



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

PUBLISHED FOR LABOR ACTIVISTS BY THE ILLINOIS AFL-CIO

MICHAEL T. CARRIGAN, PRESIDENT TIMOTHY E. DREA, SECRETARY TREASURER JASON KELLER, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The Illinois General Assembly will be taking a three week break to allow for the 2010 Primary Election.

The House is scheduled to return on Wednesday, February 3; the Senate will return on Monday, February 8. The bill introduction deadline for both the House and Senate is Thursday, February 11.

STATE NEWS

Governor Says Number One Goal is State's Economy

The Illinois AFL-CIO is neutral in the Governor's primary race between Dan Hynes and Pat Quinn. However, on Wednesday Governor Quinn gave his State of the State speech and the following are comments from his speech.

In his State of the State remarks on Wednesday, Governor Pat Quinn said creating jobs and getting Illinois' economy back on the right track are his top priorities.

"Our state has a severe budget deficit," said Quinn. "One of the worst financial crises in our history... but I have an economic plan."

Quinn pointed to the passage of the Capital Bill in 2009 as a good start to recovery. "A lot of hard work went into passing this landmark law," he said. "We worked together for the good of the people of Illinois."

The 2009 Capital Bill – *Illinois Jobs Now!* – was estimated to create over 400,000 jobs and pump billions of dollars into the state's economy. The Governor's office says that to date, \$1.5 billion in *Illinois Jobs Now!* projects are up and running.

Quinn said rebuilding the state's roads, bridges, rails, schools and water works will set the foundation for future

growth. He talked about the importance of high speed rail and a new airport to be built in Peotone. "We will grow our economy with good infrastructure," he said. "I want Illinois to be an inland port... a center for distribution."

He also pointed to biotechnology, the FutureGen plant scheduled to be built in Mattoon, wind power and Illinois' huge agriculture industry as all being critical to the state's economic recovery.

The Governor said he and lawmakers had cut state spending, borrowed where they could and taken full advantage of federal funds available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to cope with the budget shortfalls, but that new, sustainable revenue was still needed. He renewed his call for progressive tax reform saying, "There's a principle as old as the Bible, that taxes should be based on one's ability to pay." But he did not say which tax plan he would be supporting.

HB 1188 – Cemetery Oversight

Rep. M Davis (D – Chicago)

Sen. Trotter (D – Chicago)

SUPPORT

Requires that cemetery workers, regardless of whether they are classified as independent contractors or employees, must obtain a registration card from the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. Requires cemetery authorities to abide by a "Consumer Bill of Rights". Requires that information about burials be provided to the Department upon sale or transfer of cemetery land.

1/13/10 – Passed the House 85-30-2. Passed Senate 30-24-1. To Governor.

SB 315 – Race to the Top Education Funding

Sen. Lightford (D – Chicago)

Rep. ChapaLaVia (D – Aurora)

OPPOSE

The underlying legislation was passed by the General Assembly to meet certain federal mandates in order to qualify for

\$250-400 million worth of federal funding for school districts in Illinois. It was part of the Obama Administration's Race to the Top funding. In order to qualify for the funding, stricter guidelines were set for teacher evaluations.

In the Spring of 2009 the Illinois General Assembly passed SB 189, sweeping changes to Illinois' Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). An unintended consequence of the passage of that bill was that public employee evaluations were made available under a FOIA request. The Illinois AFL-CIO has been leading a coalition, for approximately two months, of our public employee unions in attempting to pass language to protect public employee evaluations from being made public. We attempted to insert that language in this bill, however, the House chose to insert protections for teachers, principals, and superintendents.

While we were not successful in getting our language passed, this will

certainly be a top priority for the State Federation once the General Assembly returns in the first week of February.

1/13/10 – Passed the Senate 48-4. Passed the House 74-37. To Governor

SB 642 – Southern Illinois University Borrowing

Sen. Haine (D – Alton)

SUPPORT

Southern Illinois University is currently owed \$125.0 million by the state of Illinois and has received only 14% of its FY10 appropriation seven months into the fiscal year. SB 642 provides authorization for the SIU Board of Trustees to borrow money in anticipation of receiving payments from the State of Illinois. Requires these monies to be repaid within 18 months and provides maximum limits.

1/13/10 – Passed Senate State Government 9-0-0. Second Reading.

(continued on next page)

(continued)

SB 1868 – McCormick Place
President Cullerton (D – Chicago)
Rep. Hamos (D – Evanston)

Monitor

The terms of current members of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority Board will end 30 days after the effective date of the bill (bill becomes effective immediately upon a signature from the Governor). Within the same 30 days of the effective date, an interim board shall be appointed. The Governor shall appoint three members, one of which shall have academic credentials in labor law or human resources.

The Mayor of Chicago shall appoint three members as well. The Mayor shall appoint a chair of the board, with the Governor's approval. Total of seven board members.
1/13/10 – Passed House 112-0-0. Passed Senate 39-11-1. To Governor.

Early Voting Begins; Runs Through Jan. 28

Early Voting began Monday for the Illinois Primary Election and runs through Thursday, Jan. 28.

Combining early and absentee voters, one in every five voters cast their ballot before Election Day in 2008. In counties with smaller populations, the County Clerk's office typically serves as the Early Voting location. In larger municipalities and counties, there are multiple locations offered. Locations can be found on the Illinois AFL-CIO web site at www.ilaf-cio.org, or the State Board of Elections website at www.elections.state.il.us.

Early voting gives busy working families ample opportunity to vote without having to wait in line or worry about inclement weather. Along with the new no-excuse absentee voting, early voting (which also requires no excuse) gives workers great flexibility.

FEDERAL NEWS



Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Monday, January 18

On Monday, we celebrate the birthday and resounding accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Jan. 15, 1929-April 4, 1968) and remember Dr. King's teachings and leadership by example of social justice for all through non-violent acts.

Dr. King saw the union movement and the civil rights movement as the strongest forces in the battle to lift up low-wage workers. He was in Memphis, Tennessee supporting the city's striking sanitary workers (AFSCME Local 1733) when he was assassinated. In a letter to the Amalgamated Laundry Workers in 1962, he said, "The coalition that can have the greatest impact in the struggle for human dignity here in America is that of the Negro and the forces of Labor, because their fortunes are so closely intertwined."

We salute Dr. King on the 81st anniversary of his birth.

- NOTICE -

Unemployment Benefits and Your Income Tax Returns

Under the Obama Administration and the Democratic Congress American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, every person who received unemployment benefits during 2009 can exclude the first \$2,400 of those benefits from their 2009 tax return. For married couples, the exclusion applies to each spouse separately. If both spouses received unemployment benefits during 2009, each may exclude from their tax return the first \$2,400 of benefits they received.

Labor Agrees to a Compromised Excise Tax on Health Insurance Plans

In a meeting with President Obama on Wednesday, Labor leaders agreed to support a limited tax on high-end health care plans in order to move the long-awaited health care bill through Congress.

The agreed-to compromise raises the threshold for family plans that will be subject to a 40% excise tax from the original Senate bill figure of \$23,000 to \$24,000 and on individual plans from \$8,500 to \$8,900. There will be a higher threshold for plans covering people in high-risk professions and on plans covering high numbers of older and female workers. The compromise exempts vision and dental plans and most importantly exempts all insurance policies covering workers under a collective bargaining agreement from the tax until 2018.

An estimated 3 to 4 million of the 31 million Americans affected by this excise tax are union members.

