (Behavioral Health Care and Ongoing Navigation), the portal developed in partnership between Illinois and Google Public Sector.
- This new state-of-the-art online portal will provide a user-friendly experience for Illinois families to access behavioral and mental health resources for children.
- \$31.3 million for Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services Expansion.
- \$2 million for Pediatric Mental Health Training.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FY25 Proposed Budget: \$14.248 billion All Funds, \$7.282 billion General Funds

- Provides an additional \$50 million for Home Illinois to continue initiatives launched in FY24 through investments in eviction mitigation, shelter diversion, scattered site housing, and court-based rental assistance.
- \$2.4 billion for services for people with developmental disabilities in support of the *Ligas* consent decree –an increase of \$940 million since 2019. The FY25 budget proposes a nearly \$116 million general funds increase for these services, including:
 - Preserves over 2 million statewide service hours for I/DD group home Direct Support Professionals.
 - \$100 million to annualize the cost of the accelerated Guidehouse rate increases for Direct Service Providers effective January 1, 2024.
 - \$30.1 million for continued compliance with the *Ligas* Consent Decree including \$13.6 million to annualize FY24 placements and \$16.5 million for 630 new placements.
 - \$11.7 million to adjust for the SSI increase of 3.2 percent for the Home and Community Based Waiver.
- \$36.5 million increase for the Child Care Assistance Program to serve approximately 135,000 children.
- Funds the Division of Rehabilitation Services' Home Services Program with an increase of \$116 million to support expected caseload growth and liability increases.
- Provides emergency funding to support the joint response of the state of Illinois, city of Chicago, and Cook County to thousands of asylum seekers arriving in Illinois with a \$182 million commitment through allocations of funding at Welcoming Centers (\$115 million) and Home Illinois (\$67 million).
- Supports mental health care and treatment through a \$19 million increase for forensic inpatient and outpatient services, 9-8-8 hotline, and support of the *Williams* and *Colbert* consent decrees.

HEALTHCARE AND FAMILY SERVICES

FY25 Proposed Budget: \$39.478 billion All Funds, including \$9.383 billion General Funds

- FY25 Medicaid liability is projected to total \$26.8 billion all funds, approximately 0.1% increase.
 - Total enrollment is projected at 3.6 million Illinoisans.
 - State continues to work through eligibility reviews following the end of the federal public health emergency's continuous enrollment requirement.
- Includes an increase of \$497.9 million to annualize Medicaid program rate increases and changes effective mid-FY24.
- Includes a new \$50 million for a Medicaid tiered safety net hospital add-on.
- Includes funding of \$629 million for the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults and Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors programs, of which \$440 million will be covered by State GRF.
- Includes a \$20.6 million GRF increase for Child Support Services.
 - Ensures 100% pass-through of child support collected on behalf of clients receiving TANF.
- The recommended budget provides \$10 million for a program to erase medical debts totaling an estimated \$1 billion in relief for more than 300,000 Illinois households.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FY25 Proposed Budget: \$1.708 billion All Funds, \$269.9 million General Funds

- Provides \$6 million to hire 100 additional staff in the Office of Health Care Regulation.
- Proposes \$4 million to create an action plan that centers on reproductive care through community based providers and support community-based, full-spectrum care birth centers.
- Adds \$2 million for grants for freestanding reproductive health care clinics and maintains the funding of \$18 million to support existing reproductive health initiatives, including the navigation hotline and the learning/training collaborative for providers.
- Includes \$400,000 for a Homelessness Mortality and Morbidity Report to address health issues of those who are housing insecure.
- Includes \$500,000 to fund community-based tuberculous prevention, follow-up, and treatment.
- Provides \$45 million (\$15 million GRF and \$30 million in federal funds) to support critical IT replacement for Illinois' National Electronic Disease Surveillance System and Long-Term Care systems.
 - The first update for Illinois' Disease Surveillance System, the replacement for INEDSS, will be released in March 2024 and the second release is scheduled for summer of 2024.
 - IDSS will assist in the surveillance, investigation, data collection, tracking and reporting of communicable and emerging diseases.
- Maintains \$8.5 million to respond to unexpected public health threats and emergencies.
- Provides capital funding to adapt plans for a Chicago-area Public Health laboratory to current needs and to rebuild the Carbondale public health lab.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

FY25 Proposed Budget: \$2.032 billion All Funds, \$1.920 billion General Funds

- Provides a \$22.6 million increase for staffing the 28 correctional facilities across the State.
- Continues funding to expand a federally funded construction workforce vocational training program.
- Includes sufficient funding to cover increased medical expenses and food related costs.
- Includes funding to implement an electronic healthcare records system.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

FY25 Proposed Budget: \$3.877 billion All Funds, including \$157.9 million General Funds

- Continues funding for core initiatives, including business attraction and development, workforce training, energy transformation, economic assistance programs, foreign trade, administration of federal funds, and tourism and film promotion.
- Includes \$20 million in capital funding to continue the Illinois Works Construction Pre-apprenticeship Program.
- Includes \$1.4 million for Illinois Works Administration to support the Bid Credit IT system development project.
- Provides additional funds for the Illinois Grocery Initiative to address food insecurity faced by millions of Illinoisans living in urban and rural food deserts –\$10 million
- Includes \$30 million for the Fast-Track Workforce program to provide employee screening, recruitment and job training development to employers.
- Funds a Chief Workforce Officer at DCEO.
- Continues to leverage the remaining amounts from the \$400 million set aside in FY23 for the Invest in Illinois Act closing fund initiative. To date, these monies have helped create jobs, spur business development, and lay the groundwork for further economic growth in multiple communities.
- Continues funding for the new Office of Outdoor Recreation to promote tourism at destinations around the State and grow the outdoor recreation economy of Illinois –\$2.5 million
- Continues funding for the multi-year initiative to develop and implement a one-stop business portal to assist entrepreneurs wishing to create new businesses or relocate businesses to Illinois –\$10 million
- Includes \$25 million for competitive business development capital grants to expand, rehabilitate, or relocate private businesses to Illinois.
- Continues the annual \$2 million for rural economic development, intended to connect communities and improve access to state and federal aid through outreach or technical assistance from rural navigators.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

FY25 Proposed Budget: \$931.3 million All Funds

- Funds Electric Vehicle rebates –\$12.0 million
- Continues to provide funding for IJJA water infrastructure programs, with nearly \$622 million in IJJA-related capital appropriations.
- Provides capital funding for new Lead Service Line Replacement Inventory (LSLRI) grants –\$20 million
- Provides \$10 million for the Great Lakes Environmental Justice Program to fund environmental projects in underserved communities.
- Includes \$70 million for opportunities to address emerging contaminants in small and disadvantaged communities to confront per-and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) pollution.

\$11 BILLION IN DEBT PAYDOWN ACROSS FY22 - FY25

- All COVID-related borrowing repaid
- All interfund borrowing repaid
- \$3.6 billion reduction in payables including delayed health insurance bills
- Paid off \$4 billion+ UI Trust Fund advance

- Extra \$700 million Pension Stabilization Fund contribution
- \$449 million set aside for Railsplitter bonds defeasance
- \$250 million dedicated to eliminating unfunded College Illinois! liabilities

STATE RETIREE HEALTH CARE SAVINGS

- Negotiated a \$37.3 billion, or 63.5 percent, reduction in the State’s estimated long-term liabilities for OPEB programs (Other Post Employment Benefits)
- State realized an incredible 56% reduction in OPEB long-term liabilities in FY22

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- March 10: Deadline – Senate Bills out of Senate Committee
- March 19: Primary Election
- April 5: Deadline – House Bills out of House Committee
- April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
- April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
- May 2: ICCTA Lobby Day
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

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

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report February 26, 2024

Last week's legislative highlight was the much anticipated joint State of the State and Budget Address delivered by Gov. **JB Pritzker** on Wednesday, February 21. Not much else was accomplished, as several scheduled committee hearings were cancelled. The Illinois General Assembly does not return to Springfield until March 5.

Gov. Pritzker presented a **\$52.7 billion proposed budget** he described as austere. "I wish we had big surpluses to work with this year to take on every one of the very real challenges we face," he said. "It's important to note, that while this budget is tight this year, our fiscal house is in order, and we are able to keep our commitments to the people of Illinois."

While the budget proposal builds on priorities from the Pritzker administration like funding preschool, funding the neediest schools, and caring for asylum seekers, the budget also includes roughly \$800 million in tax increases, primarily targeting large corporations and sportsbooks. Another part of his revenue plan is to free up another \$175 million for day-to-day state operations by using money from the Road Fund rather than sales tax revenue to pay for mass transit.

Pritzker is proposing a permanent repeal of the 1% sales tax on groceries, which he and the legislature previously suspended for one year in 2022. But this time around, the state would not make up the lost revenue for local governments, which receive all the grocery tax revenue.

The Governor also continues to focus on addressing Illinois' pension system, which continues to be the most significant fiscal challenge facing the state. He proposed to increase the full-funding target to 100% from 90% and extend the payment deadline by three years, to 2048. The change would not affect the state's pension payment for the coming year, totaling \$10.1 billion, or roughly 19% of the operating budget.

Now the General Assembly will begin its analysis of each agency's budget requests, as well as appropriation requests from the other executive constitutional officers and the judicial branch.

The speech was also a State of the State address. Gov. Pritzker discussed national issues ahead of the November election, making clear that he supports aiding the 35,000 asylum seekers in Illinois. He took a swipe at California, saying Illinois' budget is tight, but "our fiscal house is in order." Pritzker also insisted he will expend political capital to reform the health insurance industry with a sweeping plan to prevent companies from dictating coverage decisions, including prior authorization and step therapy, in which patients must get permission from insurers before receiving certain types of care.

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

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

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- March 15: Deadline – Senate Bills out of Senate Committee
- March 19: Primary Election
- April 5: Deadline – House Bills out of House Committee
- April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
- April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
- May 2: **ICCTA LOBBY DAY**
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

U.S. SUPREME COURT SCHEDULES ARGUMENTS OVER BRIBERY STATUTE

The U.S. Supreme Court set April 15 as the date it will hear arguments in the case of former Portage, Indiana mayor James Snyder. This case is anticipated to potentially resolve a disputed legal issue related to political corruption and will directly affect several political corruption cases in Illinois, including the conviction of four ComEd lobbyists and the pending trial of former House Speaker Michael Madigan.

Snyder was convicted after a company he controlled accepted \$13,000 in payments from a government contractor. The contractor bid on and won a contract with the city. After the bids were closed and the contract awarded, Snyder opened a consulting firm and later contracted with the entity to provide consulting services. Prosecutors alleged that the payments were gratuities made as a reward for the contract, whereas the parties contend it was for consulting services not tied to the contract. Federal prosecutors successfully argued that they didn't need to prove a quid pro quo, and the payment of consulting fees was a sufficient gratuity to constitute a violation of federal law. Snyder lost his appeal in the Seventh Circuit, which holds that gratuities do not require a quid pro quo. Currently there is a split among federal circuits as to whether the federal bribery statute only criminalizes quid pro quo bribery or also criminalizes gratuities that do not require a quid pro quo. "Gratuities" can be gifts or payments in recognition of actions of an official without any quid pro quo agreement related to the action, regardless of whether such payments or gifts are made to the official or any person or entity on behalf of an official. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision will likely resolve the dispute among the circuits.

LABOR RIGHTS OUTREACH INITIATIVE

The Illinois Department of Labor and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights are partnering on an education and outreach program to raise awareness of workplace protections that apply to all workers in Illinois, with a particular focus on labor exploitation and child labor. The program is designed to educate migrants who have recently arrived in Illinois of their rights under state labor laws. The effort comes in part in response to national reporting of instances of migrant children working and being injured in hazardous facilities, including warehouses and food processing plants. To date, more than a dozen workshops have been held with over 350 attendees.

PAID LEAVE FOR ALL WORKERS ACT PROPOSED RULES SECOND NOTICE

On February 1, IDOL issued its second notice draft of proposed rules ([HERE](#)) regarding the implementation of the Paid Leave for All Workers Act. The Joint Committee of Administrative Rules is tasked with considering the

proposed rulemaking and has postponed any action on it until Tuesday, March 12. Individuals with questions or comments may contact IDOL by email at DOL.PaidLeave@illinois.gov.

IDOL continues to host webinars about PLAWA. The webinars will be held on the following dates:

- Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. CT
- Thursday, March 21, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. CT

Beginning January 1, 2024, employers are required to post a physical notice on the premises where other notices are posted that summarizes the Act and includes information about filing a complaint.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX STADIUM

White Sox chair Jerry Reinsdorf and Related Midwest real estate developer Curt Bailey visited with legislative leaders in Springfield to pitch their plan for a downtown stadium in The 78 just south of the Loop in Chicago. Reinsdorf used the meetings to dispel the idea that he wants new state money to pay for it. He said financing the stadium would require not only \$1.1 billion in subsidies from an existing tax on Chicago hotel rooms but also up to \$900 million in infrastructure work that already has been authorized but not funded by a tax-increment financing district that covers The 78 property. Such a move, however, will require legislative and possibly City Council approval.

'RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL' SUBJECT MATTER HEARING AFTER GOVERNOR'S VETO

A proposal to grant electric utilities more control over the construction of transmission lines was discussed in a subject matter committee hearing in the Illinois House. Rep. **Larry Walsh**, D-Joliet, who chairs the Public Utilities Committee, was behind a push last year that would have granted a temporary "right of first refusal" to Ameren Illinois and MidAmerican Energy. A ROFR policy would grant existing utilities the option of controlling transmission line projects before other companies can bid on them. Gov. Pritzker vetoed that measure last summer, saying the proposal would hurt ratepayers. Its sponsors declined to bring it for an override vote when lawmakers returned to Springfield for their annual fall veto session. While no vote was taken, representatives of the energy sector and consumer advocates testified to lawmakers.

LEAD SERVICE LINE INVENTORY GRANT PROGRAM

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity ([HERE](#)) for the fourth round of the Lead Service Line Inventory Grant Program. The program will provide grants to local units of government to fund the creation of a complete lead service line inventory. A total of \$6.5 million is available statewide. Applications will be accepted from February 15 until all funding has been expended. More information about the program can be found on IEPA's website. As part of the Lead Service Line Replacement and Notification Act, community water supplies have until April 15 to submit a final material inventory and initial replacement plan to IEPA.

CHICAGO SUES OIL COMPANIES

Chicago is suing five of the world's largest oil and gas companies, accusing them of lying about their products and the dangers of climate change that contributes to flooding, extreme heat and other destructive forces that hurt the city and its residents. Mayor **Brandon Johnson's** administration filed the lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court, accusing the companies of discrediting science and misleading the public as the climate crisis continued to wreak havoc on the planet. The city is asking a court to hold the companies responsible for the costs of climate change, including damage to property and infrastructure necessary to adapt.

MENDOZA UNVEILS ONLINE PORTAL FOR TRACKING STATE SPENDING ON ASYLUM SEEKERS

State Comptroller **Susana Mendoza** has launched a new online portal aimed at offering increased transparency into state spending on the influx of asylum seekers in Illinois. The move comes in response to the growing calls for clarity regarding expenditures related to the care and accommodation of migrants. [The portal](#) provides detailed information on state expenditures associated with asylum seekers. Users can view various data points, including the vendor's name, the paying agency, the funding source, contract details, and the total amount disbursed.

METRA TO BUY BATTERY-POWERED TRAINS

Metra is set to get its first battery-powered trains in the coming years, which could replace diesel-powered locomotives in places and times of day with fewer riders. Metra believes that the trains will be among the first to use the technology in the United States. Manufactured by Stadler U.S., a Salt Lake City-based division of the Swiss train-maker, they are expected to be delivered in 2027 or 2028. Metra board members approved buying eight of the two-car trains for \$154 million, with the option to spend up to \$181.4 million more for eight additional trains and up to 32 cars that can be added onto the trains to expand them to three or four cars long. They consist of two attached railcars that can hold 112 passengers. Each extra car can seat about 46 people. Metra said the type and cost of charging infrastructure has not yet been determined.

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

Illinois Community College Trustees Association

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report March 4, 2024

Both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly will meet this week to consider hundreds of bills assigned and posted to committees. It will be a very busy week given the large number of bills. The deadline to move bills out of committee in the Senate is March 15, and it is April 5th in the House.

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

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

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

LEGISLATIVE RACES TO WATCH ON PRIMARY ELECTION DAY

House District 31 -- Rep. Mary Flowers (D-Chicago) vs. Michael Crawford

Rep. Flowers was kicked out of leadership and banned from Democrat caucus meetings last year, so Speaker **Chris Welch** has opened the floodgates in support of Crawford, who is dean of The Chicago School, a psychology-focused university. Unions (including IBEW Local 399 and LiUNA) have already contributed more than \$500,000 to support Crawford. The Speaker began to publicly support Crawford by maxing out an individual contribution of \$68,500 and directing several members of his leadership to do the same, for a total of \$618,000 in one day. Flowers, who has served in the House since 1986, has raised just \$6,000 in large donations this year.

Senate District 20 -- Sen. Natalie Toro (D-Chicago) vs. Graciela Guzman vs. Dave Nayak

Sen. Toro was appointed last year to replace **Cristina Pacione-Zayas**. Toro has been tagged as a moderate and has been trying to shake the moniker. Guzman is Pacione-Zayas' former legislative assistant and is attempting to make the race about who is the "real" progressive.

House District 36 – OPEN SEAT -- Rick Ryan (D) vs. Sonia Anne Khalil (D)

In this open primary to replace Rep. **Kelly Burke** (D-Evergreen Park), Rick Ryan is Burke's chosen candidate to replace her.

12th Congressional District – U.S. Rep. Mike Bost (R-Murphysboro) vs. Darren Bailey

When Bailey announced his challenge of Bost last July, it was immediately heralded as one of the top GOP primaries in the country. Bost has raised a lot of money while Bailey has struggled to fundraise. Bost also received former President **Donald Trump**'s endorsement and has had a steady stream of television ads on the air since early January.

House District 110 -- Rep. Blaine Wilhour (R-Beecher City) vs. Matt Hall

House District 102 -- Rep. Adam Niemerg (R-Dieterich) vs. Jim Acklin

Unions have made it a priority to defeat GOP incumbents Wilhour and Niemerg, both outspoken far-right conservatives in the House. The 102nd race has turned into one of the stranger primaries seen in recent years. After Rep. Niemerg was kicked off the ballot for messing up his petition packet, the Illinois Education Association recruited Acklin. Both men are running a write-in campaign to win the GOP nomination.

Senate District 58 -- Sen. Terri Bryant (R-Murphysboro) vs. Wesley Kash

Kash initially dropped \$300,000 of personal funds into his campaign, only serving to motivate Bryant. However, Kash's campaign has turned out to be anything but spectacular. Numerous unforced errors from Kash and good fundraising for Bryant makes the incumbent a favorite.

PRITZKER CUTS RIBBON AT HEARTLAND ADVANCED MANUFACTURING CENTER, EV LAB

Gov. **J.B. Pritzker** visited Heartland Community College on February 27 to celebrate the grand opening of its new Advanced Manufacturing Center and State Farm Electric Vehicle Lab. The Lab offers state-of-the-art training programs in robotics, HVAC, welding, digital media, and renewable energy technologies. These programs aim to equip students with the skills needed to secure well-paying jobs and pursue careers in high-demand industries.

In response to questions from reporters, Pritzker reflected on the importance of investing in electric vehicle expertise due to the increasing demand for such skills in the automotive industry. He reiterated Illinois' commitment to fostering a skilled workforce and highlighted the state's efforts in providing incentives for electric vehicle adoption, saying he'd rather use "carrots rather than sticks to move people in the right direction."

This comment sheds some light on the Governor's opinion of [House Bill 1634](#), which has drawn fire in recent weeks from agriculture and transportation industry advocates. The law would require Illinois to adopt California's strict standards that would, in part, prohibit sales of diesel-powered trucks over several years, including semi-trucks, by 2045. "I personally think now is not the right time for us to do that," Pritzker said of mirroring California's policies. He said he would prefer to incentivize electric vehicle adoption -- such as through the \$12 million electric vehicle rebate program proposed in his Fiscal Year 2025 budget.

IBHE WINS NATIONAL GRANT COMPETITION

The Lumina Foundation has selected the Illinois Board of Higher Education as one of three winners of The Great Admissions Redesign Challenge, a nationwide competition aimed at revolutionizing the college admissions process to enhance accessibility for all students. IBHE will receive a \$750,000 grant to pursue this initiative in partnership with the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

COMMISSION ON EQUITABLE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY FUNDING SUBMITS NEW FORMULA RECOMMENDATIONS

The Illinois Commission on Equitable Public University Funding has submitted its [recommendations report](#) to the Illinois General Assembly. The Commission was established by Public Act 102-0570 and was tasked with developing a structure that funds the state's public universities in an adequate, equitable, and stable manner -- a key strategy in the state's strategic plan for higher education.

Under the recommended formula, funds will be directed to the state's public institutions in a transparent manner through an equity-centered adequacy target with the funding at each institution based on the particular makeup and needs of the student body, the characteristics and mission of the institution, and the resources it has available to it. The new proposed funding model:

- Determines for each institution a unique funding level based on its students' needs, mission, and variety of programs.
- Encourages greater access and success for historically underrepresented students.
- Provides a funding increase to every institution when new dollars are invested.
- Ensures institutions have flexibility to invest in ways that best serve their students.
- Incentivizes institutions to reduce reliance on student tuition with increased state investment.
- Distributes new funding through an equity allocation.
- Calls for transparency and increasing accountability as institutions get closer to adequate funding.

The new formula recognizes and addresses both the historic inequities underlying Illinois' access and attainment gaps – especially among students from low-income households, students of color, students from rural communities, and working adults – and the variety of unique institutional missions and characteristics across the state. The new formula is dynamic and encourages institutions to increase enrollment of historically underserved student groups.

With the necessary state investment, the formula is also intended to reduce the burden on students who have borne an increasing share of the costs of higher education due to state disinvestment in the years prior to Gov. Pritzker's administration. Currently, universities rely on tuition revenue for \$2.1 billion (64%), compared to only \$1.2 billion (36%) from state appropriations. The formula would flip that dynamic, with the state responsible for 57% of the total cost of adequacy, compared to 40% for students, and 3% from other institutional resources. The funding approach estimates that the state Illinois will need to increase funding to universities by approximately \$1.4 billion over the next 15 or more years.

The Commission was made up of 33 members, with representatives from the General Assembly, each of the 12 universities, advocacy organizations, fiscal policy organizations, faculty, a health care expert, a legal expert, a public university student, and a member of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

PRITZKER'S PROPOSED FY25 REVENUE CHANGES

Gov. Pritzker's proposed FY25 budget anticipates \$52.9 billion in general revenue and \$52.7 billion in spending for the state's main discretionary spending account in the fiscal year that begins July 1. The Governor has proposed several revenue enhancements to fill previously projected deficits and support over \$2 billion in spending growth:

- Extend a cap on the amount of net operating losses that corporations can claim on taxes to raise **\$526 million**. Lawmakers created a \$100,000 cap on such deductions in 2020, but it was set to expire in the 2025 tax year. The proposal would extend it while expanding the claimable losses to \$500,000. The Governor's office estimated over 90% of losses claimed by corporations will not be impacted.
- Increase the sports gambling tax to 35% from 15%. That tax is applied to the total profits collected by sportsbooks and will bring in about **\$200 million**, according to the Governor's office. Since sports gambling revenues were originally earmarked for infrastructure projects, the Governor's office proposes dedicating the first 15% for that purpose while allocating the rest to the General Revenue Fund.
- Other revenue changes include raising **\$101 million** by capping a sales tax credit retailers are allowed to claim. Retailers receive a discount of 1.75% of the sales tax they collect as reimbursement for their efforts in collecting them. The Governor's proposed change would allow retailers to claim a maximum of \$1,000 per month. The change would generate another \$85 million for local governments as well. That proposal drew rebuke from groups such as the Illinois Chamber of Commerce and the Illinois Retail Merchants Association.
- The Governor's office also proposed freeing up another **\$175 million** in the General Revenue Fund by transferring some payments to public transit agencies to the Road Fund, which is separate from the state's main discretionary spending account. Since the Road Fund goes to infrastructure projects, that proposal was immediately opposed by the Transportation for Illinois Coalition, which is made up of several union, infrastructure, and business groups.
- The standard deduction – a specific dollar amount used to reduce a taxpayer's adjusted gross income – would be capped at \$2,550 as proposed by the Governor. Capping the inflationary growth at one year instead of two would create **\$93 million** in revenue.

BLACK CAUCUS BUDGET REACTION

During the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus' news conference after the Governor's February 21 joint State of the State and Budget Address, members announced that they would publish their own report outlining their spending requests later in the legislative session entitled "Leveling the Playing Field: Using the General Fund Budget to Invest in Building an Equitable State and Eliminating Structural Racism." Black Caucus members called for investments to improve academic opportunities for low-income and minority students, investments in trades in communities of color to foster economic development, and increased investments in public safety and gun violence prevention in disadvantaged communities. Despite previous budget proposals including investments to counter-act inequities across a wide range of issues, data shows little improvement in these inequities.

ILLINOIS LAUNCHES BIRTH EQUITY INITIATIVE TO TACKLE MATERNAL HEALTH DISPARITIES

The Pritzker administration has unveiled the Birth Equity Initiative, a new, comprehensive program aimed at ensuring equitable access to reproductive healthcare for all communities across the state. The initiative seeks to confront the systemic barriers that have long plagued maternal health outcomes, particularly among Black women and underserved populations. Key components of the initiative include community-based care, expanding Medicaid coverage for reproductive services, providing expanded training and support for providers, and creating a new diaper distribution program for families in need.

DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM WORKSHOPS

The Illinois Department of Transportation is hosting free virtual workshops in March as part of its continuing Building Blocks of Success series for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise for firms interested in strengthening their skills, growing their business and bidding on state projects. New and existing DBEs, as well as firms interested in becoming certified in the program, are invited. March workshop dates and topics:

- March 5, 10 a.m. to noon: Job Costing and Work-In-Process
- March 7, 10 a.m. to noon: Overhead Rate Calculation - Construction and Professional Services, Part 1
- March 12, 10 a.m. to noon: The Benefits of Using Accounting Software
- March 14, 10 a.m. to noon: QuickBooks - Part 1, 2 and 3 Q&A
- March 19, 10 a.m. to noon: Quickbooks - Industry Specific: Construction
- March 21, 10 a.m. to noon: Quickbooks - Industry Specific: Professional Services
- March 26, 10 a.m. to noon: Quickbooks - Industry Specific: Suppliers
- March 28, 10 a.m. to noon: Quickbooks - Industry Specific: Trucking

Workshop information, including dates and times, is available through Eventbrite at bit.ly/DBEworkshops. Advance registration is required.

