



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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PUBLISHED FOR LABOR ACTIVISTS BY THE ILLINOIS AFL-CIO

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The Illinois General Assembly concluded its business on Thursday this week. Both chambers will return to Springfield on Tuesday, March 8 at noon. The deadline to pass bills out of committee in both chambers is March 17.

The House Labor Committee will be particularly busy next week, where we are seeking passage of a bill (HB 2987) to codify Governor Quinn's executive order on project labor agreements (EO 2010-3). In addition, there is a bill to increase penalties on contractors who violate the prevailing wage law (HB 3237). The penalty would increase to a felony and four year debarment. House Labor will meet on Wednesday at 1pm in Room 114 of the Capitol. We would welcome any support that can be shown in Springfield for those bills.

The Senate Local Government Committee will meet on Wednesday at 9 am in Room 409 of the Capitol. They will be hearing SB 1559, which requires drivers' education and municipal vehicles in Illinois to be manufactured in America. We welcome UAW members at this hearing for support.

The Illinois AFL-CIO will hold a labor lobbyist meeting on Tuesday, March 8 at 11am in our Springfield office to discuss labor legislation. All of our affiliates are welcome to attend.

For a complete list of bills the Illinois AFL-CIO is tracking please visit: http://www.ilaff-cio.org/forms/bill_trak.pdf.

CALL TO ACTION!

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BILLS ADVANCE TO SENATE FLOOR

The Illinois Senate Committee on Assignments quietly approved two workers' compensation bills yesterday to be considered on second reading on the Senate floor. SB 1349 (Senator McCarter) and SB 2155 (Senator Brady) are extremely detrimental to injured workers.

SB 1349

- Eliminates the injured worker's right to choose his/her own doctor;
- Absolutely removes all presumptive disability language from the Workers' Compensation Act as it relates to the profession of a Fire Fighter;
- Severely cuts the wage-differential benefit, especially for older workers;
- Requires an injured worker to submit to alcohol/drug testing; and
- Would strip away medical care and compensation for Fire Fighters suffering from job-related illnesses incurred while serving the citizens in communities across Illinois.

SB 2155

- Severely limits temporary total disability benefits when an injured worker cannot work;
- Severely cuts the wage-differential benefit especially for older workers;
- Requires use of American Medical Association Guidelines to reduce awards to injured workers; and
- Requires injured workers to submit to alcohol/drug testing.

SB 1349 and SB 2155 should be taken seriously. To show there is little support for these anti-worker ideas, we are asking our affiliates to **immediately** call into Senate District offices to inform senators that these bills are devastating to injured workers. You can find your State Senator by visiting: <http://www.ilga.gov/>.

S T A T E



THE GREAT PENSION DEBATE

A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE ILLINOIS CONSTITUTION'S PENSION CLAUSE

Senate Dem Report Says Changing Current Pension Payments is Unconstitutional

Senate Democrats released this week an in-depth report on the constitutionality of changing/lowering current public employee pension benefits. *This is a must read for not only public employee unions but ALL union members.*

Read the study by clicking here: <http://www.illinoisenatedemocrats.com/index.php/component/content/article/108-public-information-brochures/1517-pension-debate>.

Call 217.544.4014 For More Information On These And Other Legislative Issues Important To Working People - www.ilaff-cio.org



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State Supremes to Decide on Capital Bill Funding this Spring

The Illinois Supreme Court will hear the state's appeal of a circuit court ruling earlier this year that found the funding portion of the state's 2009 Capital Bill to be unlawful (*Wirtz v. Quinn*). In January, the 1st District Appellate Court in Chicago ruled the legislation that created the \$31 billion construction program funding violated the state Constitution's "single subject" rule requiring one topic per piece of legislation. Last month, the Illinois Supreme Court issued a stay of the Appellate Court ruling, leaving the Capital Bill funding for current projects in tact. However, without a reversal by the Supremes, state funded construction could grind to a halt by summer. ■

State Unemployment Drops for 12th Straight Month

Unemployment in Illinois dropped to 9 percent in January from 9.2 percent the month before, and from a high of 11.2 percent in January of 2010. The Illinois rate dropped to equal the national unemployment rate for the first time in many months.

According to the Illinois Department of Employment Security manufacturing has added nearly 11,000 jobs in the state over the last year and trade, transportation and utilities have added over 15,000 jobs. However, the largest growth was in business and professional services. ■

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HB 1073 – Harassing

Rep. Pihos (R – Glen Ellyn)
NEUTRAL

Amends the Criminal Code of 1961 to create the offense of perpetual harassment. Provides that purposely and repeatedly harassing another person or following with the intent to harass another person constitutes an offense. The Illinois AFL-CIO offered an amendment to ensure that a labor picket is not a felony under the act, and that amendment passed this week.

3/3/11 – *Passed House Jud II 6-0-0. Second Reading.*

HB 1427 – Firefighter Work Comp

Rep. Bradley (D – Marion)
SUPPORT

Amends the Workers' Compensation Act. Provides that a member of a fire department in any city whose population exceeds 500,000 (was 200,000) is considered an "employee" under the Act only with respect to claims for any serious and permanent disfigurement. Seeks to clarify that firefighters in cities with an increasing population will continue to fall under the Workers' Compensation Act.

