



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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**Call The Illinois AFL-CIO at (217) 544-4014 For More Information
On These And Other Legislative Issues Important To Working People**

The Illinois House is scheduled to return Monday, February 9th at 2pm. The Senate will return on Tuesday, February 10th at noon. The bill introduction deadline in the Senate is February 20th, and the deadline in the House is February 27th.

STATE NEWS

State Faces \$9 Billion Deficit

Illinois Comptroller Dan Hynes came out with the state's FY 2010 Budgetary Outlook on Wednesday. The Comptroller reports a budget deficit of approximately \$8.95 billion. Even with potential money coming from the Federal Economic Stimulus Package the State would still face an approximately \$6 billion shortfall. The report stated that no action taken by the Federal Government can rescue Illinois from these financial difficulties. The State must take action to eliminate the debt.

According to the Governor's Office of Management and Budget (GOMB), the General Assembly authorized spending in excess of \$2.1 billion over then anticipated revenues and former Governor Blagojevich cut approximately \$1.5 billion, leaving a \$600 million debt. Since then Illinois' revenues have declined due to the national recession. Estimates from GOMB and the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability show a fiscal year 2009 General Funds forecast that is lower than the actual 2008 revenues, and \$1-1.3 billion below the unofficial budget assumptions. Revenue collections over the past two months and a significant decrease in expected gaming license proceeds indicate that lower than expected revenues are anticipated.

The report stated that without a major infusion of money from borrowing or another source, the state will be virtually insolvent. This will come with dire consequences to the state's healthcare infrastructure, educational community and state workforce.

Senate Labor Committee Announced for the 96th General Assembly

The Illinois Senate released the committee assignments for members for the next two years. The Senate Labor Committee saw changes in membership. Previously the committee consisted of six Democrats and four Republicans. It will now consist of seven Democrats and four Republicans. The listing is as follows:

Senator Gary Forby (Chair)

Senator Linda Holmes (Vice Chair)
Senator Maggie Crotty *
Senator Toi Hutchison *
Senator Emil Jones III *
Senator Kimberly Lightford
Senator Ed Maloney

Senator Carol Pankau

(Minority Spokesperson)
Pamela J. Althoff
Dan Cronin
Randall M. Hultgren

* Indicates New Member

Madigan and Cullerton Form Joint Committee Government Ethics Reform

Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton were the sponsors of Senate Joint Resolution 1, a measure that passed both chambers of the General Assembly unanimously this week.

The resolution will create a special House-Senate joint legislative committee, consisting of 16 members, to consider state government ethics reform initiatives. Madigan and Cullerton will serve as co-chairs of the committee, and they will appoint four members from their caucus to also serve on the committee. The resolution also calls upon the minority leaders in each chamber to serve as vice-chairs and appoint two members from their caucus. Madigan and Cullerton committed to working with Governor Quinn and his newly formed Reform Commission to discuss ethics commission reports, strengthening existing revolving door prohibitions and expanding whistleblower protections.

Labor Endorses Fritchey

The Illinois AFL-CIO Executive Board voted today to endorse the candidacy of Democrat John Fritchey in the Special Primary Election to replace Rahm Emanuel in the 5th Congressional District. Fritchey, a state representative with a 97 percent voting record, is running in a crowded field of 13 Democrats vying for the nomination. The district is overwhelmingly Democrat.

There were no endorsements in either the Republican or Green party races.



Senator Frank Watson Announces Retirement

Former Minority Leader Frank Watson announced his retirement Monday. Watson's public service career has spanned more than three decades. His resignation is effective at midnight on Feb. 16. The vacancy will be filled, as required by law, by a Legislative Committee, which includes representatives of each of the nine counties in the 51st Senate District. After suffering a stroke in October, Watson

chose not to seek reelection as the Senate Republican Leader late last year. Senator Christine Radogno was voted in as the Republican Caucus leader.

Watson's career first began when he was elected to the office of Bond County Central Township Supervisor and Trustee. Senator Watson began his career in Springfield in 1979 in the House of Representatives, where he served for four years. In 1982 he was elected to his current Senate seat where he has served for nearly 26 years. He was Assistant Majority Leader from 1993 to 2002, and then Minority Leader from 2003 to 2008.