TEN STATE-DESIGNATED CULTURAL DISTRICTS LAUNCHED

The State-Designated Cultural Districts program aims to uplift the unique contributions of historic cultural districts with the overarching goal of increasing economic development opportunities. Recipients will be eligible to apply for \$3 million in funding to support the goals of the program and to foster economic development and help communities preserve their unique cultural identities. State-Designated Cultural Districts are communities, towns, or specific geographic areas that have a distinct shared historical and cultural identity that binds the community together. The intended purpose of the program is to encourage economic development; support the preservation and development of history and culturally significant structures, traditions, and languages; foster local cultural development and education; provide a focal point for celebrating communities' unique cultural identities; and promote equitable growth and opportunity without generating displacement:

- Champaign -- North First Street Cultural District
- Chicago -- Bronzeville District
- Chicago -- Chinatown
- Chicago -- Clark Street/Camino Clark
- Chicago -- Mahalia Jackson 79th Street Cultural District
- Chicago -- Little Village

- Chicago -- Puerto Rico Town
- Chicago -- South Chicago Cultural District
- Springfield -- Central East Cultural District
- Springfield -- Southtown Cultural District

As outlined in statute, the Illinois Department of Economic Opportunity selected 10 recipients (five for 2023 and five for 2024) and will be selecting an additional five recipients in 2025, with a focus on downstate and rural communities.

ILLINOIS OFFICE OF BROADBAND ADOPTS NEW CONTACT MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

The Illinois Office of Broadband is moving to a new contact management platform. To assist in its community engagement efforts, and to ensure the most up-to-date information is received, the agency is asking community, government and Internet service providers to complete a short contact information intake form ([available here](#)).

CEJA RETURNING RESIDENTS PROGRAM

DCEO has launched \$6 million in funding for the Illinois Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program as part of a larger strategy to equitably grow Illinois' clean energy workforce through the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act. The program will deliver clean jobs training, education, and support services in Illinois Department of Corrections facilities to individuals within 36 months of their release to prepare them to work in clean energy and related sector jobs upon release. Program curriculum will include training in essential employability skills and clean energy basics to help participants succeed in an array of workplaces and clean energy jobs. Upon completion, participants will continue to the job-specific training portion of the curriculum to receive solar PV training or HVAC training, with an energy efficiency focus. Organizations that will run the Returning Residents Program will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity process.

ICC APPROVES IPA 2024 LONG-TERM RENEWABLE RESOURCES PROCUREMENT PLAN

The Illinois Commerce Commission recently greenlit the Illinois Power Agency's 2024 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan, a move set to infuse over \$1.1 billion into procuring new renewable generation across Illinois over the next two years. The plan, mandated by statute for biennial review, aims to diversify Illinois' energy landscape by encouraging investments in various clean energy projects, including utility-scale and community solar, utility-scale wind, hydropower, and other renewable sources. The plan includes the procurement of Renewable Energy Credits for major energy providers like Ameren Illinois, Commonwealth Edison Company, and MidAmerican Energy Company for the program years 2024-2026.

ONE-THIRD OF ILLINOIS NURSES PLAN TO LEAVE INDUSTRY WITHIN 12 MONTHS

A recent survey by the non-profit organization Nurses Take DC, in collaboration with the Project for Middle Class Renewal at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Illinois Economic Policy Institute, has shed light on the ongoing crisis within the nursing profession in Illinois, even after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings reveal a trend of staffing shortages, moral distress, and attrition among Registered Nurses in the state. According to the report, [*Illinois Nursing in Crisis: A Comprehensive Survey Reveals a Continuing Systemic Level of Staffing Shortages, Moral Distress, and Attrition Among Registered Nurses*](#), over half of Illinois' registered nurses are over the age of 55, foretelling a looming shortage of 15,000 RNs by 2025.

Additionally, 34% of current RNs expressed intentions to leave the profession within the next 12 months. The survey, based on the responses of 385 RNs between October 2022 and February 2023, highlighted several persistent concerns among nurses. These include heavy workloads unrelated to patient needs, lack of awareness about laws mandating adequate staffing levels, and feelings of moral distress due to organizational constraints.

IDOC TO PROVIDE CAREER INFORMATION IN MARCH AND APRIL

IDOC will participate in at least 20 hiring events open to the public in various locations throughout March and April for anyone interested in learning about the agency's career opportunities. Prospective applicants can attend any event to learn more about the process. IDOC recruiters will be on hand to answer questions and help individuals apply on the spot. IDOC is currently seeking correctional officers, nurses, wardens, office associates, social workers, and more to join its team.

ICJIA GRANTS FOR THE RESTORE, REINVEST, AND RENEW PROGRAM

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority has opened applications for \$30 million in grants under the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew Program for organizations as they set out to create safer communities, empower youth, provide legal aid, build business landscapes, and help individuals successfully rejoin communities after a period of incarceration. Funded programs will offer evidence-based, promising, or innovative practices within at least one of the five R3 Program Priority Areas: civil legal aid, economic development, re-entry from the criminal justice system, violence prevention, and youth development.

EPA RESOLVES OVERSIGHT OF POLLUTERS IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has agreed to take a more rigorous look at polluters before allowing them to operate or expand in low-income communities, based on a policy change that will resolve a lawsuit filed in response to the IEPA's approval of a scrap shredder in Chicago's predominantly Latino Southeast Side. Under an agreement with U.S. EPA investigators, the state agency promised to require more effective pollution-control equipment and consider air-quality monitoring if industries want to build or expand. Past violations of environmental laws will be taken into consideration as well, and polluters near schools, day care centers and medical facilities will face increased scrutiny.

HFS EXTENDING MCO CONTRACTS

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services had decided to extend for one year the current contracts with the Medicaid managed care organizations in the HealthChoice Illinois program. This extension delays the need to procure new contracts and gives new leadership a chance to settle in and evaluate the program. Additionally, HFS is working on requests for proposals for a new fully integrated dual-eligible special needs plan after the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services notified the state that it will not extend the Medicare-Medicaid Alignment Initiative demonstration program past 2025.

IDPH ADOPTS NEW CDC GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19, FLU AND RSV

The Illinois Department of Public Health has adopted updated guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for dealing with a range of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, influenza, and RSV. The CDC guidance was issued as data indicate respiratory viruses are continuing to circulate around Illinois and

the state's overall respiratory virus level has moved up from Low to Moderate based on an uptick in flu reports. The new guidance no longer requires that those who test positive for COVID-19 should isolate for a minimum of five days before returning to work or other activities, and instead recommends isolation until symptoms improve. Once people resume normal activities, they are encouraged to take precautions for the next five days to curb disease spread, including hand washing and wearing a mask until a negative COVID test is obtained.

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

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Update: March 6 CCB subject matter hearing

March 5, 2024

The Illinois Senate Higher Education Committee will hold a subject matter hearing tomorrow on [Senate Bill 3787](#), an ICCTA-initiated bill that would allow an Illinois community college district to offer a baccalaureate degree program under specified conditions.

SB 3767 SUBJECT MATTER HEARING

9:00 AM, March 6, 2024

Senate Higher Education Committee

Capitol Building Room 212

Springfield, Illinois

[Listen to Committee Room 212 Audio HERE](#)

No action will be taken on SB 3787 at the hearing. The committee is co-chaired by Sen. Michael Halpin (D-36th District) and Dale Fowler (R-59th District).

Please feel free to contact ICCTA with any questions or comments about legislation or public policy issues affecting community colleges.

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ICCTA supports all public community college trustees through information exchange, training, and advocacy to assist them in effective leadership locally and statewide.



ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report March 12, 2024

Both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly will meet this week to consider hundreds of bills assigned and posted to committees. While last week was a very busy week – more than 200 bills passed out of committee – this week will be even busier as we approach committee deadlines. The deadline to move bills out of committee in the Senate is March 15, and it is April 5 in the House. It's still early in the spring session calendar, and many of the measures will be subject to further amendments or fail to gain approval once they get to their respective full chambers.

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

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

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COMMISSION UNVEILS UNIVERSITY FUNDING FORMULA: UNIVERSITIES \$1.4 BILLION UNDERFUNDED

A state commission created in 2021 issued a new report calculating that public universities in Illinois are underfunded by approximately \$1.4 billion. The [Commission on Equitable Public University Funding](#) is made up of 34 members, including legislators, representatives from public universities, and members of advocacy organizations. The commission has been working to develop a formula to bridge the gap in funding. By setting targets for each university and subtracting their established resources, the commission calculated the gap in funding for each public university. Public universities, including all sources of available funding, are currently at 68.5% funding adequacy collectively. It found that dedicating an added \$100 million to \$135 million annually to public universities would allow the state to bridge the funding gap in 10-15 years.

The commission looked at funding models from five states, including Tennessee and California, as well as Illinois' K-12 Evidence-Based Funding model. The commission decided to base the higher education formula on the K-12 model. The K-12 model sets an individual funding adequacy target for each district and calls for an added \$350 million in state funding each year. The bulk of that money is directed to districts that are furthest from the adequacy target. The commission's report will be part of subject matter hearings in the legislature's Higher Education committees.

REPORT: TUTORING BOLSTERS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN ILLINOIS

The Illinois State Board of Education, alongside the Illinois Board of Higher Education and Illinois Community College Board, released a report detailing the progress of the Illinois Tutoring Initiative in boosting student achievement during the 2022-23 academic year. The initiative, aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic on student learning, has yielded significant results, particularly in reading and math. According to the report, an analysis of assessment data from 133 schools across 58 districts revealed that nearly 90% of tutored students met or exceeded expected growth in math, while approximately 80% achieved similar results in reading. These findings are underscored by a recent national study from Harvard and Stanford, which identified Illinois as one of only three states to have fully recovered in English language arts post-pandemic.

LAWMAKERS PASS CHICAGO ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD BILL

Illinois lawmakers have voted to transition Chicago Public Schools from an appointed school board to an elected school board. If signed by Gov. **JB Pritzker**, the transition will occur in two phases. In the first phase of elections this November, voters will pick one board member per district for a total of 10 elected members, and Mayor Johnson will appoint a second member in each district, plus a board president. Candidates can begin circulating petitions on March 26. The CPS school board will be a fully elected school board at the following election cycle, as all 21 seats will be up for election in November 2026. From there on, elections will be staggered so half the seats are up for election every two years.

MORE THAN 3,500 ILLINOIS TEENS PRE-REGISTER TO VOTE

Individuals 16 years old or older can now pre-register to vote in Illinois and have their application held until voting age, as part of a new law that went into effect this year. As of March 5, 3,570 individuals have pre-registered to vote. Of that total, 2,954 are 16 years old and 616 are 17 years old.

2024 TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE

Preparations are underway to host thousands of visitors in Illinois for the April 8 total solar eclipse that will pass over much of the southern third of the state. Staff from multiple state agencies have worked together for more than a year to ensure a safe and successful experience for the influx of eclipse watchers. Southern Illinois is in the path of totality for the second time since Aug. 21, 2017, making it the eclipse crossroads of America. Carbondale and Southern Illinois University are on the centerline of the path of totality and will see 4 minutes and 9 seconds of totality – nearly double what was seen in 2017. SIU is hosting numerous educational and enrichment events during the four days of the eclipse weekend, culminating with a public viewing at the football stadium on April 8 and other activities. The weekend is expected to attract thousands of visitors.

IMMIGRANT HEALTH PLANS TO BEGIN ANNUAL REDETERMINATIONS

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services announced plans to initiate annual redeterminations for enrollees in the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults and Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors programs. This process, beginning on April 1, aims to verify continued eligibility for coverage, mirroring the redetermination process utilized in traditional Medicaid programs. HFS has filed amended emergency rules with the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules to implement this process. Those deemed ineligible or failing to respond will lose coverage by July 1.

PRITZKER ANNOUNCES BIOMANUFACTURING, PRECISION FERMENTATION INVESTMENTS

Gov. Pritzker, alongside Innovate Illinois, announced an investment of \$680 million for the Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing Tech Hub in Chicago. This initiative, designated as one of the 31 Economic Development Administration Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs nationwide, aims to propel economic growth and innovation in Illinois. iFAB is spearheaded by the Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and 30 other key partners. It focuses on leveraging Illinois' agricultural sector to drive economic growth and innovation for a sustainable future. The iFAB project aims to address emerging market demands for sustainable products by supporting various applications in biomanufacturing, from novel ingredients to sustainable materials.

IDOT OPENS PLANNING, RESEARCH GRANTS FOR LOCAL PARTNERS

The Illinois Department of Transportation has announced the availability of \$7 million in grants for projects aimed at advancing the state's long-range transportation goals. The grants will support activities ranging from planning studies to outreach efforts. Awards will be based on the ability to study or implement goals, strategies, or objectives outlined in IDOT's Long-Range Transportation Plan or its multimodal plans, such as those for transit, rail, bike, freight, and highway safety. Eligible activities include planning studies, data collection and analysis, research and program development, performance management, and outreach efforts. Applicants include local and state agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, regional planning commissions, and nonprofit entities with public sponsors. The deadline to apply for the grants is April 14.

PRIMIEN'T'S \$400M CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN ILLINOIS' PLANT-BASED FUTURE

Gov. Pritzker joined Primient leadership, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and local stakeholders to celebrate Primient's new investments in Decatur. With this milestone \$400M investment over the next 5 years in infrastructure and operations, Primient will improve refining and drying practices and further ensure quality and reliability for decades to come. A leader in sustainable food and industrial ingredient production, Primient is the sole corn wet miller to replace coal use at every facility with more sustainable energy sources. As a long-term community partner, Primient has increased corn processing capacity by 10 million bushels, locally sourced, and created hundreds of jobs for Illinoisans.

ILLINOIS LEADER APPOINTED TO U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S APPRENTICESHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The U.S. Department of Labor has announced the appointments of 30 members to serve on the Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship to advise the Secretary of Labor on issues related to the national apprenticeship system. As part of the announcement, Daniel Serota, a member of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board and chair of IWIB's Apprenticeship Committee, was appointed to serve on the committee. As vice president of

government and public Affairs at Aon, he will serve as an employer representative on the committee. Committee members will provide advice and recommendations aimed at enhancing and modernizing apprenticeship programs across the country.

\$8.5 MILLION CEJA COMMUNITY SOLAR ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY GRANT PROGRAM

DCEO has launched \$8.5 million in funding for the Community Solar Energy Sovereignty Grant Program. The program supports community-based organizations and technical service providers in low-income and historically disadvantaged communities to plan, develop and execute community solar projects. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity process. The goal of this grant program is to provide upfront seed capital funding to overcome barriers to project development caused by lack of capital in historically disadvantaged communities.

FOLLOWING US SUPREME COURT DECISION, IL LAWMAKERS SEEK TO SAFEGUARD WETLANDS

Sen. **Laura Ellman** (D-Naperville) and Rep. **Anna Moeller** (D-Elgin) have introduced the Illinois Wetlands and Small Stream Protection Act, filling the void left by a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that weakened federal safeguards under the Clean Water Act. The court's May 2023 ruling in *Sackett v. EPA* shifted the responsibility of wetland protection to the states. The proposed legislation would establish a program under the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, requiring developers to obtain permits before impacting wetlands. It also includes provisions for avoiding destruction and compensating for environmental losses.

TOP CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

Concerns about subpar home repairs and remodeling topped Illinois Attorney General **Kwame Raoul's** Top 10 list of consumer complaints in 2023. Illinoisans complained of poor quality and no-shows on a range of repairs from fixing gutters and roofing to new construction. The second most prevalent complaint was identity theft, with consumers reporting breaches of information and having credit cards taken out in their names. Raoul released the analysis of 19,450 written complaints and thousands of phone calls in time for National Consumer Protection Week. Here are the remaining top complaint categories:

- Suspect consumer debt services, such as mortgage lending
- Used vehicle sales including warranties
- Promotions/schemes involving phone, work-at-home and lottery scams
- Internet and mail-order products
- Telecommunications including cable and satellite TV, telemarketing and wireless phones
- Auto repairs
- New auto sales, including financing
- Federal, state and local governments

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

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report March 18, 2024

The action at the Statehouse last week occurred in committee rooms as the Senate worked toward its March 15 deadline to move substantive bills to the Senate floor. Similarly, the House also moved a lot of bills, but its deadline is not until April 5. Legislators returned to their districts on March 14 for their final push to Primary Election Day tomorrow (Tuesday, March 19). Session will resume on Wednesday, March 20.

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

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

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- March 19: Primary Election
- April 5: Deadline – House Bills out of House Committee
- April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
- April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
- May 1: Illinois Community College Caucus reception
- May 2: **ICCTA LOBBY DAY**
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

RACES TO WATCH IN TOMORROW'S PRIMARY ELECTION

The following is a non-exhaustive list of what is on the ballot around Illinois:

Three incumbent members of Congress face tough challenges from within their own parties. In the **4th Congressional District**, Democratic U.S. Rep. Chuy Garcia faces Chicago Ald. Raymond Lopez. In the **7th Congressional District**, Rep. Danny Davis is part of a crowded field that includes Chicago City Treasurer Melissa Conyears-Ervin, community organizer Kina Collins, and two others. In the **12th Congressional District**, Republican Rep. Mike Bost has a challenge from former state Sen. Darren Bailey.

Voters in the **1st Illinois Supreme Court District** will select a justice for a full 10-year term, with incumbent Justice Joy Cunningham running for re-election to her seat. Cunningham replaced former Chief Justice Ann Burke in 2022. Cunningham faces Justice Jesse Reyes, who currently serves on Illinois' 1st District Appellate Court.

Vying to replace Kim Foxx, who is not running for a third term, to serve as **Cook County State's Attorney** are democrats Clayton Harris and retired Appellate Court Justice Eileen O'Neill Burke.

Races to watch in the **State Legislature**:

State Senate 20th District (Dem): Natalie Toro (incumbent) vs. Garciela Guzman vs. Dave Nayak

State Senate 58th District (GOP): Terri Bryant (incumbent) vs. Wesley Kash

State Senate 37th District (OPEN GOP): Chris Bishop vs. Tim Yager vs. Li Arellano, Jr.

State Senate 53rd District (OPEN GOP): Jesse Faber vs. Chris Balkema vs. Susan Wynn Bence

State House 4th District (Dem): Lilian Jimenez (incumbent) vs. Kirk Ortiz

State House 5th District (Dem): Kimberly Neely DuBuclet (incumbent) vs. Andre Smith

State House 21st District (Dem): Abdelnasser Rashid (incumbent) vs. Vidal Vasquez

State House 23rd District (Dem): Edgar Gonzalez, Jr. (incumbent) vs. Josephy Mercado

State House 24th District (Dem): Theresa Mah (incumbent) vs. Lai Ching Ng

State House 29th District (Dem): Thaddeus Jones (incumbent) vs. Gloria White

State House 31st District (Dem): Mary Flowers (incumbent) vs. Michael Crawford

State House 36th District (OPEN Dem): Rick Ryan vs. Sonia Khalil

State House 83rd District (Dem): Matt Hanson (incumbent) vs. Arad Boxenbaum

State House 88th District (OPEN GOP): Chuck Erickson vs. Regan Deering

State House 102nd District (GOP): *write in candidates* Adam Niemerg (incumbent) vs. Jim Acklin

State House 110th District (GOP): Blaine Wilhour (incumbent) vs. Matthew Hall

State House 116th District (GOP): Dave Severin (incumbent) vs. Angela Evans

IL STATE CAPITOL LOCKDOWN CLEARED AFTER THREAT

On March 12, Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias announced that his office received notice of a threat involving the State Capitol. Out of an abundance of caution, SOS Police issued lockdown and shelter in place orders. After a sweep of the perimeter and the building, an all-clear order was issued and business resumed.

NEW STATE ECONOMIC FORECAST EXPECTS GROWTH FOR FY 2025

The Commission on Government Forecasting Accountability has upped its revenue estimate for the current year by about \$2 billion – moving it slightly above the Governor's February estimate. COGFA did not adjust its estimate for the state's personal income tax collections, but revenue manager Eric Noggle said that a further revision could be forthcoming as the April 15 tax filing deadline approaches.

COGFA noted that general nationwide fears of a recession have subsided, and the scope of the potential slowdown is reflected in Pritzker's proposed spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year. "During our last annual revenue meeting, we mentioned that many of the economic firms were still forecasting such a chance of a recession," COGFA executive director Clayton Klenke said. "But we mentioned that the data that we saw coming in month to month gave us greater confidence that the economy would continue to chug along. And that is what we have continued to see."

SPRING ENROLLMENT AT ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGES CLIMBS FOR SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Spring enrollment at Illinois community colleges has increased for the second straight year. According to the Illinois Community College Board, opening spring 2024 enrollment increased by 5.1% percent from the

previous spring. The Illinois system's enrollment growth continues to outpace national growth, which shows a 2.6% increase from 2023. It is also the third largest enrollment increase in nearly 15 years (7.8% increase between spring 2009-2010, and 7.2% between spring 2022-2023).

SUPREME COURT EXPLAINS SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

The U.S. Supreme Court has clarified when a public official who blocks a constituent on social media may be sued for doing so. In a unanimous opinion, the court laid out a two-pronged test for determining when a public official's speech on social media is attributable to the government and can therefore lead to litigation. Under the new standard, an official's social-media activity constitutes state action only if that official had actual authority to speak on the government's behalf, and "purported to exercise" that authority when speaking on social media. Social media users may then sue public officials for blocking them if that test is met.

HOUSE PANEL OPENS HEARINGS ON PRITZKER'S HEALTH INSURANCE REFORMS

The Illinois House Human Services Committee began hearing testimony last week on Gov. JB Pritzker's proposals for sweeping changes in the state's health insurance industry – The Health Care Protection Act. The changes, which Pritzker first unveiled in his State of the State address in February, would limit the ability of companies to deny claims or steer patients toward cheaper treatments. They are contained in an amendment to [House Bill 5395](#).

The changes include banning prior authorization requirements for people to receive in-patient treatment at a psychiatric facility as well as all forms of so-called "step therapy" for prescription drug coverage. Step therapy refers to the practice of requiring a patient to try one or more alternative medications before being allowed to access medications prescribed by their doctor. Other changes in the plan include requiring insurance companies to publicly post the types of treatments and therapies that do require prior authorization; requiring them to maintain accurate lists of the providers who are in their networks; and banning the sale in Illinois of short-term, limited duration insurance plans that do not meet the minimum standards under the federal Affordable Care Act.

Speaking at a news conference after the hearing, Pritzker brushed aside suggestions that his proposals would result in higher costs for consumers. The committee took no action Wednesday, but Chair Anna Moeller (D-Elgin) said that the committee plans to hold more discussions and could vote as early as next week to advance the bill to the full House.

'BRING CHICAGO HOME' VOTES WILL BE COUNTED AFTER ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT DENIES APPEAL

Chicago voters will be allowed to decide the Bring Chicago Home referendum question after the Illinois Supreme Court denied real estate groups' effort to appeal – a decision that brings the winding legal saga to a close less than a week before Primary Election day. The decision cements the referendum's place on the ballot, which asks whether the city should increase a tax on the sale of high-end properties to raise revenue for homelessness prevention.

SENATE COMMITTEE PASSES BILL CHANGING LIABILITY LAWS FOR BIOMETRIC DATA VIOLATIONS

The Illinois Senate Judiciary Committee has passed a bill ([Senate Bill 2979](#)) changing how liability is calculated under the state's Biometric Information Privacy Act. Under current law, companies need to get written consent

from customers and employees to use biometric information like fingerprints, face scanners, and retina scanners. That part of the law would not change, although the bill would allow companies to obtain an electronic signature for consent. What would change is what happens when a company violates the law. Currently, they can be held liable in civil court for \$1,000 in damages for each violation -- which means that every time an employee uses their fingerprint to punch the clock or enter a restricted area, the company could be held liable if they did not get consent. If the proposal becomes law, damages would change to \$1,000 per person.

A 2023 Illinois Supreme Court decision held that White Castle must pay \$17 billion in damages due to liability being calculated on a per-swipe basis. Under the proposed legislation, the bill's sponsor estimated that White Castle would have been liable for less than \$50 million.

SENATE ENERGY COMMITTEE DISCUSSES BATTERY RECYCLING BILLS

The Illinois Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee recently deliberated on two bills concerning battery recycling and stewardship. [SB 3481](#), sponsored by Sen. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), focuses on Electric Vehicle battery recycling and storage, aiming to establish a regulatory framework overseen by the Illinois Pollution Control Board. Proponents emphasized the need for proper regulation to mitigate fire risks associated with battery storage facilities. The second bill under discussion was [SB 3686](#), sponsored by Sen. Dave Koehler (D-Peoria). This legislation focuses on establishing a battery stewardship program for portable and medium-format batteries, intending to streamline battery collection and recycling efforts. Ultimately, both bills received favorable responses from committee members, with SB 3686 passing with amendments and SB 3481 passing without opposition.

BUSINESS, LABOR, AGRICULTURE COALITION PROPOSES CARBON CAPTURE LEGISLATION

The Capture Jobs Now Coalition, a new coalition consisting of business, organized labor, and agricultural groups, have announced legislation aimed at advancing carbon capture and storage projects in Illinois. Sponsors say [SB 3311](#) and [HB 569](#) seek to provide a regulatory framework to support CCS initiatives, thereby helping the state achieve its clean energy goals while fostering job creation and economic development.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has announced \$4.75 million in funding through the release of two Section 319(h) Grant Program Notices of Funding Opportunity to address nonpoint source pollution. Illinois EPA is seeking proposals for watershed-based planning projects and watershed-based plan implementation projects to prevent, eliminate, or reduce water quality impairments to Illinois' surface and groundwater resources. Nonpoint source pollution is the result of rain or snowmelt carrying natural and human-made pollutants and depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater. It is estimated that over 60% of water pollution issues nationwide can be traced to nonpoint sources.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR EV CHARGING STATIONS OPENS

The Illinois Department of Transportation has released the first official Notice of Funding Opportunity for Round One of the Illinois National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program, which will provide up to \$50 million for the construction of 46 charging stations across the state. The Illinois NEVI program aims to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles by providing reliable access to charging on Illinois interstates and is part of a series

of comprehensive initiatives to achieve the state’s goal of becoming a leader in manufacturing and deploying electric vehicles.

PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CAPITAL INVESTMENTS IN DOC FACILITIES

The Illinois Department of Corrections is planning to dedicate capital funds to rebuild Logan Correctional Center in Lincoln and Stateville Correctional Center in Crest Hill, addressing critical infrastructure needs at both facilities. The funding is included in the Governor’s Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposal. IDOC will work with the Illinois Capital Development Board and stakeholders on a timeline and next steps, with work to begin pending approval of capital appropriations in the FY25 budget.

It is anticipated that Stateville will be temporarily closed and demolished with a new facility to be built on its grounds. Logan’s status is still to be worked through with various stakeholders, and the location of the new facility is still being finalized.

The plan estimates construction costs will total between \$805 to \$935 million. Gov. Pritzker’s proposed FY25 capital budget included \$900 million in new funds to demolish and rebuild these facilities. In accordance with COGFA process, construction will not commence until all requirements of the State Facilities Closure Act are met. The design and build-out of the new facilities is anticipated to be completed over the next three to five years. IDOC will coordinate closely with staff at these facilities, organized labor, individuals in custody, and other stakeholders to ensure a smooth rebuilding process and the department is continuing its work to hire for a number of open positions.

FUNDING FOR THE HOME ILLINOIS WORKFORCE PILOT PROGRAM

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has announced \$5 million in funding for the Home Illinois Workforce Pilot Program. The program’s goal is to support individuals experiencing homelessness by improving employment opportunities, helping them establish financial stability and improving their ability to afford permanent housing in their community. The program is an essential part of the Illinois Job Training and Economic Development Program. The JTED Program was created to provide workforce training and wrap-around services to bolster equitable workforce recovery for Illinoisans struggling to gain meaningful employment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ILLINOIS GAMING BOARD RENEWS PAR-A-DICE CASINO LICENSE

The Illinois Gaming Board has renewed the license for Par-A-Dice Hotel Casino in East Peoria. Par-A-Dice Gaming Corporation presented its case for license renewal, emphasizing plans for a modernized gaming facility. Initially licensed on February 14, 1992, the casino received a four-year renewal, contingent on submitting a project development plan to the IGB by March 14, 2026.

SUPREME COURT APPROVES PRE-TRIAL RELEASE APPEALS TASK FORCE REPORT

The Illinois Supreme Court announced that it has approved the report and recommendations of the Pretrial Release Appeals Task Force Report. The task force convened to review the recent surge in pretrial release appeals throughout the state’s five Appellate Courts, which have risen dramatically since the implementation of the Pretrial Fairness Act in September 2023.

The Supreme Court’s amended rules are available [HERE](#) and are effective April 15, 2024. The full report with recommendations can be found [HERE](#). The amended rules are intended to streamline the pretrial release appeals process to relieve pressure on the judicial system while maintaining the same rigorous standards of review.

MADISON COUNTY JUDGE RULES STATE VENUE SHOPPING LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL

A state law that requires lawsuits alleging violations of the Illinois Constitution to be filed only in Cook or Sangamon counties has been ruled unconstitutional as applied to a case from Madison County. Approved last year and signed by Gov. Pritzker, [House Bill 3062](#) was opposed by Republicans who said that limiting where people can sue the state to just two of the state’s 102 counties is “tyrannical.” The law “does violate due process, as applied to persons who reside or were injured outside of Cook or Sangamon County,” Madison County Judge Ronald Forest, Jr. wrote. “The motion to transfer is Denied, as [the law] is unconstitutional, as Defendant seeks to apply it.” In its motion to move the case to Sangamon County, the state said that the litigants can participate in court proceedings remotely with video conferencing. Forest said that the state could also video conference into Madison County.

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report March 25, 2024

After last Tuesday's primary election, both chambers met Wednesday through Friday last week and held dozens of committee hearings. Legislators now return to their district offices for a short break. The House will reconvene on April 2 and the Senate on April 9.

The Senate deadline to move bills out of committee has passed, but 398 bills were given extensions. Last week 20 bills advanced out of committee, and 65 bills advanced to Third Reading. The Third Reading deadline is April 12. The House committee deadline is April 5, and last week 133 bills came out of committee. The House's Third Reading deadline is April 19.

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

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

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- April 5: Deadline – House Bills out of House Committee
- April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
- April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
- May 1: Illinois Community College Caucus reception
- May 2: **ICCTA LOBBY DAY**
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

LEGISLATION OF INTEREST

The Workers Freedom of Speech Act, [House Bill 5572](#) (Evans), has passed out of the House Labor Committee 18-6. The bill provides that an employer may not discharge, discipline, or penalize an employee for refusing to participate in an employer-sponsored meeting that is meant to communicate the opinion of the employer regarding religious or political matters. The bill is a priority of the AFL-CIO.

The House Consumer Protection Committee has passed [HB 5380](#) (Gong Gershowitz), which requires large social media companies to use third-party software companies that would alert parents if their child is being cyber bullied, talking about suicide, buying drugs, or engaging in other potentially other dangerous activity on the platforms.

The first of Governor JB Pritzker's spring session initiatives – the Health Care Protection Act, [HB 5395](#) (Moeller) – has passed the House Human Services Committee by a vote of 6-3. The bill would ban step therapy, ban prior authorization for in-patient mental health care, establish statewide standards on clinical criteria when performing utilization review; prohibit insurance companies from selling Short Term Limited Duration Plans; require insurers to publicly list all treatments that require prior authorization; raise network adequacy and transparency standards, requiring insurers to submit updated in-network care directories; authorize the Department of Insurance to fine insurers that violate network adequacy requirements; require cost-sharing adjustments for insurers to participate in the Exchange in 2026; and require insurers to post drug formularies on their websites, among other things. The sponsor stated the bill will be further amended on the House floor to address several concerns.

2024 IL PRIMARY RESULTS IN KEY RACES

When all the votes are certified by the Illinois State Board of Elections next month, it will likely show the lowest turnout for a presidential primary in at least 34 years. Though thousands of properly postmarked mail-in ballots are still being tallied through April 2, state election officials believe it will be hard to crack 20%. The likely reason for the low turnout is that most races were uncontested. For the most part, incumbents beat back challengers.

In Chicago, Mayor Brandon Johnson's real estate transfer tax reform measure to fund housing programs ("Bring Chicago Home") has been rejected by voters, with residents voting nearly 54% to 46% against the measure. As mail-in votes continue to be counted, Cook County State's Attorney hopeful Eileen O'Neill Burke maintains a slim 2,015 vote lead over Clayton Harris. Based on the unofficial count results, Burke is leading Harris 50.19% to 49.81% overall, with thousands of mail-in ballots still to be counted in the city and suburbs. This race could be headed to a re-count challenge.

In congressional races, Chicago's incumbent U.S. Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL7) defeated four primary challengers, and U.S. Rep. Chuy Garcia (D-IL4) won his primary race against Chicago Ald. Raymond Lopez. U.S. Rep. Sean Casten (D-IL6) won his race against two primary challengers, as did U.S. Rep. Bill Foster of Naperville in his race against civil rights attorney Qasim Rashid. Downstate, U.S. Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL12) defeated former state senator Darren Bailey. Despite challenging Bost from the right, Bailey failed to defeat the incumbent after Bost secured an endorsement from former President Donald Trump, who also easily won the Republican presidential primary in Illinois.

Incumbent Illinois Supreme Court Justice Joy Cunningham will stay on the bench for a full 10-year term after defeating challenger Appellate Court Judge Jesse Reyes. Cunningham was appointed to the court after former chief justice Anne Burke stepped down in 2022.

In the Statehouse, two incumbents were defeated. Michael Crawford beat Rep. Mary Flowers (D-Chicago) handily (69% to 31%) with the backing of House Speaker Chris Welch. Rep. Flowers stated after her loss that she will not return to Springfield. Despite high campaign spending, Sen. Natalie Toro (D-Chicago), appointed to the Senate 20th District seat in 2023, lost to CTU-backed challenger Graciela Guzman.

In the open seat to replace retiring Rep. Kelly Burke (D-Oak Lawn), Rick Ryan defeated progressive Sonia Khalil. Sen. Terri Bryant (R-Murphysboro) defeated a Republican challenge. In the open race to replace retiring Dan Caulkins (R-Decatur), Republican Regan Deering won. No Democrat has filed to run for the seat. In the downstate race of two write-in candidates, incumbent Adam Niemberg (R-Teutopolis) prevailed.

PRITZKER DECLARES APRIL AS ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH

Gov. Pritzker has declared April 2024 as **ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH** “in honor of the Illinois Community College System and the significant contribution these institutions are making to every student, every community, and our state.” The full text of the proclamation can be viewed [HERE](#).

ICCTA, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Community College Marketing Collaborative will be featuring Community College Month stories on social media throughout the month of April, using the hashtags [#4everystudent4everycommunity](#), [#ilcommunitycollegeproud](#), and [#CCMonth](#).

DR. AONDOVER TARHULE NAMED ISU'S 21ST PRESIDENT

The Illinois State University Board of Trustees has named Dr. Aondover Tarhule as the university’s 21st president. Trustees approved a four-year contract for Tarhule that will expire March 17, 2028. Tarhule served a year-long appointment as interim president. A 29-member committee composed of trustees, students, faculty, staff, and alumni conducted the nationwide search.

Tarhule previously served as vice provost and dean of the Graduate School at Binghamton University (State University of New York) and was executive associate dean and department chair in the College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences at the University of Oklahoma. Born and raised in Nigeria, Tarhule is a first-generation college student. He earned a bachelor’s degree in geography and a master’s degree in environmental resources planning from the University of Jos, Plateau State, in Nigeria. He later earned a master’s degree and a doctoral degree in geography from McMaster University in Hamilton (Ontario, Canada), then received a post-doctoral fellowship from the Canadian Science Advisory Council to conduct research at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario.

PRITZKER SIGNS ELECTED CHICAGO SCHOOL BOARD IMPLEMENTATION

Gov. Pritzker has signed [Senate Bill 15](#), the implementation bill outlining how the Chicago Public Schools Board will transition from a mayoral-appointed to a fully elected body in the 2026 general election. Initially, 10 members will be elected in 2024, while the remaining 10 members and the board chair will be appointed by the mayor. However, starting in 2026, all 20 CPS Board members will be directly elected from subdistricts, with the board president being elected citywide.

During an unrelated news conference Monday, Pritzker threw his support behind a follow-up bill ([HB 5766](#)) from Rep. Margaret Croke (D-Chicago) that would prohibit the CPS Board from taking any action on CPS’ selective admission school system or closing any of selective admission schools until after the board is fully elected in Feb. 2027.

HOUSE WORKING GROUP ON TEACHER SHORTAGE & RECRUITMENT

Speaker Welch has created a new group aimed at tackling the persistent teacher shortage afflicting schools statewide and will focus on devising strategies to recruit and retain qualified educators to fill vacancies across Illinois. Rep. Katie Stuart (D-Edwardsville), a former educator, will lead the working group. Stuart’s priority is to unify the various bills and programs attempting to address the shortage into a cohesive effort. The working group includes Reps. Harry Benton (D-Plainfield), Sharon Chung (D-Bloomington), Fred Crespo (D-

Streamwood), Will Davis (D-Hazel Crest), Laura Faver Dias (D-Grayslake), Michelle Mussman (D-Schaumburg), Aaron Ortiz (D-Chicago), and Sue Scherer (D-Decatur).

Illinois lawmakers have implemented various measures to streamline licensing procedures, reduce fees, and enhance support for aspiring educators. Efforts such as raising the minimum teacher salary to \$40,000 annually and investing in early childhood education and teacher preparation programs have yielded growth in the educator workforce.

EXECUTIVE ORDER ON GENE THERAPY AFFORDABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY

Gov. Pritzker has signed an executive order aimed at making transformative gene and cell therapy treatments accessible and affordable for all Illinoisans, particularly those suffering from sickle cell disease. At a press conference at La Rabida Children's Hospital in Chicago, health officials highlighted the significance of this move in addressing the healthcare disparities faced by sickle cell patients. Joined by Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton, Pritzker acknowledged the importance of affordable healthcare for all Illinoisans. He underscored the historic progress in medical science, particularly in gene and cell therapies, which offer hope for many families.

COGFA REPORT ON STATE GROUP HEALTH LIABILITY

The Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability has published a report on the State Employees' Group Health Insurance Program. Key findings showed that Fiscal Year 2025 expected liabilities are projected to be significantly higher than in FY24 due to health cost inflation and various legislative mandates for health care procedures and coverage, including weight-loss medications. The Illinois Department of Central Management Services estimates that the FY25 liability for the SEGHIP will be \$3.775 billion, 16.5% higher than the FY24 liability. CMS has requested a \$490 million increase in general revenue funds for FY25. There are 359,188 participants in the SEGHIP.

ILLINOIS PROMOTED AS SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUEL HUB

Speaking at the Illinois Sustainable Aviation Fuel Conference, Gov. Pritzker emphasized Illinois' commitment to becoming a leader in sustainable aviation fuel production, citing the state's advantageous infrastructure and abundant resources. He highlighted Illinois' efforts in fostering clean energy initiatives, underscoring the state's role in driving economic growth while prioritizing environmental sustainability. He also emphasized Illinois' rebuilt and modernized infrastructure, including its robust network of international airports, as key assets facilitating the growth of SAF production and distribution. In a bid to incentivize private sector participation in SAF projects, Pritzker noted measures such as a \$1.50 per gallon tax credit and initiatives to encourage investment in SAF infrastructure and technology deployment.

UTILITIES FILE SLIMMED-DOWN SPENDING PLANS

The Illinois Commerce Commission sent the state's two major electric utilities, ComEd and Ameren Illinois, back to the drawing board in December when it rejected the companies' multi-year grid plans, citing a lack of transparency and unclear benefits to customers among other reasons for the rejection. The plans – products of the state's Climate and Equitable Jobs Act – propose billions of dollars in spending and lay out the companies' plans for supporting the state's climate goals, including the transition away from greenhouse gas emitting energy generation over the next 20 years. The ICC is now reviewing the plans in a process likely to last the rest of the year. The types of projects outlined in the company's filings include plans related to solar energy,

electric vehicles, battery storage, automating electricity distribution and making infrastructure more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

The plans propose less spending than the ones rejected last year. ComEd is asking for \$7.6 billion in spending on grid improvements, a 10.7% decrease from their rejected plan. Ameren is seeking \$1.88 billion in capital spending, about a 15.7% decrease from its previous request. The plans also include the companies' operational spending, which would be similar to current levels. Along with the grid plans, the two utilities are also filing rate plans to formalize the changes to customer rates and lay out some unrelated expenses. ComEd is proposing increasing residential customer bills by an average of \$3.74 per month next year, with smaller increases in subsequent years. By 2027, the average residential customer could be paying about \$92 more per year than they would be otherwise. Ameren, which serves about 1.2 million electric customers, has not filed its rate plan.

PRITZKER TO TOUT ILLINOIS ECONOMY AND FILM INDUSTRY IN CALIFORNIA TOUR

Gov. Pritzker is in California, accompanied by key Illinois film officials and stakeholders. The aim is to elevate Illinois as a prime destination for business ventures and film productions. The trip will kick off an effort to pitch Illinois to industry giants and explore opportunities for expanded investments in the state. The Governor hopes to shed light on what the Illinois Film Production Services Tax Credit as well as the state's increased film infrastructure can offer companies who may be looking to expand beyond southern California. The delegation plans to meet with major studios and distributors to highlight the benefits of filming in Illinois, including the tax credit, picturesque locations, and robust infrastructure.

REPORT TOUTS \$300 MILLION IN STATE-FUNDED MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE

The Illinois Housing Development Authority has released a report touting the nearly \$300 million in mortgage assistance the state has delivered over the past several years. Funded by the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the Illinois Homeowner Assistance Fund has distributed \$298.6 million in emergency mortgage assistance that helped 16,845 households avoid foreclosure. Eligible homeowners could receive up to \$60,000 in grant assistance for past due mortgage payments, property taxes, homeowner's insurance and/or flood insurance payments, homeowner/condominium association fees, and mobile home lot rent. The average recipient received \$17,727. Of the nearly 17,000 households helped, 70% had a total income of less than \$60,000 per year, and they were located in 98 of the state's 102 counties.

ILLINOIS EPA OPENS \$44 MILLION FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has opened the second round of grants totaling \$44 million aimed at bolstering the purchase and installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across publicly accessible locations in the state. The program aims to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles by providing reliable access to charging on Illinois interstates. The funding opportunity invites applications from a spectrum of entities, including local governments and private organizations, to install and maintain charging stations. Each application must propose a minimum of two publicly accessible charging station locations.

MAJOR GENERAL NEELY RETIRING; BOYD NAMED NEXT NATIONAL GUARD COMMANDER

Major General Rich Neely, head of the Illinois National Guard, will retire in May after 40 years of service. Neely's retirement signifies the end of a long career that saw him serve as Adjutant General for Illinois,

commander of the Illinois National Guard, and director of the Illinois Department of Military Affairs. Gov. Pritzker has appointed Major General Rodney Boyd as Neely's replacement, making Boyd the first Black officer to command the Illinois National Guard.

COMMISSION ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION LAUNCHES INAUGURAL BEP CERTIFICATION WEBINAR SERIES

The Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion has announced its new Business Enterprise Program and Veterans Business Program Certification Educational Webinar series, in collaboration with Chief Procurement Offices. Each virtual webinar will provide practical insights regarding the benefits of being certified with the State of Illinois, contract bid opportunities and resources, and step-by-step guidance to complete the BEP and VBP certification applications successfully. More information is available here: [BEP and VBP Certification Educational Webinar](#).

- March 27th at 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
- April 24th at 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
- May 22nd at 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

IDHR STATEMENT ON IL SUPREME COURT DECISION REGARDING PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Illinois Department of Human Rights director Jim Bennett released the following statement regarding the Illinois Supreme Court's decision to ensure the availability of places of public accommodations for individuals with disabilities, including athletes:

“The Illinois Supreme Court unanimously sent a case back to circuit court making it clear that the Illinois Human Rights Act ‘must be liberally construed to achieve its purpose’ of securing for Illinoisans the right to be free from unlawful discrimination in our places of public accommodations, including persons with physical or mental disabilities. The high-court decision further clarifies that organizations who own, operate, or lease a place of public accommodation can be held liable under the IHRA for the denial of full and equal enjoyment of that place based on a disability or other protected category.”

BLAGOJEVICH SUIT AGAINST GENERAL ASSEMBLY DISMISSED

After Gov. Rod Blagojevich was impeached by the House twice in 2009, the Senate convicted him, removing him from office, and then unanimously voted to prohibit the Governor from ever holding public office again. Last year, Blagojevich filed a complaint seeking to invalidate the Illinois General Assembly's actions so that he could potentially run for office, stating that he was treated unfairly and the prohibition on future office violates the federal constitution. In an atypical opinion that closes with quotes from Dr. Seuss, Judge Seeger dismissed the claims and wrote -- “The time has come. The time is now. Just Go. Go. GO!”

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report
April 1, 2024
APRIL IS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH

Lawmakers were away from Springfield last week for the spring break typically scheduled around the Easter holiday, although both chambers held Appropriations Committee hearings in Chicago each day except Friday. The Illinois House is back in session this week, while the Senate continues with its break for one more week.

A handful of proposals considered during the appropriations hearings, including one ([Senate Bill 3462](#)) that would create a task force to consider the feasibility of implementing a guaranteed income of \$1,000 per month to certain Illinoisans, including new parents, caregivers, and students. Another measure ([SB 3626](#)) would extend the eligibility period for Illinois' Child Care Assistance Program for low-income families. Multiple proposals (i.e. [SB 3399](#) and [SB 3593](#)) were also discussed that would use state money for recruiting and retaining workers in Illinois' healthcare industry.

Illinois' primary election results will be certified this week. One race was so tight that it was just finalized on Friday after 10 days of vote tabulation. Clayton Harris conceded after the AP called the Cook County State's Attorney race, with Eileen O'Neill Burke edging out Harris by a mere 1,556 votes. It's a slim margin but likely too large for an expensive recount.

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

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

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- April 5: Deadline – House Bills out of House Committee
- April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
- April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
- May 2: **ICCTA LOBBY DAY**
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION APPROVES ADDITIONAL \$5.8B IN STUDENT DEBT FORGIVENESS

The Biden Administration has announced the approval of \$5.8 billion in additional student loan debt forgiveness for 77,700 borrowers in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. The debt relief includes borrowers who have benefitted from the limited PSLF waiver as well as regulatory changes. Total forgiveness

through PSLF now stands at \$62.5 billion for 871,000 borrowers since October 2021. Prior to the fixes to the PSLF program, only about 7,000 borrowers had ever received forgiveness, according to Biden officials.

An additional nearly 380,000 borrowers who are within two years, or 24 qualifying payments, of receiving forgiveness under PSLF will also receive an email from President Biden starting this week thanking them for their service and notifying them that if they continue in their public service work, they will be eligible for forgiveness within that time frame. The announcement brings the total loan forgiveness approved by the Biden administration to \$143.6 billion for 3.96 million Americans. In Illinois, 33,870 borrowers so far have received forgiveness totaling \$2.4 billion under the PSLF.

ILLINOIS WORKS BID CREDIT PROGRAM

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is now accepting applications for the Illinois Works Bid Credit Program, part of the Illinois Works Jobs Program Act. Designed for contractors engaged in or interested in state-funded capital projects, the Illinois Works Bid Credit Program offers opportunities to earn bid credits by employing and retaining graduates of the Illinois Works Pre-apprenticeship Program. These bid credits, or virtual dollars, can be accumulated when contractors hire and retain ILW Pre-apprenticeship Program graduates enrolled in a U.S. Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Program and when these graduates work on state-funded capital projects or any construction project.

Contractors participating in the program can earn up to six years of bid credits for each hired and retained ILW Pre-apprenticeship Program graduate, enhancing their competitiveness in future bids for state capital projects. In addition, contractors have the option to pool bid credits with others to bolster their bids. More information is available [HERE](#).

PRISONER REVIEW BOARD MEMBER RESIGNS FOLLOWING PAROLEE DOMESTIC MURDER CHARGE

The longtime chair and a relatively new member of the Illinois Prisoner Review Board have resigned. The Governor's office announced the pair's resignations within hours of each other nearly two weeks after Crosetti Brand was released from Stateville Correctional Center. Brand is now charged with stabbing his pregnant ex-girlfriend and killing her 11-year-old son the day after his release.

NEW DIRECTOR OF ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE APPOINTED

Gov. JB Pritzker has appointed Robert Vickery, a leader in juvenile justice reform for nearly two decades, as the next director of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, pending Senate approval. Vickery currently serves as interim director of IDJJ, following the selection of previous director Heidi Mueller to lead the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services in February. Before his position as interim director, Vickery served as the deputy director of programs from 2017 to 2024.

IDJJ OPENS PEACE CENTER

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice recently celebrated the grand opening of a newly repurposed secure youth facility that will specialize in vocational, career, educational, and life skills development opportunities for high school graduates ages 17-20 who are in the custody of IDJJ.

IDOC HOSTS FIRST CORRECTIONS WELLNESS FOR FAMILIES COURSE

The Illinois Department of Corrections hosted its first 'Corrections Wellness for Families' class for adult family members of frontline employees in southern Illinois. IDOC's Staff Wellness Response Team presented the course to family members from seven correctional facilities, who spent the day at John A. Logan College navigating how corrections work realities can impact family life. The course marks the first time a state correctional agency in the United States has extended a staff wellness program to family members.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AWARDS NEARLY \$700K IN GRANTS

The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs has allocated almost \$700,000 in grants through the Veterans' Cash Grant Program for the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2024. These grants aim to support organizations across the state that provide essential services to veterans and their families. The funds, derived from proceeds of the Winter Riches Illinois Lottery ticket, will aid programs addressing veteran homelessness, post-traumatic stress treatment, workforce development, education, transportation training, and community development. Since its inception in 2006, the Veterans' Cash Grant Program has allocated over \$20 million to approximately 400 veterans organizations statewide.

BLOCH QUANTUM TECH HUB PLANS ANNOUNCED

Gov. Pritzker and Innovate Illinois have announced a multi-year plan for The Bloch Quantum Tech Hub to develop quantum technology solutions for pressing issues such as fraud detection, grid resilience, and drug discovery by accelerating industry adoption to drive research commercialization — an initiative that is projected to generate \$60 billion in economic impact for the Chicago metro area over the next decade. The coalition, which includes Fortune 500 companies, quantum startups, universities, state and city governments, community colleges, and economic and workforce development nonprofits, developed the plan as part of its application for Phase 2 funding through the U.S. Economic Development Administration Regional Technology and Innovation Hub program.

The Bloch led the Chicago metro area in earning a designation as one of 31 U.S. Tech Hubs during Phase 1 of the program. During Phase 2, the agency will award Implementation Grants to designated Tech Hubs to propel their regional growth in technology through initiatives in workforce development, business and entrepreneur development, technology maturation, and infrastructure enhancement. Substantial state investment is included in the Governor's proposed Fiscal Year 2025 budget for developing quantum technology and a state-of-the-art quantum campus, including a cryogenic facility crucial for quantum technologies and next-generation microelectronics. Should its Phase 2 bid be funded, The Bloch is expected to create 30,000 quantum jobs, train 50,000 workers, and support 200 quantum companies by 2035.

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report April 9, 2024 **APRIL IS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH**

While the Illinois Senate enjoyed its second week of a break from session, the House convened last week to advance legislation out of committee ahead of the April 5 deadline. The House was in session Tuesday through Thursday, abruptly cancelling Friday. The committee deadline was extended to April 19 for 81 bills.

Both chambers will be in Springfield on Tuesday, April 9. The Senate will spend most of its time on the floor ahead of the 3rd Reading deadline on Friday, April 12. The 3rd Reading deadline in the House is Friday, April 19.

