



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

PUBLISHED FOR LABOR ACTIVISTS BY THE ILLINOIS AFL-CIO

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The General Assembly will return to Springfield on Tuesday, February 16th. The Senate will convene at noon, and the House at 1:00 p.m. The Senate deadline to pass bills out of committee is March 5th. The House deadline to pass bills out of committee is March 12th.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY NEWS

THIS JUST IN...

The Temporary Restraining Order on 2010 Lobbyist Registration has been extended an additional four days. Judge Joan B. Gottschall, who is presiding over the class action complaint *ACLU Illinois v. Jesse White, Illinois Secretary of State*, extended the order to allow herself additional time to consider the case. The class action complaint was brought in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division as a result of the passage of sweeping overhauls, particularly the increase in registration fees, to the Lobbyist Registration Act made by the General Assembly in 2009 in Senate Bill 54 (PA 96-0555). It is expected that Judge Gottschall will come to a decision over the weekend. We will provide additional information regarding this litigation as soon as possible.

The General Assembly was in session this week for a total of four days. Thursday, February 11th was the deadline to introduce new legislation in each chamber. In this year alone, 1,332 bills have been introduced in the Senate and 1,558 bills have been introduced in the House. While legislators were busy crafting and introducing bills, they also met in committees this week to begin the first consideration of these bills. The following is a list of bills that passed this week. To view a complete list of bills being monitored by the Illinois AFL-CIO, please visit: www.ilaf-cio.org/laborbills.htm.

HB 2240 – Delay of Governor’s Budget Speaker Madigan (D – Chicago) President Cullerton (D – Chicago) **Monitor**

Allows the Governor to submit a State budget to the General Assembly by March 10, 2010 rather than February 17, 2010. Requires the Governor to file a report with the General Assembly concerning revenues, expenditures, and liabilities by February 24, 2010. Allows members of the public and members of the General Assembly to make budget recommendations to the Governor between February 24 and March 10, 2010, and requires the Governor to promptly post those recommendations on the Governor’s website.

2/11/10 – Passed the Senate 31-21-0.
Passed House 65-44-0. Signed by Governor - PA 96-0881.

HB 4649 – Alternative Method for ICC Approval of Electric Transmission Lines Rep. Reitz (D – Sparta) **SUPPORT**

Under current law, public utilities must obtain approval from the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) to construct any transmission line that has a voltage rating of 100kV or more and is longer than one mile. This legislation will retain the traditional transmission line approval process, but would also provide an alternative procedure for transmission

line approval that would require:

- the ICC to expedite its decision within 120 days of the filing;
- the public utility seeking approval of a transmission line to pay a \$100,000 application fee with each filing to fund additional ICC resources needed to implement the expedited process;
- the public utility to satisfy the same criteria for obtaining approval of a transmission line that exists under the state’s current laws and regulations; and
- require the public utility to pay to each county in which the transmission line is constructed a one-time construction fee of \$20,000 per mile of transmission line constructed in that county.

2/11/10 – Passed House Electric Generation Committee 11-0-0. Second Reading.

HB 4654 – Senior Citizens Ride for Free on Mass Transit

Rep. Bassi (R – Palatine)

Monitor

Requires that seniors must be aged 65 or older, and be eligible for benefits under the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Act, to receive free mass transit service. Provides that the requirement must be imposed no later than 180 days after becoming law.

2/11/10 – Passed Mass Transit 20-4-0. Second Reading.

HB 4842 – Primary Election Voter Guide Rep. Currie (D – Chicago) **SUPPORT**

Requires (now, permits) the State Board of Elections to publish an Internet voters’ guide before each general primary in the same manner that the board does before each general election.

2/9/10 – Passed Elections & Campaign Reform 9-0-0. Third Reading.

HB 4959 – Creation of Port District Rep. Walker (D – Arlington Heights)

Monitor

Amends the Illinois International Port District Act governing foreign trade zones to include “Area A,” which encompasses O’Hare International Airport and, therefore, under federal law, the 30-mile radius surrounding the air port property. Foreign trade zones (FTZ) were created in the United States to provide special customs procedures to U.S. plants engaged in international trade-related activities. Duty-free treatment is accorded items that are processed in FTZs and then re-exported, and duty payment is deferred on items until they are brought out of the FTZ for sale in the U.S. market. This helps to offset customs advantages available to overseas producers who compete with domestic industry.

