



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 and Senate will return Wednesday, February 18th at noon.
The Senate deadline for introduction of bills is Friday, February 20th.

CONGRESS PASSES STIMULUS PACKAGE

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which is on final passage of the conference committee report between the U.S. House and Senate, passed the U.S. House today by a vote of 243-186 with no Republican votes and the U.S. Senate is likely to pass this measure Friday evening. The bill is made up of four broad categories: tax breaks for individuals and businesses; investments in health care and alternative energy; funding for "shovel-ready" infrastructure projects; and aid to state and local governments, including expanded benefits for individuals who are unemployed and lack health insurance.

According to an analysis produced by the House Appropriations staff, the legislation will provide \$311 billion in appropriations, including the following critical investments:

- Investments in Infrastructure and Science - \$120 billion
- Investments in Health - \$14.2 billion
- Investments in Education and Training - \$105.9 billion
- Investments in Energy, including over \$30 billion in Infrastructure - \$37.5 billion
- Helping Americans Hit Hardest by the Economic Crisis - \$24.3 billion
- Law Enforcement, Oversight, Other Programs - \$7.8 billion

In order to access the first half of the highway stimulus funds coming to Illinois, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has identified projects that can be awarded quickly to put people to work in the construction industry and utilize the upcoming construction season. IDOT has identified \$693 million of projects that are "shovel ready" and can be on a special letting in early April. You may find this complete list of projects on our web site at "<http://www.ilaf-cio.org/laborbills.htm>".

This legislation provides immediate relief to Illinois students by creating a \$2 billion state stabilization fund to stave off teacher layoffs and create new jobs by repairing, renovating and modernizing schools. It expands broadband Internet access in rural communities, increases funding for alternative energy and college tuition, and invests in healthcare IT to lower costs and save lives. The package also provides assistance to those hardest hit in the current recession by extending unemployment insurance, increasing food stamps and Medicaid, and bolstering Social Security for low-income seniors.

Illinois specific projects and funding in the legislation will be distributed early next week from the 1,000 page bill.

STATE NEWS

Stermer Appointed as Governor's Chief of Staff

Jerry Stermer, former president of Voices for Illinois Children which he led since its founding in 1987, was appointed as Governor Quinn's Chief of Staff this week. While leading Voices for Illinois Children, Stermer ensured public investments in education and health care for children. He also sought tax credits for low income working families.

Prior to leading Voices for Illinois Children, Stermer served with the Department of Children and Family Services from 1973 to 1979 and was executive director of the Legislative Advisory Committee on Public Aid from 1979-1985. The Illinois AFL-CIO looks forward to continuing our relationship with Jerry in his new position.

HB 35 – State Employee Salary Database

Rep. Tryon (R – Crystal Lake)

OPPOSE

Creates a searchable database on state employee salaries. In addition, it would allow tracking of state expenditures and contracts. Commitment has been given by Tryon to work on privacy issues for state employees.

2/10/09 – Passed State Government Committee 17-0-0.
Second Reading.

HB 77 – Firefighter Death/Flag Half Staff

Rep. Cole (R – Grayslake)

SUPPORT

Requires that the U.S. and Illinois State flags be displayed at half-staff when an Illinois firefighter is killed in the line of duty.

2/10/09 – Passed State Government Committee 15-0-0.
Second Reading.

HR 30 – Rail Investment

Rep. Nekritz (D – Des Plaines)

SUPPORT

Calls on Congress and President-Elect Barack Obama to maximize the investment in expanded and improved passenger train service as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan.

2/10/09 – Passed Railroad Industry 18-0-0.
Placed on Calendar order of Resolutions.

SB 43 – Prevailing Wage in TIF/Enterprise Zones

Sen. Clayborne (D – East St. Louis)

SUPPORT

Workers on projects in TIF/Enterprise Zones in Illinois would be paid the prevailing wage.

2/11/09 – Passed Labor Committee 7-3-0. Second Reading.



Trumka and Burger to Serve on President's Economic Board

Last Friday, President Obama named a group of labor, business and academic leaders to advise him and his administration on how to "jump start economic growth and facilitate economic stability."

The group includes AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka as well as Anna Burger from SEIU.

According to a White House statement, the Board will meet regularly and provide advice directly to the President, Vice President and their economic team. The Board will serve for two years, after which the President will make a determination on whether to extend their work.

Other members include: William Donaldson, chairman of the SEC; Robert Wolf, chairman and CEO of UBS; Penny Pritzker, chairwoman of Pritzker Realty Group; Jim Owens, chairman and CEO of CAT; and Martin Feldstein, professor of economics, Harvard University.

President Overturns Bush' Ban on PLAs

On Friday, Feb. 6, President Obama issued another in a series of pro-worker Executive Orders, this time overturning the Bush Administration's ban on federal project labor agreements (PLAs).

Project Labor Agreements are designed to provide maximum efficiency on construction projects including the assurance of hiring local workers who are well trained in skilled trades, no work stoppages and bringing the project in on time and on budget.

The PLA Executive Order went into effect immediately after signing.

To see the complete Executive Order go to www.bctd.org/assets/file/2009pla_eo_final_rel.pdf.

President States Support for EFCA

In recent interviews, President Obama has reiterated his support for the Employee Free Choice Act, telling the Detroit Free Press that he "believes there is no economic risk to workers organizing and making a living wage."

The President is also quoted in the Philadelphia Inquirer saying he doesn't "buy the argument that providing workers with collective bargaining rights somehow weakens the economy or worsens the business environment" and adds that he "will not urge delay in consideration of the Employee Free Choice Act."

House Passes Legislation Commemorating the Bicentennial Birthday of Abraham Lincoln

The House of Representatives today unanimously passed Congressman Phil Hare's (D-IL) legislation commemorating the bicentennial birthday of Abraham Lincoln.

"The fact that this celebration comes only weeks after our nation's first African-American President was inaugurated is a fitting tribute to all those who paved the way for his historic election," Hare said. "Both Presidents Lincoln and Obama are Illinois treasures."