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

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

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
- April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
- May 2: **ICCTA LOBBY DAY**
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

STATE REVENUES UP IN MARCH 2024

Final state revenues for March were up \$413 million from the prior year, putting state coffers about \$831 million ahead of this time last year. That revenue growth “helps solidify” the state’s most recent revenue projections driving ongoing budget discussions, according to the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. Last month, COGFA increased revenue expectations for the current fiscal year by about \$2 billion from what was projected when lawmakers passed the budget last May. It now anticipates \$52.6 billion in revenue for the fiscal year that ends June 30.

There is one quarter left in the fiscal year, and April is a generally volatile month for state revenues as final income tax collections are received. COGFA noted that it is not making an adjustment to income tax projections at this time – although April’s performance could move the needle in either direction.

ISBE ALLOCATES \$4.3 MILLION FOR CTE EDUCATION PATHWAY GRANTS

The Illinois State Board of Education has allocated approximately \$4.3 million in state funding for the Career and Technical Education Career Pathway Grants, marking the fourth round of funding for this program. Since its inception, the program has received \$5.6 million in funding and has served nearly 12,000 high school students across 212 school districts and three community colleges.

The aim of these grants is to prepare current high school students in Illinois for careers in teaching and to address the teacher shortage in the state by recruiting diverse students into the field of education. Participants undergo tailored coursework, field experiences, and work-based learning opportunities to equip them for success in college-level teacher preparation programs. Recent data released by ISBE indicates year-over-year growth in the teaching profession for the past seven years. However, the demand for teachers has also increased, resulting in a 15% rise in unfilled teaching positions compared to the previous year.

COOK COUNTY CLERK KAREN YARBROUGH DIES

Cook County Clerk Karen Yarbrough, a former state representative, has died. She was 73. Yarbrough was elected in 2018 as the first African American and woman to serve as clerk in Cook County. When serving in the Illinois House, she was a leader of the Black Caucus, a member of Speaker Madigan's leadership team, and the first Black woman to preside over that chamber. Her legislative accomplishments include serving as lead sponsor of the SmokeFree Illinois Act, the abolition of the death penalty, and one of the first cyberstalking laws. She was also active in Democratic Party politics, working for both the Cook County Democratic Party and Democratic Party of Illinois.

Clerk Yarbrough was re-elected in 2022. Unless the Cook County Democratic party waits three to four months to make an appointment, a special election will be held in November.

SEN. GILLESPIE TO SERVE AS ACTING DIRECTOR OF DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

Illinois Department of Insurance director Dana Popish Severinghaus will step down from her role on April 15. Popish Severinghaus has served as DOI director since January 2021. Gov. JB Pritzker has appointed State Sen. Ann Gillespie as new acting director, pending Senate confirmation.

Gillespie, who will resign her Senate seat, has served in the Illinois General Assembly since 2019, representing Chicago's northwest suburbs. She sponsored the bill to create the state-based health insurance marketplace and has been a leader on health care consumer protection issues. Gillespie is a former business executive, health care attorney, and consultant in the health care field. She brings decades of experience in the insurance and managed care spaces to the role.

MORGAN WINTERS NAMED STATE-BASED MARKETPLACE DIRECTOR

DOI has announced the addition of Morgan Winters as the new acting director of the State-Based Marketplace, also known as the Illinois Health Benefits Exchange. The SBM is slated to start enrolling Illinoisans during the ACA Marketplace Open Enrollment Period beginning November 1, 2025. Winters most recently served as the deputy director and chief operating officer for MNsure, Minnesota's health insurance marketplace. Winters' leadership with MNsure also includes previous work as senior director of business operations, director of policy & plan management, and manager of operations and contact center.

NEW CHIEF OF STAFF TO CHICAGO MAYOR APPOINTED

Chicago mayor Brandon Johnson has appointed Dr. Cristina Pacione-Zayas as his chief of staff. Pacione-Zayas is the city's first Latina chief of staff, previously serving as first deputy chief of staff. She succeeds Rich Guidice following his resignation two weeks prior.

EXPIRATION OF ACA MARKETPLACE TAX CREDITS COULD RAISE INSURANCE RATES NATIONWIDE

Gains in individual health care coverage nationwide following the passage of the Affordable Care Act are in danger of backtracking unless Congress acts before the end of 2025, according to research from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. According to CBPP, the passage of the ACA has brought down the number of people without health insurance in the United States from 45.2 million in 2013 to 26.4 million in 2022. The report shows that 21.3 million people nationwide have an ACA marketplace plan for the year 2024 after 40 states and the District of Columbia expanded Medicaid under ACA and the American Rescue Plan Act.

In addition to the ACA, further cost relief was offered to shoppers on health insurance marketplaces following temporary enhancements to premium tax credits enacted in the American Recue Plan Act. PTCs reduced ACA marketplace enrollees' insurance premiums by an average of \$800 per year, according to the CBPP, and 91% of marketplace enrollees received PTCs. The CBPP report says that those tax credits are set to expire at the end of 2025 unless Congress acts. Were those tax credits to expire, the report predicts that fewer people overall would enroll in health insurance plans through ACA marketplaces. That could mean that enrollees who do not get PTCs would likely see increased premiums were PTCs to expire because of fewer applicants to the system and the ensuing effect on the risk pool making it likely rates would then go up.

ICC "FUTURE OF GAS" PROCEEDINGS

In March 2024, the Illinois Commerce Commission initiated a statewide Future of Gas workshop and will host a series of public meetings to develop an action plan for Illinois gas utilities' future infrastructure investments. The Future of Gas workshops will evaluate the impacts of Illinois' current decarbonization and electrification goals on the natural gas system. The main goal of the proceedings is to explore issues tied to decarbonization of the gas distribution system, including how the gas system may need to adapt. Additionally, the proceeding will develop recommendations for any future Commission action and any necessary legislative changes.

Phase 1 of the workshop series is designed to describe and expand on the issues outlined in the Commission's March 2024 initiating order, as well as identify issues related to decarbonization and the gas sector. The first meeting of Phase 1 was held on April 1, with meetings taking place weekly through mid-May. Phase 2 will examine the issues identified in Phase 1 to address stakeholder positions and perspectives, including areas of disagreement; assess short-, medium-, and long-term horizons; consider proposed legislation and/or regulatory solutions to individual topics; and present recommendations for ICC action where relevant. Meeting dates to explore Phase 2 have not yet been set.

CITY OF CHICAGO ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON NATURAL GAS LIMITS

The Chicago City Council's Committee on Environmental Protection and Energy held an hours-long subject matter hearing on its Clean and Affordable Buildings Ordinance last week. The proposal would set new indoor emissions standards for new buildings and additions to prohibit the use of natural gas heating systems and natural gas-powered appliances. Groups in favor of CABO argue that the legislation will mitigate the share of

greenhouse gas emissions that come from Chicago's built environment and lower energy costs for property owners and tenants. They also argue that it will lead to better health outcomes and cite the health concerns associated with gas stoves. Labor unions representing plumbers, pipefitters and operating engineers, along with Peoples Gas, oppose the ordinance, saying that it removes customer choice and would cause job losses. They also warn that customers left on the gas system will end up experiencing higher gas bills.

ILLINOIS RANKED #1 FOR STATE POLICY ON ENERGY DEMOCRACY, UTILITY RESPONSIBILITY

The Institute for Local Self Reliance Governor has ranked Illinois #1 among the 50 states and the District of Columbia for energy democracy and utility accountability. The Institute scored state policies on clean energy action, holding utility companies accountable, protecting ratepayers, and other measures that support locally owned clean energy. The study goes beyond measurements of clean energy output and deployment to examine who owns and controls clean energy production in each state. The Institute also identified Illinois's net-metering and community solar policies as major initiatives that set the state apart.

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report

April 16, 2024

APRIL IS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH

This week, the Illinois House meets Monday through Friday. The 3rd Reading deadline for House bills to pass out of the House is Friday, April 19. Meanwhile, the Senate meets Tuesday through Friday. Last Friday was the Senate's deadline to pass substantive Senate bills out of the Senate. The Senate passed 244 bills, although more have received deadline extensions. That number includes an "agreed bill list" passed by a vote of 59-0 that contained about 90 bills.

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

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

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
- May 2: **ICCTA LOBBY DAY**
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

BIPA UPDATE

The Senate has approved the first major change to Illinois' Biometric Information Privacy Act since it was originally passed in 2008. A year ago, the Illinois Supreme Court urged state lawmakers to clarify a law that led to several multi-million-dollar settlements with tech companies over the collection of Illinoisans' biometric data. [Senate Bill 2979](#) (Cunningham), which passed 46-13, would change BIPA's violation accrual so that each initial collection of a fingerprint or other biometric data would amount to one violation, rather than a violation occurring for each individual scan.

OTHER BILLS ON THE MOVE

Also moving to the House:

- [SB 2639](#) (Hastings) enhances Illinois' requirement to cover infertility treatments.
- [SB 3686](#) (Koehler) requires businesses that sell or distribute batteries to develop a recycling stewardship program.
- [SB 2662](#) (Morrison) prohibits the advertising, marketing or promoting of an electronic cigarette in a manner that is likely to cause an adult to mistake it for an object that is not a tobacco product.

- [SB 3098](#) (Loughran Cappel) prohibits electronic cigarettes purchased by mail, online or through other remote sale methods from being shipped to anyone under the age of 21 in the state other than a distributor or retailer.
- [SB 2933](#) (Stadelman) prohibits consumer reporting agencies from including medical debt in their reports.
- [SB 2737](#) (Faraci) makes non-compete clauses unenforceable for licensed professionals who provide mental health services to veterans and first responders.
- [SB 2641](#) (Holmes) aims to improve insurance network adequacy by requiring insurers to provide documentation to the Department of Insurance on whether in-network hospitals have a sufficient number of specialists.
- [SB 2764](#) (D Turner) makes changes to the Auto Contract Renewal Act.
- [SB 3741](#) (Morrison) prohibits insurance companies from requiring prior authorizations for medications used to treat substance abuse disorders.

SHEEHAN APPOINTED TO OZINGA VACANCY

State Rep. Tim Ozinga (R-Mokena) resigned from his position effective immediately, according to a letter he sent to House officials last week. Ozinga is co-owner and executive vice president of Mokena-based Ozinga Bros. Inc., and will continue to lead the Will County Republican Central Committee. Local Republicans appointed **Patrick Sheehan** to fill the vacancy for the 37th District. Sheehan, a police officer with almost two decades of experience, also has a background in local governance, having served as a Lockport Alderman and Park Commissioner. Sheehan ran against Sen. Mike Hastings in 2022 and lost.

SIU SYSTEM HONORED FOR ADVANCING ANTI-RACISM, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Southern Illinois University will be recognized as a leading institution in anti-racism work during Weill Cornell's Diversity Week activities. Dr. Sheila Caldwell, SIU system vice president of anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion, announced at SIU'S Board of Trustees meeting that the school has been invited to present about ADEI all over the country, including Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Dallas, and Boston.

STATE EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE COSTS RISE 16.5%

Lawmakers received a [new report](#) showing a 16.5% increase, or \$533 million, in state employee health insurance costs – the largest single-year increase in several years and one that analysts said is due in part to new coverage mandates. The report did not provide details of the specific mandates driving the cost increases, but it mentioned “medications not otherwise guaranteed to be covered, such as certain weight-loss medications” as among the factors.

STATE WATCHDOG FINDS \$7.2 MILLION IN IMPROPER PPP LOANS

A state watchdog is continuing to investigate public employees who claimed millions of dollars from the federal Paycheck Protection Program intended for struggling businesses during the COVID pandemic. The Office of Executive Inspector General has found 277 cases of wrongdoing involving PPP loans, which were typically forgiven, meaning they did not have to be repaid. The investigators focused on loans of more than \$20,000 and found about \$7.2 million in improper ones. Most of the confirmed fraud cases — 175 — involved Illinois Department of Human Services employees. There were 31 cases in the Department of Corrections, 27 in the Department of Children and Family Services, and three in the Illinois State Police.

NEW ILLINOIS GROCERY INITIATIVE GRANT OPPORTUNITY

A new program from the Illinois Grocery Initiative -- the New Stores in Food Deserts Program -- will offer competitive grants to encourage the establishment of new grocery stores in USDA-defined food deserts. Paired with the Equipment Upgrades Program, the initiatives are a \$20 million effort to address food deserts and prevent grocery store closures in Illinois. Awards can range from \$160,000 to \$2.4 million, with a 1:3 match requirement from businesses. Qualified entities include units of local government and independent grocers or cooperatives with fewer than 500 employees and no more than four grocery locations. New Stores in Food Deserts grants will fund construction and renovation costs for new stores, as well as many first-year operations costs, such as employee wages, utility costs, initial inventory of food, and more.

DPH AWARDS ABORTION PROVIDER CAPACITY BUILDING GRANTS

The Illinois Department of Public Health has awarded \$2 million to three organizations to provide training aimed at increasing provider capacity and access for reproductive care in Illinois. The grant provided to Midwest Access Project will expand its work providing sexual and reproductive healthcare clinicians with training in procedural and medication abortion. Its training model fills gaps nationwide in medical education, advanced practice nursing, midwifery education, and clinical training. Planned Parenthood of Illinois plans to expand training efforts by offering more procedural abortion training for physician trainees and advance practice nurses, and medication abortion training for eligible providers. The University of Illinois-Chicago College of Nursing will establish a training program to expose new advanced practice nurses to abortion care through the Reproductive Advocacy and Diversity in Advanced Nursing Training Fellowship.

CHICAGO 'FOUR-PILLAR PLAN' TO ADDRESS CITYWIDE ROBBERIES AND CAR THEFTS

Chicago police officials have unveiled a "four-pillar plan" to address car thefts and robberies, which have remained stubbornly high in recent years. Police officials joined Mayor Brandon Johnson and Ald. Pat Dowell to announce the plan, which utilizes technology, focus missions, public engagement, and accountability. Through weekly data-driven meetings between patrol units and detectives, resources are deployed to areas where robberies and car thefts are being committed. So far this year, the Vehicular Hijacking Task Force has conducted 10 operations, resulting in more than 80 arrests and the recovery of more than 140 stolen or hijacked vehicles. In addition, Chicago Police Supt. Larry Snelling announced a partnership with Hyundai and Kia to host vehicle safety days during the first week of May at Guaranteed Rate Field, where eligible owners can get software updates to help prevent vehicle thefts. Along with the updates, vehicle owners can also receive catalytic converter etchings and steering wheel clubs.

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report
April 29, 2024
APRIL IS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH

Members of the Illinois General Assembly were working in their home districts last week. Both chambers will convene tomorrow through the rest of the week and plan on being in session nearly every weekday in May. This week is the deadline for House bills to pass out of Senate committees and Senate bills to pass out of House committees. Each chamber has passed more than 300 bills to the other side. It is expected to be a hectic week as only one week was allowed for this work. The scheduled adjournment is May 24, but the rest of May has been reserved for “budget contingent session.”

Despite last week’s hype about the Chicago Bears’ proposal for a new lakefront domed stadium, legislative leaders and the Governor are expressing skepticism about its prospects.

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

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

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- May 2 **ICCTA LOBBY DAY**
- May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
- May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

MOODY’S REVISES ILLINOIS’ OUTLOOK TO POSITIVE

Moody's Ratings has revised Illinois' outlook to positive from stable. The rating agency also affirmed the state's A3 issuer rating and the A3 rating on Illinois' general obligation debt and Build Illinois sales tax bonds. In addition, it assigned a rating of A3 to \$1.8 billion of forthcoming Illinois GO bonds. Moody’s noted, “Revision of the outlook to positive is driven by continued improvement in fund balance and budget reserves, which has been supported by stability in revenue and state decisions to shore up financial health.” Illinois remains Moody’s lowest-rated state, but it is well above the near-junk rating with a “negative” outlook assigned during the state’s 2015-2017 budget impasse. The reason the state did not receive a higher rating, Moody’s noted, is because of its outstanding debt – namely its \$141 billion in unfunded pension liabilities.

ILLINOIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS SEE ANOTHER YEAR OF ENROLLMENT DECLINES

Enrollment at Illinois public schools this year dropped by nearly 10,000 students from the previous year. That includes 1,787 fewer students at 104 suburban public-school districts in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, and

McHenry counties, according to fall enrollment figures released by the Illinois State Board of Education last week. It continues a trend that has seen enrollment drop by nearly 200,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade statewide over the past decade. That represents a 9.8% decline since the 2015 school year. Among the 104 suburban school districts, enrollment is down 6.9% during the same time frame. All told, the fall enrollment figures released by ISBE last week showed the statewide public school head count at 1,766,547 students this year, down from 1,775,941 in 2023. The same snapshot in 2015 showed 1,959,250 students enrolled across Illinois public schools.

MONICA GORDON SELECTED TO RUN FOR COOK COUNTY CLERK

Cook County Democrats have selected Cedric Giles, who had served as chief deputy in the Cook County Clerk's office, to fill the rest of the term of the late Karen Yarbrough. Cook County Commissioner Monica Gordon was selected from more than a dozen candidates to campaign for the seat on the November ballot. Gordon is a former chair of the Prairie State College Board of Trustees.

ONLINE NOTARY SERVICES

Illinoisans who need a notary public can now access those services online through a new "E-Notary" portal launched by the Secretary of State's office. Notaries are state-appointed officials who administer oaths, certify documents, and act as witnesses to document signings for items such as affidavits and bills of sale. Until now, notary services could be performed remotely so long as the parties involved were in Illinois and the notary physically signed and sealed the notarized document. Now, the process can occur fully online through one of 12 notarization service providers listed on the Illinois Secretary of State's website at www.ilsos.gov. All parties can now participate remotely, and notaries are allowed to use electronic signatures and seals. Individuals using e-notary services must have a valid ID and access to a device supporting audio-video communication.

US EPA ISSUES FINAL NATIONAL PFAS PRIMARY DRINKING WATER REGULATION

On April 10, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued its final National Primary Drinking Water Regulation regarding six per- and polyfluorinated substances. The regulation sets enforceable maximum contaminant levels for six PFAS. The final rule requires public water systems to complete the initial monitoring for PFAS by 2027, followed by ongoing monitoring for compliance. Water systems are also required to provide the public with information regarding the level of PFAS in their drinking water starting in 2027. By 2029, water systems must implement solutions to reduce PFAS if monitoring shows PFAS in drinking water exceeding the MCLs. In addition, \$1 billion in funding is available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help states and territories implement PFAS testing and treatment for public water systems, and help owners of private wells address PFAS contamination. Illinois has been allotted \$21.81 million for eligible projects.

ILLINOIS JOINS 'AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL' CHALLENGE

Illinois has committed to the America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge, a Biden Administration initiative aimed at conserving and restoring the nation's freshwater systems, including rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has announced its involvement following a Water Summit at the White House, where new conservation targets were set. The initiative hopes to protect, restore, and reconnect 8 million acres of wetlands and 100,000 miles of rivers and streams across the country.

STATE RECEIVES \$156M GRANT FOR SOLAR POWER INITIATIVES

Illinois has been awarded a \$156 million grant from the U.S. EPA to enhance solar power development across the state. The state was one of 60 'Solar for All' grant recipients. This funding, part of the EPA's Solar for All initiative, will be administered by the Illinois Finance Authority/Climate Bank and aims to increase solar installations in low-income and disadvantaged communities. Grant funds will support programs focused on increasing access to solar energy in underserved areas, improving the affordability of clean energy, and creating jobs within the green energy sector.

PRITZKER, IRRPP RELEASE REPORT DETAILING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HOMELESSNESS

Governor JB Pritzker has announced a new action plan aimed at tackling the disproportionate impact of homelessness on the Black community in Illinois. The report, developed in collaboration with the University of Illinois Chicago's Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy, shows that Black Illinoisans are eight times more likely to experience homelessness than their white counterparts. Pritzker highlighted efforts that the state has already taken to combat homelessness, including his 'Home Illinois' program. His proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025 includes an additional \$50 million for the program, bringing the total to \$250 million.

IEMA-OHS ANNOUNCES FEDERAL SECURITY GRANTS

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency and Office of Homeland Security has announced the availability of federal grant opportunities for non-profit organizations to strengthen safety and security measures. These grants are part of the FY24 Nonprofit Security Grant Program, funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Eligible 501(c)(3) organizations at high risk of terrorist attacks can apply for up to \$150,000 per site, with a cap of \$450,000 for organizations with multiple sites. Funds from both grant programs are specifically allocated for target-hardening activities, which include the installation of security equipment and the hiring of contracted security personnel at properties occupied by the nonprofits.

\$30 MILLION GRANT OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has launched \$30 million in funding for the Rebuild Illinois Downtowns and Main Streets Capital (\$20 million) and Research in Illinois to Spur Economic Recovery (\$10 million) programs to revitalize commercial corridors and downtown areas throughout the state and accelerate local economic recovery initiatives. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity process.

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report May 7, 2024

We are in the final month of the Illinois General Assembly's spring 2024 session. Despite passing the committee deadline for legislation in the opposite chamber, several bills received deadline extensions. The House will be in today at 3 PM, and the Senate returns tomorrow.

The Fiscal Year 2025 state budget is the primary focus from here on out. In a report released last week, FY25 revenue remains as predicted as state legislators figure out how to make the most of strong revenue with a tighter revenue-to-expenditures margin. April produced "solid" revenue growth, according to the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. That means that revenues are on pace to come in \$2 billion ahead of what lawmakers expected when they passed the FY24 budget last year. There will not be a windfall, however, because the excess funds were anticipated when Gov. JB Pritzker proposed his budget in February.

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

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

KEY 2024 SESSION DATES FOR THE 103RD ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading for House bills in Senate & Senate bills in House
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PRITZKER SIGNS ELECTION CHANGES

Last week, Gov. Pritzker signed legislation two days after it was introduced that makes some changes to election rules. The bill adds three non-binding referendums to the November 2024 general election ballot. The ballot questions focus on:

1. Protecting elections workers;
2. Targeting an additional tax on income over \$1 million for the purpose of property tax relief; and
3. Supporting insurance coverage for in vitro fertilization treatment.

As state law limits the number of questions on a statewide ballot to three, the legislation effectively crowds out the possibility of any other referenda appearing on the November ballot. The legislation would also eliminate the longstanding option for political parties to appoint challengers to fill out the ballot if the party did not field a candidate in the primary election. In addition, it shifts the period for gathering candidate petition signatures and filing the petition to appear on the primary ballot back by 28 days.

After the bill was signed into law, the Illinois State Board of Elections said that it has already accepted some slating filings -- and despite the new law, will continue to accept them under the original deadline of June 3.

CENSUS REPORTS RECORD RISE IN SCHOOL SPENDING

U.S. school funding rose by the greatest proportion in more than two decades from FY21 to FY22, according to recent Census Bureau survey results. Illinois ranked 12th among states and Washington, D.C. in per student FY22 spending at \$18,927. The No. 1 state was New York at \$28,889, while the lowest was Utah at \$9,552. Among Illinois' neighbors, Michigan was 21st at \$15,719; Wisconsin 26th at \$14,505; Kentucky 32nd at \$13,549; Iowa 36th at \$13,259; Missouri 37th at 12,631; and Indiana 38th at \$12,322.

RIVIAN TO EXPAND PLANT IN NORMAL

Backed by \$827 million in state incentives over 30 years, Rivian plans to invest \$1.5 billion to expand its 4 million-square-foot auto plant in Normal. The expansion, which is estimated to create more than 550 assembly jobs over five years, is geared toward building the midsize R2 SUV, which is expected to begin rolling off the production line in 2026. Rivian opted to launch production by expanding its Normal plant instead of building a new plant in Georgia. The majority of the incentives will come from state tax credits paid out over 30 years, if Rivian meets its investment and hiring obligations of retaining at least 6,000 jobs during the entire three-decade period.

ICC COMMISSIONERS CONFIRMED

The Illinois Senate has confirmed the appointments of Stacey Paradis and Conrad Reddick to the Illinois Commerce Commission. Commissioner Reddick was appointed to a five-year term on March 13, 2023; Commissioner Paradis was appointed to a five-year term on April 3, 2023. Reddick brings 40 years of experience as a corporate and regulatory attorney to the ICC. He specializes in utility regulation and litigation and previously worked with the city of Chicago as a Special Duty Corporation Counsel. Paradis most recently served as executive director of the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance and as president of the Illinois Environmental Council Education Fund.

ILLINOIS AWARDS 35 NEW CANNABIS DISPENSARY LICENSES

A total of 35 additional Conditional Adult Use Dispensing Organization Licenses have been issued to applicants in the state's Social Equity Criteria Lottery. The licensees are the third round of applicants and will join 200 other licensees chosen in two previous lotteries. The new licenses are conditional until applicants open stores and receive final certification from the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. Illinois originally had authorized 55 licenses in the latest round. Thirteen applications are still under review, and seven others chosen in the lottery did not meet the state's social-equity criteria. Seven new potential licensees will be chosen from the lottery pool.

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report May 13, 2024

With the end of session quickly approaching, the Illinois General Assembly continues to push bills through committees and debate them on the floor. May 24 currently serves as the last scheduled day of session, but both chambers have "holds" in place until May 31. With budget discussions ramping up and much legislation remaining for consideration, it is likely that the General Assembly will miss the May 24 adjournment date. Remaining deadlines include:

- May 17: Deadline – Third Reading for House bills in Senate & Senate bills in House
- May 24: Adjournment
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*****Please review [ICCTA's BILL LIST](#).*****

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WALKER APPOINTED TO FILL SENATE'S 27TH DISTRICT VACANCY

Mark Walker, formerly the state representative for the 53rd District, was appointed as the new state senator for the 27th District, replacing **Ann Gillespie**, who resigned her seat following her appointment as the acting director of the Illinois Department of Insurance. The 27th Senate District contains most or parts of Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Des Plaines, Mount Prospect, Palatine, Prospect Heights, Rolling Meadows, and Schaumburg.

FY25 BUDGET DEVELOPMENTS

Illinois' revenue performance through the end of April has resulted in an upward revision of the state's revenue forecast for Fiscal Year 2025 General Funds by approximately \$295 million. However, that revision is not enough to offset the need for additional revenue to support the FY25 proposed budget, which increases spending 1.5% over the current fiscal year. In February, Gov. JB Pritzker proposed several adjustments to the state's revenue base, totaling approximately \$1.1 billion. It has become clear that legislative opposition to proposed revenue is significant enough that the Governor's office sent a memo directing agencies to prepare for the possibility of reductions to proposed spending, under the scenario of \$800 million less in available revenue. The Governor's office requested that agencies "focus on grant programs and other discretionary spending that has increased in recent years." That directive will likely impact legislators' pet projects.