2/10/10 – Passed International Trade & Commerce 9-0-0. Second Reading.

HB 5018 – Continuation Coverage of Illinois COBRA

Rep. May (D – Highwood)

SUPPORT

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, passed by Congress in February 2009, set a time frame by which continuation and notice concerning continuing medical coverage (federal COBRA) must be granted for unem-

ployed workers (September 1, 2008 to December 31, 2009). Last fall, Congress extended the deadline to February 2010. Congress is currently considering legislation to extend the COBRA coverage for the unemployed (see article on federal legislation). HB 5018 simply tracks with the legislation regarding federal COBRA and requires that Illinois shall honor that date as well for the

state continuation coverage (Illinois COBRA). Federal COBRA requires employers with 20 or more employees to offer continuation packages, while Illinois COBRA covers all employers regardless of size.

2/9/10 – Passed Health Care Availability & Accessibility 12-0-0. Second Reading.

STATE NEWS

IPI Report Criticizes Funding of Labor's Retraining Program for Unemployed

On Tuesday, the ultra-conservative, anti-worker group the Illinois Policy Institute (IPI) made public their critique of the 2010 state budget – *The 2010 Illinois Piglet Book*. In it they criticize state spending on everything from prostate cancer screening to state support for tourism and the arts.

On page 18 of the report, they offer unsubstantiated criticism of state funding for the Illinois AFL-CIO's Member Assistance Program (MAP) that for 32 years has provided front-line help to thousands of laid-off workers, saying we should use union dues to pay for retraining of the unemployed.

"The IPI's criticism of the Illinois AFL-CIO's retraining program for workers who have lost their jobs due to their companies closing plants to move jobs and production out of the country is reprehensible on several levels," said Illinois AFL-CIO President Michael T. Carrigan in a statement.

"First, the report fails to mention that the funds we receive to run these critical programs are federal dollars that merely pass through the state's coffers and can be used only for retraining purposes.

"Secondly, we serve all unemployed workers in the state regardless of union status. So the snide comment, "... (union) dues and contributions should be used for this purpose (retraining)..." is not applicable.

"Lastly, the Illinois AFL-CIO has operated our retraining and assistance program for unemployed workers since 1978. We have worked with and received funding from both Democratic and Republican governors – in fact the program was initiated under Gov. Jim Thompson.

"While the IPI's conclusions make good sound bites, the truth is most of the programs they criticize benefit everyday Illinois citizens at a time when they need them the most."

Cohen Withdraws, Search on for Democrat Lt. Governor Candidate

Scott Lee Cohen, the surprise winner in the Democratic Primary for Lieutenant Governor, publically withdrew the nomination Sunday. Though he has yet to complete the paperwork for the withdrawal, the search has begun for a replacement.

Several issues concerning Cohen's background surfaced post-election, causing pressure for him to step down. Less than a week after winning the nomination, he relented.

The Democratic State Central Committee is tasked with naming the replacement. Democratic State Central Committee members are chosen by the voters in each congressional district (one man and one woman) during the Democratic Primary Election. Typically when casting votes, each State Central Committeeperson has a weighted vote proportionate with the number of Democrat Primary voters in each congressional district.

The current chairman of the Democratic Party of Illinois, chosen by the committee, is Speaker of the House Michael J. Madigan.

Speaker Madigan has stated that he will work with Governor Pat Quinn and Senate President John J. Cullerton to find an acceptable replacement. While many names have surfaced, no exact timeline has been agreed to. The State Board of Elections will certify the vote on March 5th and the State Central Committee is set to have its first post-election meeting on March 15th. An earlier meeting may also be called.

FEDERAL NEWS

Bipartisan Jobs Bill Proposed

This week, U.S. Senators Max Baucus (D-MT) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA) made public an \$85 billion jobs bill they are proposing that would create a \$13 billion payroll tax credit for businesses hiring unemployed Americans. The legislation would also include \$22 billion to extend unemployment benefits with additional help for states with unemployment over 8.5 percent and would include another extension for COBRA health insurance eligibility.