The Illinois AFL-CIO wishes Senator Watson a long and healthy retirement.

Governor Quinn Signs Appropriation Bill

Governor Quinn signed Senate Bill 1132 into law on Wednesday. The legislation has an immediate effective date and is P.A. 95-1035. It appropriates:

- \$35 million to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) for the purposes of a seed study on the Tenaska Energy Center;
- 3.125 million to the DCEO for grants associated with the Employment Opportunities Grant Program;
- \$696,000 for Job Training and Economic Development Grant Program;
- \$11.3 million was appropriated to the Secretary of State
- \$6.75 million to the Attorney General; and
- Approximately \$1.8 million to the State Treasurer for ordinary and contingent expenses.

Representative Scully Appointed to Cook County Circuit Court

Representative George Scully (D - Chicago Heights) was appointed this week to be a Judge for the Cook County Circuit Court. He is expected to resign his House seat at the end of this month. A legislative committee of Democratic elected officials will appoint a replacement for this House seat.

NATIONAL NEWS

New Jobless Claims Soared to a 26-Year High

The U.S. Labor Department reported Thursday that the number of laid-off workers seeking jobless benefits rose last week to a seasonally adjusted 626,000. The jobless rate in Illinois actually decreased by 1,719 jobs due to fewer layoffs in the construction trades and manufacturing industries

President Signs Health Insurance Law

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which was twice vetoed by former-President Bush, was signed into law on Wednesday by President Obama.

In his second bill signing since taking office, Obama said the bill was "only a first step." "The way I see it, providing coverage to 11 million children through SCHIP is a down payment on my commitment to cover every single American and it is just one component of a much broader effort to finally bring our health care system into the twenty-first century," the President said.

Among those joining the President at the bill signing were Illinois Senator Dick Durbin and Illinois Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky.

The program will provide health coverage for an estimated 345,000 Illinois children from low-income families.

Duckworth Appointed to U.S. Veterans Affairs Post

On Tuesday, Tammy Duckworth, the former director of Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, was appointed by President Obama to be an assistant secretary at the federal V.A.

Duckworth who was appointed to her state position in 2006 was a helicopter pilot who lost both legs and partial use of one arm in a rocket attack while serving in Iraq in 2004. In 2006, she ran for Congress in the Illinois 6th District and was endorsed by the IL AFL-CIO. She lost the race, but was appointed to run the state V.A agency later that year.

Duckworth will be assistant secretary of public and intergovernmental affairs at the federal agency.



Obama's Middle Class Task Force

First Meeting 2/27/2009

President Obama's newly created Middle Class Task Force, created to make sure working families in America have the tools and support to rebound from these tough economic times, will hold its first meeting on Feb. 27.

The group is headed by Vice President Joe Biden and includes the heads of labor, health, education and commerce, as well as members of the President's economic team.

According to the Task Force's web site – www.whitehouse.gov/StrongMiddleClass/ - the task force's first focus will be green jobs - "as a pathway to a strong middle class."

1.5 Million EFCA Petitions Delivered to Lawmakers

On Tuesday, thousands of union leaders and their members went to Capitol Hill to deliver 1.5 million signed petitions in support of the Employee Free Choice Act.

The event is the first in a series of nationwide pro-EFCA events that are planned by the AFL-CIO. In Illinois, the State Federation and the Chicago Federation of Labor are planning a large rally on Feb. 17 at 5:30 p.m. in downtown Chicago at the Plumbers' Hall. Over 2,500 union leaders, members, community and religious activists and elected officials are scheduled to attend.

On the same day, many downstate Central Labor Councils and their members will hold press conferences in their communities to tell the public the facts about the Employee Free Choice Act.

**It's Time To Restore
WORKERS' FREEDOM**

To Form Unions and
Bargain for a Better Life

**Rally to Support
THE EMPLOYEE
FREE CHOICE ACT**

Tuesday • February 17 • 5:30pm

Plumbers' Hall
1340 W. Washington Blvd • Chicago