ILLINOIS COMPLETES \$1.8 BILLION STATE BOND SALE

The state of Illinois recently sold two series of General Obligation Bonds totaling \$1.8 billion to provide funding for capital projects, including projects authorized under the Rebuild Illinois capital program and for accelerated pension payments pursuant to the state's ongoing pension buyout program.

Paul Chatalas, director of capital markets for Illinois, said that there was strong demand for the bonds and that the state's fiscal progress is paying off for its citizens. "After nine credit upgrades, the State of Illinois received tremendous feedback from the bond market today, and especially from retail investors, who came in at approximately \$1.5 billion in orders given the stronger ratings," he said.

BILL TO CREATE NEW EARLY CHILDHOOD AGENCY HEADS TO GOVERNOR

The legislature has passed Gov. Pritzker's initiative to consolidate early childhood services under a single agency, paving the way for the creation of a new state Department of Early Childhood. The new agency would be an umbrella for early intervention for children with disabilities and developmental delays from the Department of Human Services; preschool programs overseen by the State Board of Education; and day care licensing responsibilities handled by the beleaguered Department of Children and Family Services. Under the legislation, the agency would be created this July and oversee programs starting in July 2026, after a two-year transition period.

TEACHER SALARIES IN ILLINOIS AMONG BEST IN THE NATION

Illinois teachers are among the highest paid in the country, according to a new report from the National Education Association. According to the report, the national average teacher salary for 2022-2023 was \$69,544, which is a 4.1% increase from the 2021-2022 school year. An increase in teacher salaries was also seen in Illinois. The average teacher salary in Illinois was \$73,916 for 2022-2023, a 2.2% increase from 2021-2022 when salaries were \$72,315. Overall, Illinois ranked as the 12th best state across the country for teacher salaries. California ranked the highest with a salary of \$95,160, while West Virginia was the lowest at \$52,870.

MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON VISITED SPRINGFIELD TO ADVOCATE FOR FUNDS FOR CHICAGO

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson met with Gov. Pritzker and state lawmakers last week to make his pitch for more state funding for city operations, including public schools. Johnson previously has said that his Springfield wish list included \$1 billion in state funding that's "owed" to the "families of Chicago." That money would include greater state aid under the evidence-based funding formula and additional teacher pension funds. Other requests include an increase to the effective rate for the local government distributive fund, some lead service line replacement debt forgiveness and more money for lead removal from licensed daycare centers, a change in state law to allow the city to collect more for its 911 services, and money to replace what ultimately turned out to be a federal budget cut for domestic violence hotline funding – totaling up to \$115 million.

BIPA LEGISLATION ADVANCES

Last week, [Senate Bill 2979](#) passed out of the House Judiciary-Civil Committee by a vote of 10-5-0. The bill makes changes to the state's Biometric Information Privacy Act and allows employers to obtain consent from employees to use biometrics in their everyday activities through an electronic signature. The bill also clarifies that each individual BIPA violation should not be considered a separate violation. While numerous business

groups oppose SB 2979 for leaving out other requested BIPA reforms, the bill is likely to proceed through the House unchanged.

ILLINOIS RELEASES COVID-19 AFTER-ACTION REPORT & PLAYBOOK

On the eve of the anniversary marking the end of the Public Health Emergency declarations put in place at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of Illinois [released a playbook](#) detailing measures that the state should take to prepare for future public health emergencies, as well as recommendations for future administrations that may have to navigate public health crises. The playbook lays out three phases of any response: establishing the response, activating the response, and delivering the response. Under those headings, 14 steps the state should take are identified as it mobilizes state agencies, other branches of government, health system partners, and outside experts and stakeholders to deliver a coordinated disaster response.

STUDY SHOWS BENEFITS OF PROJECT LABOR AGREEMENTS

A new study published by the Illinois Economic Policy Institute and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Project for Middle Class Renewal shows that there can be many benefits in the use of project labor agreements in construction projects. Analyzing data from the Port of Seattle's construction projects from 2016-2023, the study found that PLAs promote competition in bidding, help to control costs, and increase opportunities for women and people of color.

PLAs are agreements that set employment terms for construction projects, in both the public and private sectors, and have been in use since the 1930s. The agreements will typically include provisions for strike prevention, scheduling, and work safety rules. President Joe Biden signed an executive order in 2022 that mandates the use of PLAs for any federal project that costs more than \$35 million.

FERRERO OPENS FIRST NORTH AMERICAN CHOCOLATE FACTORY IN ILLINOIS

Gov. Pritzker, officials from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and Ferrero North America executives celebrated the opening of Ferrero's first chocolate manufacturing plant in North America last week. The plant, a \$75 million investment located in Bloomington, was announced in 2021 and completed this year. The facility is expected to grow Ferrero's economic contributions in Illinois, where the company already employs over 1,500 full-time staff and has generated nearly \$300 million in output.

SOS URGES ILLINOISANS TO PREPARE FOR REAL ID COMPLIANCE

With the federal REAL ID compliance deadline just one year away, Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias is urging residents to acquire their REAL ID-compliant driver's licenses or state IDs as soon as possible. Giannoulias emphasized the urgency of updating IDs to avoid potential delays and complications at airports and federal facilities. The federal deadline, set for May 7, 2025, mandates that all domestic travelers aged 18 and older must possess a REAL ID-compliant document to board commercial flights or enter certain federal buildings. Although passports remain a viable alternative, the REAL ID offers a convenient option for those without one.

ILLINOIS SEES MARKED INCREASE IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Office of Tourism reported a 39% increase in international visitors in 2023. The office says that 2.16 million tourists contributed nearly \$2.7 billion to the state's economy, a 47% rise from the year prior. Overseas visitors (those not from Canada or Mexico) surged from 963,000 in 2022 to 1,347,000 in 2023, a 40% increase. DECO says it has partnered with offices in the United Kingdom, Germany, and Mexico to promote Illinois as a tourism destination.

MULTISTATE SETTLEMENT REACHED WITH AMNEAL PHARMACEUTICALS OVER OPIOID CRISIS

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul has announced that Illinois is among the states involved in a bipartisan settlement with Amneal Pharmaceuticals. The settlement, which exceeds \$270 million, addresses the company's role in the nationwide opioid epidemic. Amneal was a major producer of generic opioids, distributing over 9 billion pills from 2006 to 2019. The agreement stipulates that Amneal will pay \$92.5 million in cash over the next 10 years. Additionally, the company will provide up to \$180 million worth of naloxone nasal spray, an essential medication used to treat opioid overdoses.

RAOUL SUES ENERGY VENDOR FOR MISLEADING MARKETING PRACTICES

AG Raoul has also initiated legal action against Southeast Energy Consultants, LLC, a vendor representing alternative retail electric suppliers, for deceptive marketing strategies. The lawsuit, filed in Cook County Circuit Court, accuses SEC of misleading Illinois consumers into switching from their current utility providers to alternative suppliers that ultimately cost them more. The complaint details how Florida-based SEC has been collaborating with various ARES for over a decade, using telemarketing to target Illinois residents.

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report May 20, 2024

Last Friday (May 17) was the deadline for Third Reading passage, although deadline extensions were granted in both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly. The House cancelled its previously scheduled weekend session days. The Senate never planned to work over the weekend. Both chambers will reconvene this afternoon for the final stretch. The legislative session is set to adjourn on Friday but there are still a lot of moving pieces, particularly surrounding the Fiscal Year 2025 budgetary pressures, spending requests, revenue items, and potential cuts to programs. Members have been advised to be prepared to remain in session through May 31. The Illinois constitution requires a majority of those in each chamber to pass a budget before May 31 (30 Senate votes/60 House votes) and a super majority if passed after (36 votes/71 votes), but the Democrats have more than a super majority in each chamber (40 votes/78 votes).

So far, nearly 200 bills have cleared both chambers. The General Assembly has 30 days from passage to send a bill to the Governor, and Gov. JB Pritzker has 60 days to act. Several large issues remain, including:

- [House Bill 5395](#) (Moeller/Peters) -- Health insurance reform
- [HB 4629](#) (Morgan/Aquino) -- Junk fees
- [Senate Bill 3649](#) (Peters/Evans, Jr.) -- “Captive audience” regulation
- [SB 776](#) (Lightford) -- Hemp regulation
- [SB 3592](#) (Stadelman/Vella) -- Support local journalism

Additionally, there is an expectation that several large pieces of legislation will be filed onto “shell” bills early this week.

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

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DEM LEADERS SET DATE TO FILL 53RD DISTRICT VACANCY

Northwest suburban Democratic Party leaders will meet on June 5 to select a person to fill the Illinois House seat left open when state Rep. **Mark Walker** was appointed to the state Senate.

BIOMETRIC PRIVACY ACT UPDATE PASSED BOTH CHAMBERS

Under state law, companies must receive written consent from customers and employees to use biometric information like fingerprints, face scanners and retina scanners. That part of the law would not change, although [SB 2979](#) (Cunningham/A. Williams) would allow companies to obtain an electronic signature for consent. What would change is what happens when a company violates the law. Currently, companies can be held liable in civil court for \$1,000 in damages for each violation. That means that every time an employee uses

their fingerprint to punch the clock or enter a restricted area, the company could be held liable if they did not get consent. If SB 2979 becomes law, damages would change to \$1,000 per person. Though the bill passed with bipartisan support, many Republicans voted against the legislation, citing its lack of retroactive protection for businesses past actions. Sen. Cunningham said that he believes the courts can interpret the legislature's intent in passing this bill and apply retroactivity on their own if they choose.

REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES CHALLENGE NEW SLATING BAN

Four Republican would-be state legislative candidates are suing Illinois officials over a new law forbidding political parties from slating candidates after primary elections. The legislation, fast-tracked earlier this month by the General Assembly and quickly signed into law by Gov. Pritzker, bars political parties from appointing a candidate to a legislative general election race if no one from that party ran for the seat in the primary election. The lawsuit alleges that the law violates the candidates' right to vote "by restricting Plaintiffs' efforts to gain access to the ballot by changing the rules in the middle of that process." The plaintiffs also are seeking an emergency temporary restraining order to prevent enforcement of the law so they can appear on the November 5 ballot.

Last Friday, May 17, a Sangamon County judge declined to issue a temporary restraining order and scheduled the hearing on the request to halt enforcement for next Wednesday, May 22. The Illinois Attorney General's Office indicated that the Illinois State Board of Election was not taking a position. Lawyers representing House Speaker Chris Welch appeared to indicate an interest in intervening in the lawsuit, and a hearing was set for tomorrow, May 21.

"PAID LEAVE FOR ALL" IMPLEMENTATION RULES ADOPTED

The Illinois Department of Labor's [final regulations for the Paid Leave for All Workers Act](#) have been adopted after the Department — following further discussions with stakeholder groups — agreed to additional revisions to its proposed rules. While many of the regulations, which took effect immediately, are consistent with the previous proposal, some final rules have changed. The revisions provide greater clarity and flexibility on when an employer may deny paid leave under the act and simplify employer workplace posting requirements. The paid-leave mandate went into effect on January 1, 2024.

MEDICAID REDETERMINATION EFFORTS DEEMED 'NATION-LEADING'

Illinois has maintained Medicaid coverage for 73% of eligible residents during the federal transition away from pandemic-era policies. Redeterminations became necessary when the federal government ended the Continuous Medicaid Coverage Requirement on March 31, 2023. Initially implemented during the COVID-19 outbreak, this requirement paused annual eligibility checks to maintain continuous health coverage. With the requirement's end, Illinois had to resume Medicaid eligibility confirmation for the first time since March 2020; a total of 3.8 million individuals went through redeterminations. Approximately 2.6 million Illinoisans remained on the rolls while 660,000 recipients were disenrolled.

EV BATTERY MATERIAL SUPPLIER ANNOUNCES R&D HEADQUARTERS IN ILLINOIS

Bedrock Materials, a battery technology startup, has announced that it will locate its research and development headquarters in Chicago. The company plans to expand its R&D and manufacturing footprint in Illinois after it recently closed \$9 million in seed funding. Bedrock Materials originated out of Stanford

University to reduce the cost of electric vehicles through the commercialization of sodium-ion battery materials. The company designs and manufactures engineered electrode materials that allow battery makers to produce SIB at scale. With its commitment to investing \$2.5 million and adding at least 25 jobs, Bedrock will receive Reimagining Energy and Vehicles incentives from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy End of Session Report June 3, 2024

*****[Click HERE for the status of ICCTA-monitored legislation](#)*****

The 2024 Illinois state legislative session -- the second year of the 103rd General Assembly -- ended in a dramatic fashion, which was not reflective of the session as a whole. Typically, the second year of any general assembly is less eventful than the first, as members campaign for their primaries (March 19) and then re-focus ahead to the general election in November. Lawmakers are less likely to do big things -- particularly on taxes -- if an election is coming up. While not always an iron-clad rule, legislative sessions are usually quieter during even-numbered years.

One issue was targeted for reform early in the session. During Gov. JB Pritzker's State of the State Address, he announced his primary legislative effort would be to expand healthcare access and affordability. Contentious debates over reproductive rights and insurance regulations highlighted ideological divisions within the legislature. Significant changes were made to prior authorization and step therapy. Providers state that this gives quicker and greater access to services for patients by eliminating barriers to care and prescription drugs, although it is apparent that these changes will come with increased costs for payers (employers and patients) when fully enacted in 2026 as they remove the ability of insurance carriers to use these cost control measures.

Environmental policy also emerged with bipartisan legislation. Illinois passed the Safety and Aid for the Environment in Carbon Capture and Sequestration Act ([Senate Bill 1289](#)) after weeks of intense negotiations. The bill includes some of the strongest carbon capture and sequestration protections in the nation. The initiative is timely given that multiple corporations are currently targeting Illinois for carbon waste disposal. CCS projects have already been proposed across the state despite a lack of state and codified federal regulations. Companies have proposed injecting CO2 underground through 22 wells in six Illinois counties and CO2 pipelines have been proposed in 23 counties. The Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition and the Coalition to Stop CO2 Pipelines engaged with stakeholders to draft the CCS protections bill.

Ultimately, the budget proved to be the most contentious item this year, as, counter to the typical rule, the General Assembly tackled revenue enhancements during an election year. The frustration felt by rank-and-file lawmakers led them to miss their self-imposed deadline. While May 24 had long been on the calendar as the adjournment date, lawmakers had until the end of May before there was a three-fifths majority vote needed to pass a budget with an immediate effective date. The Senate remained in Springfield through Sunday, May 26, while the House adjourned after an all-nighter in the early hours of Wednesday, May 29. Despite holding 78 seats in the House, it took Democrats three tries to reach the 60 votes needed to approve more than \$1.1 billion in revenue increases, including a tax hike on sportsbooks and businesses, to balance the \$53.1 billion spending plan for fiscal year 2025. The spending plan passed the House 65-45 and the Senate 38-21.

In all, the General Assembly passed 466 measures to the Governor for his consideration. The legislature has 30 days to present a bill to the Governor, and the Governor has 60 days after receiving the bill to sign, veto, or

issue an amendatory veto. Lawmakers will not return to Springfield until the Fall Veto Session. Dates have not yet been announced.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET OVERVIEW

This session, the budget package was more about revenue enhancements than spending. In February, Gov. Pritzker proposed to raise \$1.1 billion in revenue enhancements to balance his proposed budget and avoid cuts, noting that the effort to meet the ends was very tight. This was the first session in several years (and the first for many new lawmakers) where they did not have an abundance of funds to spend.

One of the Governor's proposed revenue enhancements would extend a cap on losses large corporations can write off on their state income taxes, which Pritzker estimated would bring in \$526 million in revenue. Another would more than double the tax on sports betting, a change estimated to generate \$200 million. Pritzker also resurrected a previously unsuccessful plan to limit the tax that discount retailers receive for collecting sales tax, which his office estimated would generate another \$101 million. After some recalcitrance from legislators on the proposed revenue enhancements, the Governor's office instructed its agency directors to prepare for \$800 million in potential budget cuts -- typically grants and projects lawmakers have championed.

A proposed tax break also sparked heated debate. Gov. Pritzker proposed to eliminate a 1% sales tax on groceries. While many lawmakers believe the idea is commendable, they expressed concern that their municipalities would struggle to pick up the tab. They called for local governments to receive some kind of public reimbursement for any resulting tax burden.

The budget put forth by the General Assembly tracked closely with the Governor's February proposal. The budget contained in [Senate Bill 251](#) will increase funding for K-12 schools by \$350 million. The proposal also includes the \$182 million that the Governor committed to provide shelter, health care and other services for recently arrived migrants. It also includes a child tax credit for qualifying families with children under the age of 12, providing parents a credit of 20% of the state's Earned Income Tax Credit in calendar year 2024 and 40% in 2025. (The Governor's proposal would have provided the credit for children under the age of three.) The Governor's proposed revenue enhancements also passed the General Assembly, although some concessions were made specifically to retail merchants and to units of local government to ease the blow.

FY 25 Budget Bill [Senate Bill 251](#) (Harmon-D/Gordon-Booth-D)

The budget, which is set to take effect on July 1, would increase spending by 5% from last year's enacted budget, but just 1.6% when factoring in supplemental spending for the current year. In total, the budget allocates \$124.6 billion in all funds -- \$53.1 billion of which is allocated from the General Revenue Fund. The budget anticipates \$53.3 billion in revenue, about \$1.2 billion of which comes from various fund transfers in the budget implementation bill.

Governance

- \$198 million to the state's "rainy day" fund
- \$10.1 billion (\$322 million increase) to contribute the minimum pension payment required by law
- \$3 billion in capital spending - \$500 million of which is allocated for quantum computing

Early Childhood Education

- \$14 million to launch the Illinois Department of Early Childhood -- a new agency to focus on administering early childhood education programs
- An additional \$75 million will be sent to the Illinois State Board of Education's Early Childhood Block Grant -- putting in place 5,000 more slots in preschool deserts
- \$36.5 million to support higher participation in the Child Care Assistance Program

K-12 Education

- Continues the commitment of a \$350 million increase toward the evidence-based funding model for K-12 education. The state will top \$2 billion toward the evidence-based funding model from its inception with this investment
- \$10.3 million increase for Career and Technical Education programs
- \$3 million for State Literacy Plan Implementation -- a roadmap to enhance and unify core literacy instruction efforts statewide
- \$45 million for year two of the three-year Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program to help underserved districts with teacher retention

Higher Education

- 2% – or \$30 million – increase for community colleges and public universities
- \$10 million increase for Monetary Award Program funding
 - In Fiscal Year 2025, \$700 million total spend is projected to support 146,000 students benefiting from MAP Grants – up from 126,864 in 2019
- \$8 million for the Minority Teacher Scholarship Program

Violence Prevention and Public Safety

- \$5.3 million to hire and train 200 new state troopers – a total of two new cadet classes
- \$22.6 million for the Illinois Department of Corrections to hire additional staff
- \$200 million to the Restore, Reinvest, Renew (R3) program
- \$45 million to build up the Reimagine Public Safety grant program
- \$200 million to enhance after-school and summer youth programs

Health and Human Services

- \$290 million for HOME Illinois to prevent homelessness – a \$90 million increase
- \$2.4 billion for services for people with developmental disabilities, including a \$1 per hour wage increase for Direct Support Professionals (about \$40M). Community Care Program workers will see a raise to \$18 per hour (about \$50M)
- \$155 million for safety net hospitals
- \$50 million for a child tax credit (up to age 12) for eligible low-income families
 - Parents will get a credit of 20% of the state's Earned Income Tax Credit in 2024 and 40% in 2025
 - This will cost \$50 million in FY25 and \$100 million the following year
- \$182 million to provide shelter, health care and other services for recently arrived migrants, many of whom have been bused to the state from Texas
- Two programs providing state-funded Medicaid-like benefits to noncitizens would receive \$440 million from the General Revenue Fund, or \$629 million total with other state funds
- \$10 million for the Governor's plan to erase \$100 million in total medical debt

Budget Implementation Bill [House Bill 4959](#) (Sims-D/Gordon-Booth-D)

The budget implementation bill includes provisions for how the budget will be executed. HB 4959 covers revenue sources and fund transfers, spending guidelines, and any policy changes related to the budget.

Some highlights of the BIMP include:

- To help alleviate the classroom teacher shortage problem in Illinois, a law that allows retired teachers to teach for a full school year in districts declared to be subject shortage areas has been extended until June 30, 2027
- Establishes a new "Fleet Electrification Incentive Program" to promote the use of eligible electric vehicles and increase access to federal funding programs which provides grants to eligible purchasers

- Establishes a camping fee waiver to promote campground use and Illinois State Fair attendance
- Creates the Professions Licensure Fund at the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation to leverage private and public funds for the procurement of licensure software, license, or information technology system for administration of all licenses under IDFPR jurisdiction
- Enables the Illinois Board of Higher Education to establish and administer a grant program to assist public universities in administering the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act to raise mental health awareness on college campuses
- Enables local government to lease body cameras to take advantage of bundle deals offered by equipment providers
- Creates the Illinois Caregiver Assistance and Resource Portal Act at the Illinois Department on Aging to provide caregivers with access to an information, support, and resource website to help caregivers develop and implement caregiving plans for loved ones or friends
- Authorizes the Illinois Comptroller to frontload the required monthly certified pension payments earlier in the calendar year if the funds are available
- Creates the Health Equity and Access Fund, which may receive money from public or private sources for the purpose of paying for medical expenses and enabling rulemaking
- Redirects \$150 million from the Road Fund and \$50 million from the Leaking Underground Storage Fund to public transit
- Transfer \$20 million from the Capital Projects Fund to support the Illinois Works Pre-apprenticeship Program
- Creates a \$5 million fund to support health care telemonitoring entities
- Health benefits for teachers shall now include dental and vision benefits
- The University of Illinois Springfield is authorized to build a new downtown Innovation Center, which will be a space used to drive economic growth and workforce development
- The State Board of Education is authorized to award grants up to \$7,000 to schools for a “breakfast after the bell” program.
- Veterans’ property tax reimbursement cap is increased from \$15 million to \$30 million

Revenue Package [House Bill 4951](#) (Villanueva-D/Burke-D)

The revenue plan is expected to raise between \$865.5 million (\$746 million for General Revenue Funds), which is less than the \$1.1 billion proposed by the Governor. It did not include a decrease to the standard deduction claimed by many Illinoisans, which Pritzker proposed in February and was scored to raise revenues by \$93 million. It did, however, include a cap on corporate net operating losses businesses can claim, which is expected to generate \$526 million, and a cap on the retailer’s discount for collecting the sales tax, which should generate \$101 million. Retailers received several concessions for this revenue stream, including \$5 million to a retail theft investigator program at the Illinois Attorney General’s office; a workforce development program will receive \$5 million in the first fiscal year, \$7 million in the second, and \$10 million in the third; and pharmacists will now be allowed to test and treat patients for HIV, flu, strep throat, and other ailments (enabling language is contained in the Medicaid omnibus bill referenced below).

HB 4951 will raise more than \$200 million in new revenues from a graduated tax on sports betting, which would bump the existing 15% tax on revenues to anywhere between 20 and 40%, depending on individual sportsbooks adjusted gross receipts. The bill provides distribution of the sports betting revenue would be split between the General Revenue Fund at 58% and capital expenditures at 42%. Illinois’ tax on video gaming terminals would increase from 34% to 35%, a growing market netting \$814 million in tax revenue for the state last year, with the increase expected to boost revenues by \$35 million. That money would still be directed toward infrastructure projects.

The bill also includes a ban on financial institutions and credit card companies from charging fees on the sales tax portion of electronic transactions. This portion is hotly opposed by financial institutions and could continue to be a contentious topic, as this portion of the bill is not effective until July 1, 2025.

News publishers would be able to claim a \$15,000 credit per newsgathering employee – meaning reporters, editors, photographers, and others – up to \$150,000 per newsroom and \$250,000 per parent company. A newsroom could claim another \$10,000 per new employee. It is available to print and broadcast outlets, as well as profit and nonprofit newsrooms, and would be capped at \$5 million.

The bill also closes a loophole used by third-party hotel booking websites that allowed their customers to pay lower taxes when they book rooms online. Imposing the re-renter tax for hotel rooms is expected to generate an additional \$25 million.

Bond Authorization [House Bill 4582](#) (Harmon-D/Rita-D)

The annual bonding authority bill corresponds to available revenues that are part of the budget package. This year, the bill includes an additional \$8 billion in debt authority. The bill also provides for some greater flexibility for school districts by removing antiquated checks and to support kindergarten and pre-kindergarten facility growth.

- \$2.35 billion for capital
 - \$575 million for higher education
 - \$900 million for corrections
 - \$3 million for land preservation and plugging abandoned wells
 - \$871 million for renewable energy upgrades for use by the state
- \$1.34 billion
 - \$235 million for vertical public infrastructure
 - \$1.08 billion for economic development, now including quantum technology
 - \$24 million for health and human services expansion
- \$4.3 billion – Illinois Housing Authority

2024 SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Health Care Consumer Access & Protection Act [House Bill 5395](#) (Moeller-D/Peters-D)

The Governor’s chief legislation seeks to limit the ability of insurance companies to deny coverage or steer individuals toward lower cost, treatments and medications, strategies sometimes referred to as “utilization management.” The package also includes measures giving the Illinois Department of Insurance authority to approve or deny premium rate changes in large-group health insurance plans.

Among other things, it requires insurance companies to use “generally accepted standards of care” when deciding whether to cover certain treatments or services. It also bans the use of step therapy requirements in prescription drug plans that require a patient to show that a lower-cost alternative drug is ineffective before covering a more expensive drug recommended by their physician. The bill also prohibits insurance plans from requiring prior authorization before covering in-patient psychiatric care. For other kinds of care, it requires insurers to post publicly on their website when prior authorization is required. It also requires insurers to maintain accurate, up-to-date lists of providers who are included in their networks. And it gives the Illinois Department of Insurance the authority to approve or reject proposed premium rate changes in large-group health insurance plans. Last year, the legislature granted the Department the authority to approve or reject rates on small-group plans – but the process of rate making is wildly different than large groups. Most of these changes will not take effect until 2026.

Ban Short Term Insurance Policies [House Bill 2499](#) (Fine-D/Morgan-D)

A second piece of the Governor's health insurance package will prohibit the sale of a type of insurance known as "short-term, limited duration" health policies that do not have to meet minimum standards under the federal Affordable Care Act. These policies are typically sold to people who are temporarily unemployed or have some other circumstance in their life that causes them to need coverage for only a short period. But while they often cost much less than traditional policies, many of them also have high deductibles and do not offer the same types of benefits that are mandated in other plans, such as coverage for emergency treatment, laboratory services or preexisting conditions. These products were never designed to be used for primary coverage. This ban will not take effect until 2026, when the state will stand up its own state-based exchange.

These changes apply only to the types of insurance plans regulated by the state. Those include employer-based group plans that are fully funded by the insurance carrier as well as plans offered by local governments and plans provided under the state Medicaid program. They do not apply to plans regulated under the federal law known as ERISA -- the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974.

Birth Equity Initiative [House Bill 5142](#) (Gabel-D/Collins-D)

An initiative of Gov. Pritzker, the goal of this bill is to close the gap in maternal mortality between Black women and other new mothers. The bill requires private insurance companies to cover maternal services provided by midwives, doulas, and lactation consultants. Private insurance companies would be required to cover home births, home visits, and support during labor, abortion, or miscarriage -- expanding insurance coverage of pregnancy and postpartum services. The bill would also regulate how providers and authorities can keep and use abortion patient data.

BIPA Damages Reform [Senate Bill 2979](#) (Cunningham-D/A. Williams-D)

The measure is a response to an Illinois Supreme Court ruling last year that "respectfully suggest(ed)" that lawmakers clarify the state's Biometric Information Privacy Act. That ruling found that fast food chain White Castle violated BIPA each time its employees used their fingerprints in the course of performing their jobs, as the company never obtained permission under the law. In that case, White Castle estimated it would be on the hook for up to \$17 billion in penalties, as the law provides for \$1,000 in damages for each "negligent" violation or \$5,000 for each "reckless" or "intentional" violation. White Castle settled the case last month for \$9.4 million.

SB 2979 would change BIPA's violation accrual so that each initial collection of a fingerprint or other biometric data would amount to one violation, rather than a violation occurring for each individual scan. A business is in violation of BIPA if it does not have a storage policy in place, does not properly protect the data, or if it does not get consent from customers or employees for the data being collected. Under SB 2979, businesses could get that consent via an electronic signature, which the bill defines as an "electronic sound, symbol, or process."

Procurement Omnibus [House Bill 5511](#) (Hoffman-D/Castro-D)

House Bill 5511 is an effort to improve diversity, clear up bureaucratic issues, and modernize the state's contracting process. The measure drives Illinois' supplier diversity goals forward by requiring goals to be set for minority business development programs and tasking the Commission on Equity and Inclusion with oversight of these programs to ensure they are implemented effectively, among other provisions. To address the slow pace of the procurement process, the bill allows contractors to fix procurement violations while the procurement process moves forward and allows bids to be posted or accepted online. Further, the initiative prioritizes local competition and control by ensuring counties follow competitive bidding requirements that apply to other units of local government. It also eases the joint purchasing process to make it easier for towns,

villages, and counties to utilize existing state contracts -- reducing the need for duplicative contracts for similar needs. One provision in the bill aims to move the state toward contracting with more Illinois companies on construction projects by expanding the definition of an Illinois business. Under the legislation, a business operating and headquartered in Illinois for one year prior to submitting a bid would be eligible to receive a 4% bid preference on state projects.

Safe Carbon Capture & Storage (CCS) Act [Senate Bill 1289](#) (A. Williams-D/Fine-D)

This legislation will establish a regulatory framework to safely advance carbon capture and storage in Illinois, which will help the state meet clean energy goals while promoting economic development and creating new jobs. This measure represents a compromise among environmental groups, organized labor, agriculture interests, and the business community. SB 1289 requires 30 years of post-injection air and soil monitoring at project sites (which goes further than existing federal requirements). It also ensures existing well set back requirements apply to CCS projects and puts in place a CO₂ pipeline moratorium until the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration finalizes updated safety rules for CO₂ pipelines or July 2026, whichever is sooner.

In addition, SB 1289 creates an emergency planning and training fund to provide training exercises, equipment, and support for local emergency services and disaster agencies to prepare for future CO₂ pipelines and sequestration projects. The bill establishes an environmental justice fund to be administered by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency that can make grants to eligible entities representing areas of environmental justice concern and to fund environmental projects benefiting areas disproportionately burdened by environmental harms. The bill also creates a long-term trust fund to ensure that the state's citizens, resources, and environment will be protected in the future.

Election Omnibus #1 [Senate Bill 2412](#) (Harmon-D/Hoffman-D) -- **Signed into law on May 3, 2024**

This new law prevents either of the major political parties from nominating a candidate to run in the general election for state senate or state representative unless that candidate first runs in the primary -- preventing political parties from adding candidates to a general election if nobody ran in the primary. By passing this legislation in the middle of an election cycle, a lawsuit challenging the provisions was filed and is ongoing in Sangamon County. The judge placed a temporary pause on the law through June 3 -- the next hearing in the case.

Additionally, the new law shifts the period for gathering candidate petition signatures and filing the petition to appear on the ballot back by 28 days. Finally, the bill adds three non-binding referendums to the November 2024 general election ballot. The ballot questions focus on:

1. Protecting elections workers
2. Targeting an additional tax on income over \$1 million for the purpose of property tax relief; and
3. Supporting insurance coverage for in vitro fertilization treatment

As state law limits the number of questions on a statewide ballot to three, the legislation effectively crowds out the possibility of any other questions from making it onto the ballot.

Election Omnibus #2 [House Bill 4488](#) (Morrison-D/West-D)

House Bill 4488, among other things, would allow election authorities to deliver vote by mail ballots to voters who live in veterans' and nursing homes, hospitals, and mental health facilities, in addition to the authorities' preexisting ability to administer supervised, on-site voting. The bill will require Illinois' Electoral College votes to go to the winner of the state's popular election (joining 33 other states); includes a provision loosening restrictions on what political parties can do with campaign funds; and removes a requirement that election

judges must wear an identification badge showing their full name, instead requiring a unique identification number. The legislation also codifies that the public has access to the state's voter registration list. The database, which is required by federal law and routinely shared with local governments and political committees, is tightly protected by the Illinois State Board of Elections. The bill also lays out what voter information cannot be used for: "any personal, private, or commercial purpose, including, but not limited to, the intimidation, threat, or deception of any person or the advertising, solicitation, sale, or marketing of products or services." Overall, the package of proposals aims to increase voting accessibility and make elections more transparent.

Eliminate Grocery Tax / Local Government Benefits [House Bill 3144](#) (Castro-D/Burke-D)

This bill contains the Governor's proposal to eliminate the 1% municipal tax on groceries -- a tax benefiting municipalities, not state government. The tax cut will take effect on January 1, 2026. It is expected that this will result in a \$350 million total loss to municipal governments. To ease the loss, local governments, including non-home rule units, will be able to implement their own grocery taxes without holding a referendum and no state administrative fee will be charged. Non-home rule units will also be given the ability to increase sales taxes by up to 1% without resorting to referendums. Sangamon County has been granted the authority under this bill.

Another piece of legislation -- the state's revenue bill (HB 4951) -- also contains benefits for local government: an increase in local road grants, a re-renter hotel tax that will produce approximately \$35 million, and the retailer sales tax discount.

Medicaid Omnibus [Senate Bill 3268](#) (Aquino-D/Gabel-D)

This bill is the work product of a bicameral bipartisan working group that met with stakeholders regularly throughout the session. Key items in the annual Medicaid omnibus include increased reimbursement rates for psychiatric services, dentists, dialysis providers, and children's health centers; additional regulations and transparency requirements on pharmacy benefit managers; and an expanded scope of practice for pharmacists. A key revenue generator is reflected in an increase in the assessment of medical care organizations that will bring in an additional \$200 million. Other highlights include provisions allowing for an up to 72 hour inpatient admission to stabilize an emergency medical condition without seeking authorization from the MCO; adoption of rules to increase transparency and streamline the prior authorization process; and creation of a "gold card" program permitting physicians and hospitals with historically high service authorization approvals to receive a one-year exemption from the MCO's service authorization process for healthcare services rendered in the inpatient or outpatient setting, including hospital-based clinics. The anticipated total cost of the legislation is expected to be \$25 million in General Revenue Funds after federal reimbursements are taken into account (\$66 million total).

The increase to the scope-of-practice for pharmacists was debated on the floor and they will likely be addressed during the fall veto session or into the next spring session to determine whether the scope needs to be scaled back.

Economic Growth Package [House Bill 5005](#) (Stadelman-D/Vella-D)

HB 5005 contains new incentives supporting the state's manufacturing base to build on the Reimaging Energy and Vehicles Act, which has made Illinois a hub for electric vehicle manufacturing and auto battery production. New incentives are included for green steel manufacturers and electric and hybrid aircraft.

The package also expands the Central, Western and Northern Illinois communities eligible for the River Edge Tax Credit -- a program that gives income tax credits to project owners who rehabilitate historic buildings to

revitalize riverfront communities like Rockford, Peoria, and Elgin — and extends tax incentives to next-generation emerging industries like quantum computing.

Quantum computing, a complex processing technology similar to supercomputing, is exponentially faster than current computer processing abilities. While no quantum computer yet exists, a partnership between Illinois' top universities is currently researching pathways to create functional quantum computing technology. Stadelman's measure would establish an incentivized enterprise zone for the creation of a quantum computing campus to be located at a site in Illinois.

OTHER NOTABLE BILLS THAT HAVE PASSED BOTH HOUSES

[House Bill 307](#) (Buckner-D/Harris-D) amends the Name Image and Likeness for student athletes. Under HB 307, athletes could earn NIL compensation directly from their universities as permitted by the NCAA; and block press or the public from requesting how much athletes make from their private NIL deals. Universities will also be permitted to create athletic department incentives for fans to support NIL activities.

[House Bill 581](#) (Avelar-D/Villanueva-D) would ensure that women's right to life-saving care remains in place in Illinois and would impose civil penalties on hospitals that refuse to provide lifesaving abortion procedures. Although currently protected by federal law, the U.S. Supreme Court's anti-choice majority is expected to rule as early as this June in *Moyle v. Idaho*, a case that would exempt Idaho's total abortion ban from the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act. Idaho has presented the Court with an argument that, if accepted, would dismantle critical patient protections in cases involving severe pregnancy complications.

[House Bill 3521](#) (Cassidy-D/Villa-D) would specifically preclude any employee or agent of a hospital affiliate from abusing a patient operated by a hospital affiliate.

[House Bill 4589](#) (Hoffman-D/Hastings-D) would require recyclable metal dealers to keep records of the vehicle identification number of the vehicle from which the catalytic converter was removed and any numbers, bar codes, stickers, or other unique markings of the catalytic convertor. It would also require them to obtain and retain a copy of the certificate of title or uniform invoice showing the seller's ownership of the vehicle in transactions involving catalytic converters.

[House Bill 4592](#) (Buckner-D/Hastings-D) would enable the Illinois Secretary of State to offer a driver's license or an identification card in an electronic format and would be able to use them in any situation calling for identification. The legislation does not eliminate physical driver's licenses but would allow the state to offer them as a companion to a physical card. Several states, including Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, and Utah already have digital IDs.

[House Bill 4621](#) (Sims-D/Slaughter-D) would enhance the Office of Statewide Pretrial Services. The bill will codify the office – initially created by the Illinois Supreme Court – into law, allowing it to provide pretrial services to circuit courts and counties that do not currently have pretrial services agencies. To date, the office has completed 11,932 investigations and 11,607 defendants have been ordered to its supervision. The legislation would ensure the office creates and enforces uniform standards for pretrial services.

[House Bill 4623](#) (Gong-Gershowitz-D/Edly-Allen-D) would make "obscene depiction of a purported child" a Class 3 felony for the first offense, targeting AI and "deep fake" porn.

[House Bill 4762](#) (Gong-Gershowitz-D/Edly-Allen-D) would order an artist to be represented by legal counsel or labor union when negotiating terms, thus avoiding the potential for a contractor to replace them with AI-generated content in the artist's likeness.

[House Bill 4848](#) (Keicher-R/Harriss-R) would create a specific violation for law enforcement to cite when garbage or other debris falls from a truck and litters highways. Each infraction would result in a \$150 ticket.

[House Bill 4875](#) (Gong-Gershowitz-D/Edly Allen-D) would grant artists the right to seek legal action if their content is replicated by artificial intelligence without their consent.

[House Bill 5047](#) (Costa Howard-D/Glowiak Hilton-D) would allow advanced practice registered nurses with pending applications to practice under supervision for six months while waiting for the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation's review of their application. Under current law, this status is revoked after three months. These nurses would need to have completed at least 250 hours of continuing education in their area of certification and have at least 4,000 hours of clinical experience to be applicable for this opportunity.

[House Bill 5239](#) (Cassidy-D/Villanueva-D) gives individuals the right to sue for civil damages if their information is improperly disclosed. Further, it gives minors the right to apply for public aid to obtain family planning services without the consent of their parents; and it gives the state exclusive authority to define and regulate "lawful health care activity," prohibiting local units of government from exercising similar authority. This bill is another of several responses Illinois lawmakers have passed in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in 2022 that overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

[House Bill 5290](#) (Simmons-D/Cassidy-D) creates the Medical Debt Relief Act, which establishes a program to purchase and forgive major medical debt for individuals earning less than 400% of the federal poverty line and their debt is 5% or more of their household income. The new pilot program implements Gov. Pritzker's plan to put \$10 million of state money into partnership with nonprofit "Undue Medical Debt" to erase \$100 million in medical debt for Illinoisans.

[House Bill 5296](#) (Faver Dias-D/Villa-D), dubbed the Homeowners' Native Landscaping Act, would prohibit homeowners associations from restricting residents from planting native plants on their property. Associations would still be able to mandate that properties be free from weeds, invasive species, and trash. The homeowner would also need to keep the plants from growing onto common areas or neighboring properties.

[House Bill 5371](#) (A. Williams-D/Fine-D) aims to enhance civil rights protections for people in Illinois and provide important clarifications to existing law. Specifically, it will: align definitions with federal fair housing law; strengthen relief in discriminatory pattern-and-practice determinations by clarifying "per violation" terms and increasing maximum penalty amounts available in court; clarify aggrieved parties have a right to take action to collect judgments; ensure confidential reporting of discrimination and hate incidents through helplines administered by the Illinois Department of Human Resources; and reduce redundancies and improve enforcement processes at the IDHR.

[House Bill 5408](#) (Stephens-R/Harmon-D) would prohibit drivers from stopping or standing their vehicles on shoulders of highways within a one-half mile radius of the eastern entrance to O'Hare International Airport. It also applies to the intersection of Interstates 90 and 294. Anyone in violation of the law would be subject to a citation and a fine of \$100. The bill also will permit the installation of cameras by the Illinois Tollway Authority for the purposes of enforcement, citing a need to properly allocate law enforcement manpower around the airport.

[House Bill 5561](#) (Evans, Jr.-D/Castro-D) enhances whistleblower protections by expanding definitions and protected activity and giving the Illinois Attorney General the ability to act on behalf of workers whose employers have retaliated against them for disclosing a dangerous or unlawful practice.

[Senate Bill 774](#) (Feigenholtz-D/Gabel-D) provides that a certified medication aide may administer medications under the supervision and delegation of a registered nurse under the auspices of certain state agencies.

[Senate Bill 2586](#) (Cunningham-D/Moeller-D) ensures teledentistry meets in-person care standards, including medical history reviews and x-rays; and specifically provides for in-person exams before treatment.

[Senate Bill 2641](#) (Holmes-D/Manley-D) provides that, beginning January 1, 2026, every insurer shall demonstrate to the Director of Insurance that each in-network hospital has at least one radiologist, pathologist, anesthesiologist, and emergency room physician as a preferred provider in a network plan.

[Senate Bill 2643](#) (D. Turner-D/Gill-D) creates the Integrity in Death Care Act, which outlines new funeral home regulations in response to the mishandling of human remains at the Heinz Funeral Home in Carlinville, Illinois. The legislation would create an identification system for all human remains to ensure funeral homes never mishandle remains again. Under this proposal, anyone intentionally violating preparation room procedures and rules could face a Class 4 felony. People engaging in funeral directing or embalming without a license would be charged with a Class A misdemeanor.

[Senate Bill 3077](#) would create a special fund for the Illinois Department of Agriculture to administer the Local Food Infrastructure Grant Program. In its pilot phase, the state awarded \$1.8 million to 19 local farms for a variety of projects, like building a meat processing center and a new kitchen.

[Senate Bill 3207](#) (Tracy-R/Frese-R) would allow daycares to operate 24 hours and provide care for children up to 12 hours at a time if their parent has a job requiring regularly scheduled shifts. After 12 hours, there must be a 10-hour waiting period before the kid can return to the daycare center.

[Senate Bill 3455](#) (Martwick-D/Canty-D) would allow the Illinois Department of Revenue and the Illinois Department of Economic Development and Opportunity to evaluate the fairness of property taxes across the levy, assessment, appeal, and collection process. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle hope an independent study of Illinois property taxes can lead to solutions for the broken system.

[Senate Bill 3481](#) (Feigenholtz-D/Moeller-D) would require automotive parts recyclers that store over 5,000 kilograms of used electric vehicle batteries -- or approximately 10 EV batteries -- to register with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency by February 1, 2026.

[Senate Bill 3592](#) (Stadelman-D/Vella-D) is referred to as the Strengthening Community Media Act and would require news companies to give written notice 120 days before any sale of the news organization may occur. SB 3592 would also create a Journalism Student Scholarship Program for students who work at a local news organization for at least two years.

[Senate Bill 3650](#) (Peters-D/Gonzalez, Jr.-D) prohibits employers from threatening, disciplining, firing, or otherwise retaliating against workers who refuse to attend mandatory workplace meetings focused on communicating opinions on political or religious matters. It will not prohibit employers from holding meetings, only protect workers who choose not to engage in matters unrelated to their work.

NOTABLE BILLS HELD

Cannabis Omnibus [House Bill 2911](#) (Lightford-D/Ford-D) *Passed the Senate*

This legislation includes numerous provisions that follow up the legalization of cannabis. The bill would expand craft growers to 14,000 square feet; create needed flexibility for transporters; provide additional support for social equity license holders; update the medical use and cultivation tax section; allow for the prescription of medical cannabis via telehealth; enable curbside pickup and drive through windows at dispensaries; allow

DCEO to use a lottery system to award social equity grants and loans; and establishes standards and market protections against unfair practices.

Hemp Consumer Products Act [House Bill 4293](#) (Lightford-D/Buckner-D) *Passed the Senate*

Delta-8 is a synthetic hemp-derived THC intoxicant with serious side effects that often is sold at gas stations and other locations near schools. Under this bill, Delta-8 products would be subject to strict regulations, ultimately keeping kids away from its dangerous effects. Delta 8 has been infiltrating schools and children have been hospitalized due to overdosing on this unregulated product, currently inclusive of industrial hemp. Additionally, the unregulated market has been undermining the hard work of those in the regulated market. The bill will restrict the sale of Delta 8 and THC to state-licensed cannabis dispensaries and put limits on CBD products – which can continue to be sold statewide in any retailer, which will now need to register products with the Department of Agriculture. The regulation of hemp-derived THC products would be similar to how the state regulates cannabis as it relates to taxing, testing, possession limits and more. Importantly, the legislation imposes package and labeling requirements, so the products do not appeal to children and consumers know what they are consuming and prevent deceptive practices.

Gaming [Senate Bill 327](#) (Rita-D/Cunningham-D) *passed House Exec. Committee* – would prohibit wagering at family amusement locations like Dave & Busters; provide for gambling disorder education and prevention; removes various outdated requirements of the Illinois Department of the Lottery; and repeals racing board provisions, among other provisions.

Potawatomi Nation Land Transfer [Senate Bill 867](#) (Walker-D/Guzzardi-D) *Passed the Senate*; [House Bill 4718](#) (Guzzardi-D) *Passed House Exec. Committee* – would transfer a 1,500 acre state park in DeKalb County to the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. The bill would authorize the state to hand over what is now Shabbona Lake and State Park to the tribe for \$1. It also allows the tribe and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to enter into a land management agreement under which the land would remain open to the public for recreational use for an unspecified period. The bill would help the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation expand their newly established reservation in DeKalb County. It advanced out of a House committee, despite concerns about the tribe’s long-term plans for the property. The Prairie Band Potawatomi currently operate a hotel and casino complex on their reservation just north of Topeka, Kansas. But tribal chair Joseph “Zeke” Rupnick assured the House Executive Committee that the tribe has no such plans for the property in Illinois. Rupnick insisted that the tribe’s immediate plans are to work with IDNR to keep the property open for public recreation.

Junk Fees [House Bill 4629](#) (Morgan-D/Aquino-D) *Passed the House* – would require companies to provide consumers with the full price of the provided goods or services, thereby removing back-end, hidden fees.

Prisoner Review Board Reforms [House Bill 681](#) *Passed the Senate* – Amid ongoing controversy with the Illinois Prisoner Review Board, including a recent high-profile tragedy where a young boy was murdered by an offender just days after the offender’s release, the Senate passed legislation to reform the controversial body. 76 members of the House have signed on as co-sponsors. Ultimately, the Governor opposed the reforms. The bill would have enhanced protections for victims by ensuring they are notified when prisoners are up for release and by improving the process for filing impact statements. Additionally, the legislation establishes new qualification standards for board members, increases transparency, and creates a task force to examine various issues related to the board.

Dual Credit [House Bill 5020](#) (Blair-Sherlock-D/Castro-D) *Passed the House* – seeks to expand access to dual credit programs, which enable high school students to get a jump start on their postsecondary education by providing them with opportunities to earn college credit while simultaneously earning high school credits.

Pension Reform – The Governor proposed a plan to increase the statutory funded ratio goal from the current 90% in FY45 to 100% in FY48. In addition, when legacy debts are paid off (\$6 billion bill backlog bonds in FY30 and \$10 billion pension obligation bonds in FY33), half of what was allotted to those bond payments are to be redirected to the state’s pension systems as additional payments. The Pritzker administration indicates that this maneuver will save taxpayers an estimated \$5.1 billion by FY45.

Chicago Bears / White Sox – Despite lobbying efforts from each professional sports team, the General Assembly did not take up any legislation related to public funding for new stadiums.

Prescription Drug Affordability Board (PDAB) [House Bill 4472](#) (Syed-D/Koehler-D) *Failed to advance out of committee* – Lawmakers have increasingly been interested in lowering prescription drug spending and improving affordability for patients. One approach has been to introducing prescription drug affordability boards at the state level, which would be a government body tasked with price-setting. Ultimately lawmakers were not ready to proceed, expressing concerns about worsening patient access to medications and favoring insurance and not patients.

Journalism Preservation Act [Senate Bill 3591](#) (Stadelman-D) *Failed to advance out of the Senate* – The legislation seeks to address the financial challenges faced by local news publishers in the digital age. It would mandate that major online platforms pay local news publishers for the use of their content. An arbitration process would be set up to determine the appropriate compensation each platform must pay to the news publishers. Opposition expressed concerns about violating the First Amendment and conflicting with the Supremacy Clause.

Car Insurance Rate Review [House Bill 4611](#) (T. Jones-D) *Failed to advance out of House Insurance Committee* – An initiative of Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias would have created a review process for auto insurance rate increases and would have prohibited any practices from insurers that disparately impact customers. This includes practices based on race, color, national or ethnic identity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, or gender expression.

End Subminimum Wage for Tipped Workers [House Bill 5345](#) (L. Hernandez) *Failed to advance out of the House* – would prohibit businesses from paying employees a subminimum wage and instead have them paid the minimum wage plus tips. The bill encountered resistance from lawmakers and business groups alike who claim it will force them to raise prices to cover the higher wages.

Wetlands [Senate Bill 771](#) (Ellman-D) *Failed to advance out of the Senate* – would grant the state broad authority over potential wetlands following a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Sackett v. EPA*, which said that the federal EPA had overreached with their wetlands rules. The legislation would grant the state power to determine what is or is not a wetland, and then empower them to create regulations and restrictions for what is done on the property. The legislation also proposed new permitting rules and an appeal process for approved permits. Many organizations, especially age-related groups, strongly opposed the legislation.

Indemnity Fund Reform [House Bill 613](#) (Burke-D) *Filed late in session for future negotiations* – Current Illinois law gives homeowners with unpaid property taxes a limited period to redeem property by paying off the tax lien. Throughout that redemption process, however, the "debt" continues to grow through the addition of interest and fees. Ultimately, the investor and county can choose to seize the property, evict the residents, and sell the property for full market value. A U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Tyler v. Hennepin*, purports to declare such "tax sales" in Illinois to be unconstitutional taking of property. A group of Illinois counties argue that the Court’s decision does not apply under Illinois law, because Illinois law requires the counties tasked with collecting property taxes to maintain an "indemnity fund" from which homeowners whose homes are seized and sold over delinquent property taxes can sue to recover the equity they may have lost in the tax sale.

Subject matter hearings were conducted in both the House and Senate Revenue committees, and HB 613 was filed in the final days of session to serve as a baseline for negotiations among stakeholders.

Subminimum Wage for Disabled Workers [House Bill 793](#) (Mah-D) *Passed the House* -- would phase out subminimum wage for disabled workers beginning in 2030 -- a timeline that was extended in a late amendment to garner enough House support. It would also create a \$2 million transition fund to partially subsidize providers implementing shelter work alternatives and create a task force comprised of stakeholders to ensure the transition works effectively. The bill also calls for an increase in the personal needs allowance, the amount of money allocated to residents in care facilities they keep for personal use, from \$60 to \$100.

K-12 403(b) Plans [Senate Bill 2568](#) / [House Bill 341](#) (Villa-D) *Failed to advance out of the Senate* – would put new parameters in place for 403(b) plans offered by public school districts, both on the types of 403(b) plans that can be offered and that they must be mutually agreed about by the school district and collective bargaining units. While the bill would allow employees to maintain 403(b) plans to which they are currently contributing, any employees not currently contributing to a 403(b) plan would only be able to choose from 403(b) plans that meet these new requirements. The new parameters are intended to narrow down available options to more fiscally prudent ones. However, up to 90% of the current 403(b) options would be eliminated under this bill, significantly reducing employee choice.

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

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ICCTA Government Relations and Public Policy Report July 16, 2024

*****[Click HERE for the status of ICCTA-monitored legislation](#)*****

Both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly have adjourned the 2024 Spring Legislative Session and will not return to the State Capitol until the Fall Veto Session, which is scheduled for November 12-14 and November 19-21. The 104th General Assembly is scheduled to be inaugurated on January 8, 2025.

UPCOMING COMMITTEE HEARINGS

The **House Health Care Licenses Committee** heard testimony last week regarding pharmacists' new ability to test and treat patients. Language expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists was not approved by the committee but was included in the Medicaid Omnibus bill and is now law. The language permits pharmacists to test and treat SARS-CoV-2, respiratory syncytial virus, strep, and lice.

The **House Health Care Availability & Accessibility Committee** will meet July 23 at 10 am to discuss the topic of pharmacy benefit managers.

The **Senate Transportation Committee** has begun a series of hearings on the state of public transit in the Chicago region. The first hearing took place last week (discussed below), and future hearings are scheduled for July 24, August 8, August 28, September 18, and October 16. The hearings will inform some kind of proposal by lawmakers for the 2025 spring session. Chair Ram Villivalam stated that he would like to act at least 9 to 12 months before the anticipated fiscal cliff of early 2026.

2024 CAMPAIGN NEWS

Kathy Salvi has been elected as the next chair of the Illinois Republican Party following a vote by acclamation by the State Central Committee. She will officially begin her role on July 19 following the Republican National Convention. Salvi, a lawyer from Mundelein, ran against incumbent U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth in 2022, losing by nearly 630,000 votes (or 41.5% percent of the vote). Salvi was chosen over two other candidates: state Rep. John Cabello, of Machesney Park; and Aaron Del Mar, of Palatine, a party activist who ran unsuccessfully for lieutenant governor in the 2022 GOP primary.

Governor JB Pritzker recently delivered the keynote address at two Democratic events, the Indiana Democratic Party's Hoosier Hospitality Dinner and the Ohio Democratic Party's Family Reunion. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has been announced as the keynote speaker for the Democratic Party of Illinois' second annual gala on September 27 in Chicago. Pritzker, a top Biden campaign surrogate, has said throughout the past couple weeks that he would continue to support President Joe Biden's candidacy as long as he was the party's nominee.

FORMER GOP STATE LAWMAKER SENTENCED TO 42 MONTHS IN PRISON

Former Republican State Sen. Sam McCann was sentenced to 42 months in federal prison for stealing nearly \$700,000 in campaign funds and attempting to conceal his theft with false reports to state election authorities. In February, McCann pleaded guilty to seven counts of wire fraud and one count each of money laundering and tax evasion – but only after prosecutors had spent nearly three days presenting evidence against him at trial.

NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE ABRUPTLY CLOSED

Northwestern College, which is located in the south suburbs, has abruptly shut down after 122 years in operation. The Oak Lawn school made the announcement that it has shut down and closed its doors as of Saturday, July 6. The decision to close the college was made because of financial reasons, a statement from school officials said. The abrupt closure appears to leave its approximately 500 students high and dry, and many are unsure about what will happen to the money they have already paid out. There are also questions about whether the students' credits will transfer to other institutions.

WIU LAYS OFF 36 FACULTY MEMBERS

To achieve fiscal stability at Western Illinois University, 36 contracts for Unit B faculty have not been renewed. Unit B instructors are non-tenure track faculty. WIU had 519 faculty members as of last fall. Overall, the university had 1,313 employees, including 286 full-time tenured faculty members. Even with the layoffs, the administration is still working to eliminate a large operating deficit of about \$20 million.

ILLINOIS SWITCHES TO ACT EXAMS FOR STATE ASSESSMENTS

The Illinois State Board of Education recently announced that starting next spring, it will use the ACT exam rather than the SAT. In addition to being used for college admissions, Illinois also uses them as part of the battery of tests schools administer each year to meet federal mandates under Every Student Succeeds Act. Results of those tests are reported each year on the Illinois Report Card and are used to hold schools and districts accountable for meeting basic academic standards.

FREELANCE WORKER PROTECTION ACT TAKES EFFECT

The [Freelance Worker Protection Act](#), which provides protections for independent contractors who create products or services in Illinois or who work for a hiring entity located in Illinois, took effect on July 1. Under the law, freelance workers are entitled to the following when the value of their work is equal to or greater than \$500 in a 120-day period: 1) A written contract outlining the products and services to be provided, the dates by which services are to be performed, and the rate and method of compensation; 2) Full payment for the services by the due date in the contract, or if the due date is not specified, within 30 days of completing the services outlined in the contract; 3) Protection from retaliation and/or other negative action for exercising rights under the FWPA. The law only applies to freelance contracts taking effect after July 1, 2024. It does not apply to individuals performing construction services.

CHICAGO TRANSIT HEADS SEEK FUNDING, REJECT REFORM PROPOSALS

The Regional Transportation Authority – the funding body that oversees Pace suburban bus routes, Metra regional rail lines, and the Chicago Transit Authority – has reported a looming “fiscal cliff” in 2026. While the agencies are currently buoyed by pandemic-era funding and temporary allowances in state law, they will face a cumulative annual budget gap of \$730 million in operating costs beginning in 2026, according to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Sen. Villivalam, chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, convened the first in what will be a series of hearings meant to investigate possible improvements to public transit in Illinois. He said that there will be “no votes for funding” unless the General Assembly and transit board first address service issues and governance reforms. During the hearing, the heads of the Chicagoland agencies testified against one of the primary reform recommendations proposed by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, collectively arguing if the system is adequately funded, the operators can do the job. As a counterbalance, transit advocates and business leaders spoke to the need for governance reform to improve service.

HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM MEASURES SIGNED

Gov. Pritzker recently signed [House Bill 5395](#) (Moeller; Peters) and [HB 2499](#) (Morgan; Fine) at the RUSH Professional Center in Chicago. The pair of bills make up the Healthcare Protection Act, a top legislative priority of the governor this year.

The Healthcare Protection Act requires insurance companies and managed care organizations to use generally accepted standards of care when deciding whether to cover treatments recommended by a doctor. It also bans prior authorization for in-patient mental health care and fail-first step therapy for private insurance and Medicaid. The Act also bans the sale of short-term, limited-duration insurance plans that do not cover Affordable Care Act-required treatments. Insurers will now be required to publicly post any treatments that require pre-authorization and must conduct mandatory 90-day audits ensuring provider directories are accurate to prevent “ghost networks.” In addition, providers must now inform insurance companies when they are not accepting new patients, and insurance companies must get approval from the Illinois Department of Insurance before large plan rate approval. Parts of the law will begin to take effect in January 2025, while others will not go into effect until 2026, which will have an impact on payer cost – which includes the patient and the employer.

\$100 MILLION FOR CHICAGO CRIME-FIGHTING EFFORTS

In a show of political and private force after a horrifically violent extended holiday weekend in Chicago where more than 100 people were shot and 19 people died, civic leaders joined Gov. Pritzker, Mayor Brandon Johnson, and state legislative leaders to announce progress in their commitment to funding community-level violence prevention programs. The Chicago business community has raised \$100 million to support on-the-ground programs, which typically take the form of nonpolice interventions in communities at risk of violence -- a first-of-its-kind effort from the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago. In addition, \$175 million in state funding for those programs has begun to be distributed.

AQUA ILLINOIS AGREES TO DRINKING WATER COMPLIANCE

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, Will County State’s Attorney James Glasgow, and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency director John J. Kim have announced the approval of a [consent order](#) in the case *People of the State of Illinois v. Aqua Illinois, Inc.* by Will County Circuit Court Judge John C. Anderson. The consent order mandates several measures to maintain compliance with state drinking water regulations and provides additional protections for residents. Components of the consent order include the following:

- Ongoing public water system compliance sampling
- Customer-requested sampling available for an additional 180 days
- Nitrate variability testing
- Implementation of a program offering sampling, inspection, corrective actions, and up to \$3,500 in kitchen faucet remediation work

The order requires Aqua Illinois to maintain a dedicated website, [WaterFactsIL.com](#), to provide updated information and resources for residents. The consent order is a court-enforceable agreement. If Aqua Illinois fails to comply, the Attorney General and the State’s Attorney can seek court enforcement and penalties.

ADVISORY COUNCIL STUDIES EXPANDED ACCESS TO HIGH-COST DRUG TREATMENTS

The Illinois Advisory Council on Financing and Access to Sickle Cell Disease Treatment and Other High-Cost Drugs has started its work to evaluate payment models and financing structures aimed at improving access to treatments for sickle cell disease and other expensive therapies.

Formed by Gov. Pritzker through [Executive Order 2024-01](#), the council's task is to assist the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services in developing new financing arrangements. These recommendations are expected to be delivered by the end of 2024. The council held its initial meeting on June 25 and will continue to meet regularly. The council will submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by the end of the year. It will also identify any state and federal policy changes required to support these recommendations.

IDOT AND UIUC SIGN \$48 MILLION PARTNERSHIP

The Illinois Department of Transportation has entered a six-year, \$48 million agreement with the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to continue transportation research through the Illinois Center for Transportation at The Grainger College of Engineering. The partnership will focus on several transportation challenges, including creating more sustainable infrastructure, reducing congestion, achieving equitable transit systems, and preparing for autonomous vehicles.

GRANTS ANNOUNCED FOR CLEAN ENERGY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Central Illinois is receiving a \$4.7 million grant to launch a pre-apprenticeship program for several hundred people to join the clean energy workforce this year. The statewide Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program will prioritize underrepresented communities and Illinoisans who historically faced economic and environmental barriers. Hire360 will recruit, prescreen and provide free training for future clean energy workers in the region.

In addition, the Pritzker administration is providing approximately \$13.6 million in grant funding to start the pre-apprenticeship programs in northern, central and southern Illinois. The 548 Foundation will also serve as a Climate and Equitable Jobs Act workforce hub for the southwest and west side of Chicago.

IDNR OPENS APPLICATION PERIOD FOR OSLAD GRANTS

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has announced that applications for the next round of Open Space Land Acquisition and Development grants are open through Friday, September 13. The program offers financial assistance to local governments for the development and acquisition of public parks and outdoor recreation areas. A total of \$54 million is available for the grants, with provisions to cover 100% of eligible expenses for projects in economically distressed communities.

IDPH EXPANDS LEAD TESTING IN HIGH-RISK ZIP CODES

The Illinois Department of Public Health has added 148 additional high-risk ZIP codes that are subject to mandatory lead testing for children. IDPH expects to implement statewide lead testing by 2026. State law requires children living in these high-risk ZIP codes to undergo lead testing at 12 and 24 months. Additionally, all children up to six years old are assessed for lead exposure during pediatric visits using a questionnaire. If a child's blood test shows lead levels above five micrograms per deciliter, Illinois mandates public health interventions (including home inspections to identify and mitigate sources of lead) as well as a home visit from a public health nurse to help education families on how to protect themselves from the effects of lead.

IFAB AWARDED \$51 MILLION EDA TECH HUBS GRANT

Illinois has secured approximately \$51 million in federal funding for the Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing (iFAB) Tech Hub, leveraging the state's leading production of raw agricultural materials to develop sustainable alternatives to fossil fuel-based products. This pivotal funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration marks a significant milestone in advancing Illinois' leadership in the precision fermentation and biomanufacturing industry. The EDA funding will be allocated to projects that encompass infrastructure development, industry partnerships and more. EDA's Phase 2 Implementation Grant will strengthen iFAB's ability to attract and support companies to join the growing biomanufacturing ecosystem in Champaign, Piatt, and Macon counties.

ILLINOIS CANNABIS SALES HIT NEW HIGH

Illinois has notched over \$1 billion this year in cannabis retail sales as of July 1, with more than \$850 million from adult-use cannabis and nearly \$150 million from medical cannabis. This year's sales reached the \$1 billion mark nearly two weeks earlier than in 2023. Fiscal Year 2024 also saw total cannabis sales exceed \$2 billion, compared to \$1.9 billion in FY23 and \$1.8 billion in FY22.

Revenue from cannabis taxes has funded over \$244 million in R3 Grants for economic development, violence prevention, and youth development in disproportionately affected communities. The Illinois Cannabis Social Equity Loan Program has issued nearly \$22 million in forgivable loans to social equity applicants, including craft growers, transporters, and infusers. Currently, 218 dispensaries are licensed by the state, with more expected to receive full licensure as they meet the necessary requirements.

STUDY FINDS ILLINOIS LEADS IN DIVERSE CANNABIS BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

The Cannabis Regulation Oversight Office has identified Illinois as having the most diverse cannabis industry in the United States, with 60% of cannabis licenses awarded to minority- or women-owned businesses. The study reviewed 559 adult use cannabis licenses issued between January 1, 2020, and January 31, 2023. Results showed that 59% of dispensary licenses and over 60% of all other license types were granted to minority- or women-owned businesses. Minority- or women-owned businesses held 63% of craft grower, 61% of infuser, and 74% of transporter licenses. Nearly 84% of the state's Direct Forgivable Loans were awarded to these businesses.

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT ANNOUNCES COMMITTEE ON EQUAL JUSTICE

The Illinois Supreme Court has renamed its Committee on Equality and given it a new charge. The Committee on Equal Justice will continue its work to promote equality and fairness in all aspects of the administration of justice and facilitate a high level of trust and public confidence in the courts, judicial officers, and the entire judicial system. In addition, it will strive to advance the Supreme Court of Illinois' commitment to a judicial system free of bias in which every user and employee of the court feels fairly treated, safe, and respected.

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2024 ILLINOIS GENERAL ELECTION UPDATE

In a decidedly blue state, the 2024 General Election was never expected to alter the political dynamics in Illinois. There were no statewide elections. There wasn't a battle over a Supreme Court seat or a constitutional amendment. Within the General Assembly, more than half of the general election races were uncontested, and among the contested races, only a handful were truly competitive. All 118 state House seats and 24 of the 59 state Senate seats were up for election. Going into Election Day, Democrats held, and continue to hold, veto-proof supermajorities in both chambers with 78 members in the House, the most in modern history, and 40 in the Senate.

Even though the needle did not move in Illinois on Election Day, the results still showed a shift. In 2020, Joe Biden won Illinois by 17 points (58% to 41%). Currently, Kamala Harris is only leading Donald Trump by about 8 points (53% to 45%). This had an effect down the ballot.

House Democrats were eyeing six Republican-held House seats across the state in the hopes of flipping them. Even heading into Election Day, the party thought they could flip as many as four seats. However, it looks like the House GOP will hold onto all 40 of their seats. While the McLaughlin, Grant, and Schweizer districts (discussed below) could still be swayed by late-arriving mail-in ballots, it appears they have survived millions in collective spending against them.

House Republican Leader **Tony McCombie** said that her party would be targeting just a few seats in each election as part of a 10-year plan that will carry them to the next redistricting opportunity following the 2030 census. This cycle, she faced significant financial disadvantages. Conservatively, the Democrats spent at a 10 to 1 advantage over Republicans. Despite being significantly underfunded, even Republican challengers held their own in several districts.

The outcome of the U.S. Presidential election will potentially have significant political and policy impacts in Illinois, as federal leadership influences a wide range of state-level issues. Two broad areas of discussion for the General Assembly could include environmental regulations and changes to healthcare policy.

Keep in mind that in two years, Illinois will be voting for a U.S. Senator, governor, attorney general, secretary of state, comptroller and treasurer – all offices currently held by Democrats who are likely looking to move “upward.” U.S. Sen. **Dick Durbin**, who turns 80 this month, has not yet announced his intentions for 2026. Illinoisans only once elected any governor three times. If Sen. Durbin and/or Gov. **JB Pritzker** opt not to seek reelection – or if Pritzker pursues higher office – that shakes up the entire Democratic ballot and colors how lawmakers will think through issues over the next two years.

U.S. CONGRESS

** Illinois re-elected all incumbents **

District 12 – Rep. Mike Bost (R) wins

Incumbent Rep. **Mike Bost** was challenged by **Brian Roberts**. Bost has been serving in Congress since 2015. A former firefighter, he is known for his strong conservative values, especially on gun rights, veterans' issues, and

support for limited government. He has deep roots in Southern Illinois and is popular in more rural areas. Roberts was looking to unseat Bost by focusing on healthcare reform, economic issues, and workers' rights.

District 17 – Rep. Eric Sorensen (D) wins

Incumbent Rep. **Eric Sorensen**, first elected in 2022, faced former judge **Joe McGraw**. Sorensen represents a district that traditionally leaned Republican but has recently become competitive for Democrats. Sorensen outperformed Democratic presidential candidate **Kamala Harris** in this district and is leading McGraw by eight points.

ILLINOIS SENATE

40 Democrats – 19 Republicans
* Illinois re-elected all incumbents *

District 1 – Sen. Javier Cervantes (D)

District 4 – Sen. Kimberly Lightford (D) *contested*

District 5 – Sen. Lakesia Collins (D)

District 7 – Sen. Mike Simmons (D)

District 10 – Sen. Robert Martwick (D) wins

Sen. **Robert Martwick** typically has a contested election requiring a lot of time and money to defend. This cycle, the Republicans did not focus on this race and Martwick easily defeated his challenger by 18 points.

District 13 – Sen. Robert Peters (D)

District 16 – Sen. Willie Preston (D)

District 19 – Sen. Michael Hastings (D) *contested*

District 20 – Garciela Guzman (D) *contested* – Replacing Sen. Natalie Toro (D) after defeating in the Primary

District 22 – Sen. Cristina Castro (D)

District 25 – Sen. Karina Villa (D) *contested*

District 27 – Sen. Mark Walker (D) *contested*

District 28 – Sen. Laura Murphy (D)

District 31 – Sen. Mary Edly-Allen (D) *contested*

District 34 – Sen. Steve Stadelman (D) *contested*

District 37 – Li Arellano (R) – Replacing the retiring Sen. Win Stoller (R)

District 40 – Sen. Patrick Joyce (D) wins

Incumbent Sen. **Patrick Joyce** was challenged to a rematch by **Philip Nagel**. Joyce was appointed to the Illinois Senate in 2019 and was seeking re-election after beating Nagel by about 11% in 2022. The district runs from the south suburbs to encompass most of Kankakee County and parts of Grundy County. As a farmer, Joyce has a strong connection to the agricultural community, which is vital in this district. Despite that lopsided loss, the Senate Republicans supported Nagel, an Air Force veteran, with hundreds of thousands of dollars in both cash and in-kind contributions. Ultimately, Republicans determined the hill was too steep and withdrew support in the weeks leading up to Election Day. In 2026, Senate Minority Leader **John Curran** will need to defend 16 out of the 19 members in his caucus, which will inevitably cost a lot of money. It turned out to be a good move because Joyce ended up winning by nearly 18 points.

District 43 – Sen. Rachel Ventura (D) *contested*

District 46 – Sen. Dave Koehler (D) *contested*

District 49 – Sen. Meg Loughran Cappel (D) *contested*

District 52 – Sen. Paul Faraci (D) *contested*

District 53 – Sen. Chris Balkema (R) – Replacing the retiring Sen. Tom Bennett (R)

District 55 – Sen. Jason Plummer (R)

District 58 – Sen. Terri Bryant (R)

ILLINOIS HOUSE

Likely 78 Democrats – 40 Republicans

- District 1** – Rep. Aaron Ortiz (D)
- District 2** – Rep. Lisa Hernandez (D) *contested*
- District 3** – Rep. Eva-Dina Delgado (D)
- District 4** – Rep. Lillian Jimenez (D)
- District 5** – Rep. Kimberly Neely DuBuclet (D) *contested*
- District 6** – Rep. Sonya Harper (D) *contested*
- District 7** – Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch (D)
- District 8** – Rep. La Shawn Ford (D) *contested*
- District 9** – Rep. Yolonda Morris (D)
- District 10** – Rep. Jawaharial “Omar” Williams (D)
- District 11** – Rep. Ann Williams (D)
- District 12** – Rep. Margaret Croke (D)
- District 13** – Rep. Hoan Huynh (D) *contested*
- District 14** – Rep. Kelly Cassidy (D)
- District 15** – Rep. Michael Kelly (D) *contested*
- District 16** – Rep. Kevin Olickal (D)
- District 17** – Rep. Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz (D) *contested*
- District 18** – Rep. Robyn Gabel (D) *contested*
- District 19** – Rep. Lindsey LaPointe (D) *contested*
- District 20** – Rep. Brad Stephens (R)
- District 21** – Rep. Abdelnasser Rashid (D)
- District 22** – Rep. Angie Guerrero-Cuellar (D)
- District 23** – Rep. Edgar Gonzalez, Jr. (D)
- District 24** – Rep. Theresa May (D) *contested*
- District 25** – Rep. Curtis Tarver II (D)
- District 26** – Rep. Kam Buckner (D) *contested*
- District 27** – Rep. Justin Slaughter (D)
- District 28** – Rep. Robert “Bob” Rita (D)
- District 29** – Rep. Thaddeus Jones (D)
- District 30** – Rep. Will Davis (D) *contested*
- District 31** – Michael Crawford (D) *contested* – *Crawford defeated Rep. Mary Flowers (D) in the Primary*
- District 32** – Lisa Davis (D) – *Davis defeated Rep. Cyril Nichols (D) in the Primary*
- District 33** – Rep. Marcus Evans, Jr. (D)
- District 34** – Rep. Nick Smith (D) *contested*
- District 35** – Rep. Mary Gill (D) *contested*
- District 36** – Rick Ryan (D) *contested* – *Replacing the retiring Rep. Kelly Burke*
- District 37** – Rep. Patrick Sheehan (R)
- District 38** – Rep. Debbie Meyers-Martin (D)
- District 39** – Rep. Will Guzzardi (D) *contested*
- District 40** – Rep. Jaime Andrade, Jr. (D) *contested*
- District 41** – Rep. Janet Yang Rohr (D)
- District 42** – Rep. Terra Costa Howard (D)
- District 43** – Rep. Anna Moeller (D) *contested*
- District 44** – Rep. Fred Crespo (D)

District 45 – Marti Deuter (D) wins – *Replacing the retiring Rep. Jenn Ladish Douglass (D)*

With Rep. **Jenn Ladish Douglass** (D) retiring, former state Rep. **Dennis Reboletti** (who served from 2007 to 2015) desired to reclaim a seat for the GOP in the House. Reboletti faced Elmhurst City Council member **Marti Deuter**, who has served in that office for the past 11 years and ran on a platform of social issues such as LGBTQ+ rights and abortion rights, education reform, and environmental sustainability. The district is mostly within DuPage

County with a sliver of Cook County as well. In 2022, Douglass defeated incumbent Republican **Deanne Mazzochi**, who had held the seat since 2018, by less than 1%. Deuter ended up winning this seat by nearly 8 points.

District 46 – Rep. Diane Blair-Sherlock (D) *contested*

District 47 – Rep. Amy Grant (R) is leading Williamson (D) by exactly 500 votes: 29,531 to 29,031

Incumbent State Rep. **Amy Grant**, who has served since 2018, was challenged for the second time by **Jackie Williamson** in this DuPage County district. This is an area that has seen tight elections – and this year was no exception. In 2020, this district voted +12 for Joe Biden. Last cycle, Williamson did not receive meaningful help from the House Democrats – but that changed this year, as Democrats were all in to support Williamson. Williamson’s challenge to Grant emphasized their differences on progressive policies such as healthcare and reproductive rights. This one could take a little time to be decided.

District 48 – Rep. Jennifer Sanalitra (R) wins

Incumbent State Rep. **Jennifer Sanalitra** faced **Maria Vesey**. Sanalitra has a business background and has been vocal about reducing taxes, lowering crime rates, and increasing government accountability. She represents a suburban district that values fiscal conservatism. Vesey focused on healthcare, social services, and environmental issues but came up about 16 points short.

District 49 – Rep. Maura Hirshchauer (D) *contested*

District 50 – Rep. Barbara Hernandez (D) *contested*

District 51 – Rep. Nabeela Syed (D) wins

Incumbent State Rep. **Nabeela Syed**, who at 25 is one of the youngest legislators in the General Assembly, flipped her suburban seat two years ago. Her challenger, **Tosi Ufodike**, is a trustee on the Ela Township Board. Syed represents a historically GOP area that has been trending more Democratic in recent years. These two candidates pit progressive policies on education and equity against conservative economic strategies. Syed was one of a handful of Democrats considered to be vulnerable in November who voted against parts of the Democratic-crafted state budget package this spring, which included the \$750 million tax hike package. Syed’s hard work paid off and she managed to hold off Ufodike handily.

District 52 – Rep. Marty McLaughlin (R) leads Peterson by 969 votes: 28,532 to 27,563

Incumbent Rep. **Martin McLaughlin** was challenged by **Maria Peterson** in a northwest suburban district that includes swaths of Lake and McHenry counties. McLaughlin brought a strong fiscal conservative approach. Peterson, who has worked as a labor attorney and once owned a fitness and exercise business, campaigned on issues such as healthcare reform, climate change, and supporting working families. Peterson most recently lost her challenge to local GOP Senator Dan McConchie by less than one percentage point, so her name ID is relatively strong.

District 53 – Rep. Nicolle Grasse (D) *contested*

District 54 – Rep. Mary Beth Canty (D) *contested*

District 55 – Rep. Marty Moylan (D)

District 56 – Rep. Michelle Mussman (D)

District 57 – Rep. Tracy Katz Muhl (D) *contested*

District 58 – Rep. Bob Morgan (D) *contested*

District 59 – Rep. Daniel Didech (D) *contested*

District 60 – Rep. Rita Mayfield (D)

District 61 – Rep. Joyce Mason (D) *contested*

District 62 – Rep. Laura Faver Dias (D)

District 63 – Rep. Steven Reick (R) *contested*

District 64 – Rep. Tom Weber (R)

District 65 – Rep. Dan Ugaste (R) *contested*

District 66 – Rep. Suzanne Ness (D) *contested*
District 67 – Rep. Maurice West II (D) *contested*
District 68 – Rep. Dave Vella (D)
District 69 – Rep. Joe Sosnowski (R) *contested*
District 70 – Rep. Jeff Keicher (R) *contested*
District 71 – Rep. Dan Swanson (R)
District 72 – Rep. Gregg Johnson (D) *contested*
District 73 – Rep. Ryan Spain (R)
District 74 – Rep. Bradley Fritts (R) *contested*
District 75 – Rep. Jed Davis (R) *contested*

District 76 – Amy “Murri” Briel (D) leads Bishop (R) by 505 votes: 23,459 to 22,954

In this open seat, **Amy “Murri” Briel** was running to replace the retiring Rep. **Lance Yednock (D)** against **Liz Bishop** in a J-shaped district that stretches from DeKalb south and then west along the Illinois River Valley. Briel is Yednock’s former chief of staff and considers herself to be a “pragmatic Democrat.” Bishop has served as a deputy state central committeewoman for the state Republican Party and has a background in finance that includes jobs as a bank examiner and auditor. This race remains close, but Briel is expected to benefit from yet-to-be counted vote-by-mail ballots.

District 77 – Rep. Norma Hernandez (D) *contested*

District 78 – Rep. Camille Lilly (D)

District 79 – Rep. Jackie Haas (R) wins

Incumbent Rep. **Jackie Haas** has served her district since 2020 and is facing a challenge by **Billy Morgan**. Morgan’s campaign contrasts Haas’ fiscal conservatism with more progressive policies on social and economic issues. Despite significant spending in this district, Haas is comfortably leading Morgan by nearly nine points.

District 80 – Rep. Anthony DeLuca (D) *contested*

District 81 – Rep. Anne Stava-Murray (D) *contested*

District 82 – Rep. Nicole La Ha (R) *contested*

District 83 – Rep. Matt Hanson (D)

District 84 – Rep. Stephanie Kifowit (D)

District 85 – Rep. Dagmara “Dee” Avelar (D) *contested*

District 86 – Rep. Lawrence “Larry” Walsh, Jr. (D) *contested*

District 87 – Rep. William Hauter (R) *contested*

District 88 – Regan Deering (R) *Replacing the retiring Rep. Dan Caulkins (R)*

District 89 – Minority Leader Tony McCombie (R)

District 90 – Rep. John Cabello (R)

District 91 – Rep. Sharon Chung (D) wins

Elected in 2022 under a new political map, incumbent Rep. **Sharon Chung** defended her central-Illinois seat against **Desi Anderson** with education and healthcare as key election issues. Anderson most recently lost a race for a Senate seat in 2022.

District 92 – Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth (D)

District 93 – Rep. Travis Weaver (R)

District 94 – Rep. Norine Hammond (R)

District 95 – Rep. Mike Coffey (R) *contested*

District 96 – Rep. Sue Scherer (D) *contested*

District 97 – Rep. Harry Benton (D) wins

Incumbent Rep. **Harry Benton** worked to defend a seat he flipped after veteran Republican Rep. **Mark Batinick** stepped down in 2023. Benton spent more than \$2 million to focus his messaging on labor rights, education

reform, and creating economic opportunities for working-class families. Benton was challenged by **Gabby Shanahan**, an executive assistant at the right-leaning Illinois Policy Institute, in one of the hottest races in the state. Like many of the other candidates for the General Assembly this year, Shanahan said her priorities included efforts to lower property taxes and manage inflation and the cost of living. Benton successfully defended his seat and won by about four points.

District 98 – Rep. Natalie Manley (D)

District 99 – Kyle Moore (R) – *Replacing the retiring Rep. Randy Frese (R)*

District 100 – Rep. Christopher “C.D.” Davidsmeyer (R)

District 101 – Rep. Chris Miller (R)

District 102 – Rep. Adam Niemerg (R)

District 103 – Rep. Carol Ammons (D)

District 104 – *Rep. Brandun Schweizer (R) leads Clem by 771 votes: 23,163 to 22,392*

Freshman Rep. **Brandun Schweizer**, a 21-year veteran of the Marine Corps, is the incumbent for the seat, but he has only held it for less than a year. Schweizer’s lack of time to establish himself as an incumbent means this race was much more similar to a race for an open seat – in a district that has been trending Democrat. Schweizer was appointed to the seat after former Rep. **Mike Marron** retired last year from the district, which includes Vermilion County and parts of Champaign County outside of the Champaign-Urbana Community. His opponent **Jarrett Clem** was born and raised in the district and is a staunch labor advocate. He also serves as a trustee at Parkland College. As the business manager with IBEW Local 601 in Champaign County, Clem targeted his campaign towards creating jobs in the district that needs opportunity. This race remains close and will be decided by outstanding VBM ballots.

District 105 – Rep. Dennis Tipsword Jr. (R) *contested*

District 106 – Rep. Jason Bunting (R)

District 107 – Rep. Brad Halbrook (R)

District 108 – Rep. Wayne Rosenthal (R)

District 109 – Rep. Charlie Meier (R)

District 110 – Rep. Blaine Wilhour (R)

District 111 – Rep. Amy Elik (R) *contested*

District 112 – Rep. Katie Stuart (D) wins

Incumbent Rep. **Katie Stuart** was up against **Jay Keevan**, with education and healthcare dominating the race. Stuart has served since 2017 and is focused on public education funding, healthcare reform, and women’s rights. Keevan represents a more conservative approach to government, focusing on individual freedoms, such as parental rights in education, and fiscal restraint. Stuart comfortably defeated Keevan by eight points.

District 113 – Rep. Jay Hoffman (D)

District 114 – *Rep. Kevin Schmidt (R) leads Greenwood by four points, or 1,844 votes: 22,669 to 20,825*

Incumbent Rep. **Kevin Schmidt** faced a rematch with former state Rep. **LaToya Greenwood** in this East St. Louis-based district. Greenwood ran again after losing her seat to Schmidt in 2022. She was campaigning on a platform of social justice, healthcare reform, and economic opportunities for working-class families, presenting a more progressive agenda compared to Schmidt’s conservative stance. It appears that this district has officially flipped to the GOP.

District 115 – Rep. David Friess (R)

District 116 – Rep. Dave Severin (R)

District 117 – Rep. Patrick Windhorst (R)

District 118 – Rep. Paul Jacobs (R)

CHICAGO ELECTION RESULTS

Cook County State's Attorney – Eileen O'Neill Burke (D) wins

The Cook County State's Attorney race was a high-profile contest between Democrat **Eileen O'Neill Burke**, a former appellate judge, and Republican **Robert Fioretti**, a former Chicago alderman. This election marks a shift from the usual Democrat-vs-Democrat dynamic, and both candidates focused heavily on criminal justice and public safety in the wake of Chicago's crime and violence concerns.

O'Neill Burke positioned herself as a moderate with a focus on upholding the SAFE-T Act, particularly its controversial elimination of cash bail. She advocated for detaining violent offenders, especially those involved in gun crimes, to keep the public safe. Fioretti, who switched to the Republican party in recent years, criticized current State's Attorney **Kim Foxx's** approach, particularly her handling of violent crime and support for police. He proposed a tougher stance on habitual crimes and aimed to address vacancies in the state's attorney's office, especially in the felony division.

The two candidates brought distinct approaches to public safety, with O'Neill Burke supporting reforms aimed at balancing public safety with criminal justice reforms, while Fioretti leaning on traditional law-and-order approaches, arguing for increased support of law enforcement and stricter prosecution for repeat offenders.

Chicago School Board

For the first time, voters selected half the members of an expanded Chicago Public School board, determining the future of public education in one of the nation's largest school districts. This is just the first step to a fully elected school board because only half of the 21-member new board were elected. The other half will be appointed until the next election in 2027, when all seats will be up for election.

The Chicago Teachers Union put about \$1.5 million into campaigns for candidates it supported. Millions more went towards funding other independent candidates. Ultimately, only three or four candidates endorsed by the CTU prevailed. Given that Chicago Mayor **Brandon Johnson** is a close ally of CTU, he could appoint any CTU-backed candidate to one of his 11 appointed seats in January 2026, including those who did not win outright on Election Day.

ADVISORY QUESTIONS

Three non-binding advisory questions -- establishing a "millionaire tax" to support property tax relief, expanding insurance coverage for IVF treatments, and increasing election worker protection --were overwhelmingly favored by voters. These outcomes provide lawmakers insight into public opinion on the issues but do not have a direct legislative impact.

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The 2024 general election is over, and Illinois has pivoted from politics to governing. The Illinois General Assembly's **Fall Veto Session** kicks off tomorrow and is currently expected to run through Thursday. Lawmakers are scheduled to return November 19-21. Since the Governor did not veto any pieces of legislation this year, there is not much anticipated activity for the veto session. Lawmakers are expected to caucus to determine what actions they may wish to take, with Democrat leaders having promised to defend against any moves by President-elect **Donald Trump** to try to erode personal liberties, undo environmental protections, or withhold federal funds.

MORE 2024 ELECTION UPDATES

Trump lost Illinois, but this blue state still saw a shift toward him. The president-elect won 45.1% of the vote to Harris' 53.5%— a single-digit margin. That is up from 2020, when Trump received 40.6% of the Illinois vote to President **Joe Biden's** 57.5%; and that's up from 2016, when Trump received 38.8% of the Illinois vote against **Hillary Clinton's** 55.8%. Blue states all over the country experienced a similar shift.

Following Trump's coattails, the Illinois GOP also outperformed expectations. Heading into Election Day, the question was not "if" Democrats were going to pick up seats, but "how many?" So far, as we wait for outstanding ballots to be counted, it appears as though the House GOP will hold onto all 40 of its seats.

Four House races have yet to be called – although the incumbent is leading in each district. Rep. **Amy Grant** (R-Wheaton) leads Democrat Jackie Williamson by 326 votes. Rep. **Marty McLaughlin** (R-Barrington Hills) leads Democrat Maria Peterson by 778 votes. Rep **Brandun Schweizer** (R-Danville) leads Democrat Jarret Clem by 524 votes. Finally, in the open 76th House race, Democrat **Murri Briel** leads Republican Liz Bishop by 505 votes.

Gov. **JB Pritzker** spoke at a press conference last week to comment about the election results. In his remarks, he said he wanted to assure Illinois residents he would fight to preserve the state's protections on reproductive health, immigration, and LGBTQ+ rights during Donald Trump's second term in the White House.

The 104th General Assembly will be inaugurated on January 8, 2025, with a "lame duck" session likely in the days leading up to the new session. It is during this time that more legislative activity could occur if the Governor and legislative leaders determine it is appropriate to address significant regulatory and fiscal issues.

FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET PROJECTIONS

The Governor's Office of Management and Budget published its mandated five-year budget projection on November 1 with a projected \$3.16 billion deficit in the coming fiscal year beginning July 1. The budget office predicts that revenues will remain flat at roughly \$53.4 billion, while total spending will rise by \$3.18 billion, or 6% above this fiscal year without any executive or legislative action, based on current spending patterns. The Governor is tasked with presenting a balanced budget to the General Assembly in February. At present, he may

need to propose new revenue and/or spending cuts to confront the problem. In comparison to the last budget cycle, lawmakers entered the 2024 session facing a roughly \$891 million deficit.

GOMB projects that state healthcare costs will rise by \$1.1 billion, or 12%. Group health insurance costs for employees and retirees will rise by 24% to \$2.88 billion. Human services spending will increase by another 5%, or \$574 million. Education spending will rise by 4%, or \$522 million. Pension costs will rise by 4%, or \$427 million (and will equal about 20% of available revenue, which is about the average for the past several years). Government services are projected to fall by \$204 million, or 9%.

ILLINOIS PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES REACH HIGHEST ENROLLMENT IN EIGHT YEARS

The Illinois Board of Higher Education announced that public university enrollment for Fall 2024 has reached 185,590 students, the highest in eight years. This marks the third year of consistent growth, with undergraduate enrollment up 2% and a notable 5.1% increase in transfer students. Freshman enrollment has increased for the fourth consecutive year, growing by 0.6%.

MADIGAN TRIAL CONTINUES

The trial of former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan is expected to last through mid-December. It follows years of investigation, with several of Madigan's associates already convicted in related cases. The prosecution has continued to present its case-in-chief. Lately, the jury has been seeing relentless ComEd job placement requests from Speaker Madigan's co-defendant, Mike McClain, for individuals mostly from Madigan's 13th Ward. Prosecutors have interpreted Madigan and McClain's job recommendations as repeated solicitations of bribes from ComEd, alleging that in exchange, the powerful speaker helped push the utility's preferred legislation in Springfield. The former speaker's legal defense claims prosecutors are attempting to criminalize job recommendations made by public officials.

IDFPR LAUNCHES NEW ONLINE PROFESSIONAL LICENSING SYSTEM

The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation has launched the Comprehensive Online Regulatory Environment (CORE) to modernize professional licensing. CORE, now available for a range of licensed professions, eliminates paper applications, increases applicant control, and improves processing efficiency. The system is part of a multi-year plan to streamline licensing across all professions regulated by IDFPR, which aims to simplify the application experience for Illinois professionals. Read the full announcement [here](#).

ILLINOIS LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES REVIEW MENTAL HEALTH/ADDICTION SERVICE NEEDS

In a joint meeting, Illinois House and Senate committees on mental health and addiction met with experts to assess needs for enhanced funding in these fields. They discussed directing cannabis tax revenue and opioid settlement funds towards crisis response, mobile treatment units, and dual credit programs, which support students entering behavioral health professions. Some officials called for a stable, continuous fund for services and support for under-resourced programs, while providers expressed a need for increased addiction recovery funding.

During the next joint meeting, held on November 7, legislators and behavioral health leaders discussed funding shortages, administrative burdens, and workforce challenges in Illinois' mental health field. Key issues included reduced funding for substance use disorder programs, underutilized cannabis tax revenues, and the need for culturally specific care. Stakeholders proposed solutions such as reducing RN staffing mandates, directing opioid settlement funds to harm reduction, and expanding Medicaid support. The Certified Community Behavioral

Health Clinic model was highlighted, though concerns remain about its stringent requirements. The next House Mental Health and Addiction Committee meeting is scheduled for December 10, which will have a focus on [House Bill 1](#), the Compassionate Use and Research of Entheogens Act.

CHICAGO MAYOR PROPOSES PROPERTY TAX INCREASE

Chicago Mayor **Brandon Johnson** is proposing a \$300 million property tax hike, the largest increase since 2016, as part of his \$17.3 billion budget plan to address the city's projected \$982.4 million shortfall for 2025. This decision marks a reversal from his campaign stance against property tax hikes, which he attributed to financial challenges inherited from previous administrations. The budget also reallocates tax increment funds and eliminates hundreds of vacant city positions, including in the police department, with Johnson emphasizing the need to avoid layoffs despite the unpopular tax measure.

The proposed budget would be a 3.2% rise from last year's adopted budget. The mayor's budget team said the increase is mostly driven by grant funding and enterprise fund revenues. The city's Corporate Fund is set to see a 1.5% or \$85.6 million decrease to \$5.6 billion as a result of a reduction in the city's general financing requirements account. The city plans to declare a record \$570 million TIF surplus to return \$131 million in revenue to the city, and Chicago Public Schools are set to receive \$300 million of surplus revenues.

GOVERNORS URGE PJM TO ADDRESS RISING ENERGY PRICES

Gov. Pritzker, along with governors from four other states, sent [a letter to PJM Interconnection](#) urging the company to take urgent action to address the increasing cost of electricity bills. This action comes after PJM, the grid operator for Northern Illinois and the four states involved in the letter, increased clearing prices by almost 10 times the price of the previous year for the 2025/2026 Delivery Year.

The governors, out of concern for economic development and the residents of their states, recommended reforms that ensure that capacity from Reliability Must Run units is included in the next Base Residual Auction, eliminate the must-offer exemption for intermittent generation resources, lower the capacity price cap back to the level it was prior to PJM's recent capacity market reforms, review the propriety of recent Effective Load Carrying Capability accreditation changes and adjust as needed, and swiftly implement a sub-annual capacity market designed to reduce risk on the transmission system.

ILLINOIS WINS AETNA WORKPLACE WELL-BEING PLATINUM AWARD

The Illinois Department of Central Management Services received the Aetna Workplace Well-Being Platinum Award for the third consecutive year, recognizing the state's continued efforts in employee wellness. Key initiatives include wellness ambassador programs, expanded mental health resources, cancer risk identification screenings, and Higi health stations for employees. CMS serves over 466,000 individuals, offering mental, physical, and financial well-being programs.

ILLINOIS CREDIT CARD FEE CAP CHALLENGED IN FEDERAL COURT

The Illinois Interchange Fee Prohibition Act, a landmark state law limiting credit card fees on tax and tip portions of transactions, recently faced scrutiny in federal court. During a hearing last week, banking associations, including the Illinois Bankers Association, requested an injunction to prevent the law from taking effect in July 2025. They argue that the IFPA interferes with federally regulated banking activities, asserting that it disrupts the national banking system and imposes operational burdens that could increase fees for consumers. Backing this view, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency filed an amicus brief, emphasizing potential national

consequences if similar laws proliferate in other states, potentially leading to a fragmented regulatory environment.

In response, the Illinois Attorney General defended the IFPA, arguing that the law does not preempt federal banking powers and is a state measure to control excessive fees that burden consumers. The Attorney General also contended that plaintiffs have not shown sufficient harm to warrant an injunction, particularly with the law's implementation nearly nine months away. Observers predict a significant legal battle that could clarify states' rights to regulate transaction fees and influence similar state laws nationwide, marking this case as a potential legal precedent.

OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR GET COVERED ILLINOIS MARKETPLACE BEGINS

The Illinois Department of Insurance has opened enrollment for the Get Covered Illinois Health Insurance Marketplace, running from November 1, 2024, through January 15, 2025. During this period, Illinois residents can choose from 347 health plans offered by 11 companies, with new plan changes, including extended eligibility for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival recipients and the removal of short-term limited-duration plans in 2025 to enhance consumer protection. Rates vary across regions, with most seeing adjustments between -6% and +10%, though the average rate for the second-lowest-cost Silver plans remains flat.

CONSTRUCTION BIDS SOUGHT FOR TWO NEW CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

The Illinois Capital Development Board, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Corrections, is seeking a qualified Construction Management and Owner's Representative team to oversee and coordinate the design and construction phases for two new 1,500 single-celled multi-security level facilities, one for men and one for women. These new facilities will replace the century-old Stateville Correctional Center in suburban Chicago and the Logan Correctional Center for women in Lincoln. CDB will publish a Professional Services Bulletin on or after November 19 seeking proposals for the role. CDB expects to select a firm early next year.

\$100M IN GRANTS ANNOUNCED FOR ILLINOIS VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS

The Government Alliance for Safe Communities has announced \$100 million in grant opportunities aimed at enhancing community violence intervention programs across Illinois, Cook County, and Chicago. Formed in 2021, GASC coordinates state, county, and city resources to address violence and systemic inequities. This 2025 funding initiative will allocate \$57 million for two major CVI grant programs: one sponsored by the Illinois Department of Human Services focusing on violence prevention services and another by Chicago for street outreach. Additionally, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is providing \$2.5 million to create a Capacity Building Network to support over 400 community organizations working on violence prevention. These grants allow community-based organizations to apply for program support, with unselected applications being reconsidered for other GASC grants.

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FALL 2024 VETO SESSION UPDATE

Members of the Illinois General Assembly returned to Springfield on Tuesday for the final week of the Fall 2024 Veto Session. Not much was accomplished, however, as lawmakers primarily met internally to work out what actions they may wish to take as they face a second **Donald Trump** presidency and a potential multi-billion-dollar budget deficit. The budget outlook prompted Deputy Governor **Andy Manar** to send a memo to all state agency directors with instructions to identify spending that can be reduced, highlighting that Fiscal Year 2026 will be a challenging time.

A key development during Veto Session was the introduction of legislation aimed at enhancing **pension benefits for Tier 2 state employees**: [House Bill 5909](#) (Kifowit) and [Senate Bill 3988](#) (Martwick). Any across-the-board benefit enhancement will have a significant year-to-year budgetary impact. These bills are backed by the We Are One coalition, a group of unions focused on securing retirement benefits for public sector workers and would effectively match Tier 2 pension benefit structures to Tier 1 benefits. While Gov. **JB Pritzker** has expressed support for improving Tier 2 pensions, he emphasized that he is not in a rush to act, believing a comprehensive assessment is needed to ensure that the state meets the Social Security safe harbor threshold, which has not been fully calculated. Pritzker stated that addressing this issue will take time, and is not something that needs to be addressed in the next legislative session. While unions are pushing for faster action, Illinois lawmakers are also grappling with other budget challenges as they head into a tight fiscal year.

Other notable Veto Session action included a subject matter hearing in the Senate Executive Committee on [SB 3968](#) (Faraci), which would **ban carbon sequestration injections near aquifers**. No vote was taken as lawmakers wish to learn more about the carbon injection process and its environmental risks. The General Assembly also sent a bill to Gov. Pritzker's desk that would **end the subminimum wage for workers with disabilities**.

Several time-sensitive bills passed (such as some sunset extensions and a revenue clean-up), and several things were left undone, such as a bill that would allow certain people to legally change their names without making it public information, and Karina's Bill, which would mandate police remove firearms from any person who has been served with a domestic violence order of protection within a certain timeframe.

House and Senate leaders have advised their members to be prepared to return to Springfield as early as January 2. It is during this time – **the lame duck session** – that more legislative activity could occur if the Governor and legislative leaders determine it is appropriate to address significant regulatory and fiscal issues. Gov. Pritzker and the two Democratic legislative leaders have talked about "Trump-proofing" the state during the lame duck session.

The 104th General Assembly will be inaugurated on January 8, 2025, and both chambers released calendars for the spring 2025 session. With all ballots counted, there will be no changes to the makeup of the House and Senate in 2025. Democrats will retain their 78-40 advantage in the House and 40-19 supermajority in the Senate. In addition, Senate President **Don Harmon**, House Speaker **Emanuel "Chris" Welch**, Senate Minority Leader **John**

Curran, and House Minority Leader **Tony McCombie** have all been selected by their respective caucuses to continue in their leadership roles.

LEGISLATOR UPDATES

- ❖ Incumbent Rep. **Martin McLaughlin** (R-Barrington Hills) won the closest House race since 2018, defeating Democrat Maria Peterson by 47 votes in the northwest suburban 52nd House District. Peterson continually cut into McLaughlin's 300-vote lead with late arriving mail-in ballots for the past two weeks.
- ❖ Rep. **Amy Grant** (R-Wheaton) secured a fourth term, as final results showed a 292-vote win for the chronically endangered legislator.
- ❖ Incumbent Rep. **Brandun Schweizer** (R-Danville) secured victory with a lead over Democrat Jarrett Clem by 285 votes.
- ❖ Democrat **Amy "Murri" Briel** won this open seat over Republican Liz Bishop in the 76th District, increasing her lead from 505 votes on election night to 593.
- ❖ Sen. **Willie Preston** (D-Chicago) has been named Senate chair of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus.

NEW STATEHOUSE SECURITY MEASURES

The Secretary of State's Office has added more police officers to statehouse grounds, and all visitors who are not government employees will need to go through a metal-detection screening. The SOS office said it just wants to make sure visitors know that "safety and security are a priority."

MADIGAN TRIAL CONTINUES

The federal corruption trial of former Illinois House Speaker **Michael Madigan** continues. Last week, current and former ComEd and Exelon employees took the witness stand to speak on the alleged no-work jobs prosecutors say were traded for passing legislation. This week, the government's primary witness, former Chicago alderman and FBI mole **Danny Solis**, took the stand for a short time before adjourning for the week. As prosecutors near the end of the ComEd portion of the indictment against Madigan, the judge recently informed the jury that the trial is running at least two weeks longer than expected, with an end date likely not coming before the middle of January.

CHICAGO BUDGET UPDATE

By a 0-50 vote, the Chicago City Council unanimously defeated Mayor **Brandon Johnson's** proposed \$300 million property tax increase – meaning that the city will have to find other ways to close a \$982.4 million budget gap. The mayor is back to the drawing board: Potential revenues include reducing the property tax increase down to around \$135 million; increasing the \$9.50-a-month garbage collection fee by varying levels; raising taxes on items including cigarettes, parking, bottled water, gasoline and liquor; and raising the amusement tax from 9% to 14% — but only on streaming services. One of the biggest-ticket items, which would bring in nearly \$100 million, involves raising the personal property lease tax on cloud computing from 9% to 10.25%.

CHICAGO ON "CREDIT WATCH"

Standard & Poor's has placed Chicago's credit rating on a "credit watch," signaling potential risks to the city's financial stability. Mayor Johnson's administration also faces heightened scrutiny as it balances the city's fiscal

needs with broader economic challenges. The decision by S&P could impact Chicago's ability to secure favorable terms on future borrowing – and could raise the interest rate by roughly one-quarter of a point. That means that the increased borrowing cost on the city's upcoming plan to refinance \$1.5 billion in bonds could be substantial. That small percentage increase could cost Chicago taxpayers \$160 million in the long run, approximately \$4 million a year over 40 years.

PAID LEAVE FOR ALL WORKERS ACT WEBINAR

The Illinois Department of Labor hosted a webinar about the Paid Leave for All Workers Act on November 21. More information, including a fact sheets, and a list of resources, is [available via this link](#). Individuals with questions or comments may contact IDOL by email at DOL.PaidLeave@illinois.gov.

JUDGE DISMISSES BIPA LAWSUIT CITING REVISED STATE LAW

Northern District of Illinois Judge **Elaine Bucklo** threw out a lawsuit on November 13 filed by John Gregg, a former employee of Michigan-based trucking company Central Transport LLC, alleging that the company violated Illinois' Biometric Information Privacy Act statute. Gregg's lawsuit sought at least \$75,000 in damages for the company's alleged misuse of biometric data. Bucklo wrote that under the newly amended version of BIPA, damages would only amount to about \$15,000. That would make federal court the improper venue due to the lower dollar amount.

ILLINOIS FORGIVES \$72 MILLION IN MEDICAL DEBT

Illinois' Medical Debt Relief Pilot Program has forgiven over \$72 million in medical debt for more than 52,000 residents. The program, which targets those with low incomes or high medical debt relative to their earnings, aims to eliminate \$1 billion in debt statewide. Funded by a \$10 million state investment, the initiative works by purchasing and forgiving qualifying medical debt, with the potential for a significant return on investment. Additionally, Illinois has passed legislation to prevent medical debt from impacting credit scores. The program is part of the state's broader efforts to reduce financial burdens and promote health equity.

FUNDING FOR GHG REDUCTION AT WATER PORTS

Gov. Pritzker, along with environmental advocates, has announced grants totaling \$430 million through the federal Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. Illinois was also selected to receive a total of \$95 million from two grants through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Ports Program -- the third-largest amount awarded by the EPA. All funding from this award will implement projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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

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