3/2/11 – *Passed House Labor Committee 19-0-0. Second Reading.*

SB 83 – Water Systems

Sen. Wilhelmi (D – Crest Hill)
SUPPORT

Amends the Municipal Code to allow a water system owned by a public utility that provides water to 2 or more municipalities to be acquired by a majority of the municipalities it serves by eminent domain, so long as there is an intergovernmental agreement in existence between the acquiring municipalities. Requires that all work performed on the acquired water system must be done by employees who are members of a collective bargaining unit or by contractors whose employees are members of a collective bargaining unit.

3/2/11 – *Passed Senate Local Government 9-0-0. Second Reading.*

SB 1322/SB 1323 – Capital Projects

President Cullerton (D – Chicago)
Monitor

These two bills are vehicle bills in the event that the General Assembly must pass additional legislation to address the pending litigation before the Illinois Supreme Court, *Wirtz v. Quinn*.

3/2/11 – *Passed Senate Executive 14-1-0. Second Reading.*

SB 1342 – Nursing Plan

Sen. Lightford (D – Chicago)
Monitor

Amends the Hospital Licensing Act. Provides that a copy of the written staffing plan for nursing care services shall be provided to any member of the general public upon request.

3/2/11 – *Passed Senate Public Health 10-0-0. Second Reading.*

AM 24 – Thomas Tyrell to Work Comp Commission

Sen. Munoz (D – Chicago)
Monitor

Nominates Thomas J. Tyrell as a member of the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission.

3/1/11 – *Confirmed by Senate 51-3.*

AM 28 – Doug Scott to Illinois Commerce Commission

Sen. Munoz (D – Chicago)
Monitor

Nominates Douglas Scott to be a Commissioner and Chairman of the Illinois Commerce Commission.

3/1/11 – *Filed with Senate and Assigned to Executive Appointments*

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTORIES

Order forms for the 2011-2012 Illinois AFL-CIO Legislative Directories will go out Monday to affiliates. As always, affiliates will be able to order the booklets with the State Federation cover design or create their own covers. If you do not receive your order form within the next week and you intend to order directories, please call Communications Director Beth Spencer at 217.492.2631. ■

Illinois Labor History Society Launches New Web Site

The Illinois Labor History Society has a newly designed web site that is full of valuable information about historic labor sites and monuments, labor heroes, articles, tours, education curriculum, hand outs and more. Please utilize this site for resources for your members, apprentices and schools. Go to: <http://www.illinoislaborhistory.org>.



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Midwest Struggles

Ohio state senators narrowly approved (17-16) a bill that strips collective bargaining rights from 400,000 state and local workers. The bill now goes to the House, where the Republicans have a 59-40 majority. Republican Gov. John Kasich supports the bill.

In **Indiana**, House Democrats still remain in Illinois opposed to a Right-To-Work bill pending before the Indiana House. On Wednesday, IBEW members met at IBEW Local 601 in Champaign and held a luncheon for the Indiana lawmakers to thank them for taking such a bold stand supporting working families. IBEW International President Ed Hill called into the luncheon, hosted by 6th District Vice President Lonnie Stephenson, to personally thank the legislators. The Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois, led by Illinois AFL-CIO Vice President Pat Devaney, and other area unions have been holding dinners and support rallies as well.

In **Wisconsin**, Republican senators on Wednesday passed a resolution censuring and fining the 14 Democrats who left the state Feb. 17 to prevent a vote on Republican Gov. Walker's bill stripping public employees' collective-bargaining rights. The Wisconsin Democrats, who are in Illinois, will be fined \$100 a day for their absence when the Senate is in session. Walker says he will issue 1,500 layoff notices to public employees beginning today.

Click here to view rallies and activities in Wisconsin supporting workers' rights. Please find an activity close to you to attend. <http://www.wisafcio.org/index.cfm?action=article&articleID=86eadd47-a51c-4eb9-a6a9-6bccd3898db0>

Yesterday, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka appeared on CNN's NewsHour with Judy Woodruff to discuss workers' rights and ongoing state battles. Watch the interview: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june11/unions_03-03.html. ■

Congress Approves, President Signs Short-Term Government Funding

On Tuesday and Wednesday respectively, the House and Senate approved a stopgap budget measure that will provide government funding through March 18 only. President Obama signed the bill on Wednesday. If a funding bill had not been agreed on by today, the federal government would have faced a shutdown.

The bill passed the House 335-91 and the Senate 91-9. ■

Illinois Rallies to Support Wisconsin Workers/Democratic Lawmakers

Rallies were held in Chicago and Springfield last Saturday as part of the nationwide protest against Wisconsin's Gov. Scott Walker's attempt to strip public workers of their bargaining rights. An estimated 2,000 people turned out in downtown Chicago. Speakers included Sen. Dick Durbin, Illinois AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Tim Drea and Illinois AFL-CIO Vice Presidents Roberta Lynch (AFSCME) and Robert Kelly (ATU). In Springfield over 400 gathered in front of the Capitol. Speakers included Steve Preckwinkle, IFT; Dave Burns, IBEW; Jim Fleming, UA; Ken Swanson, IEA and Bill Houlihan representing Sen. Durbin. In addition, buses from all over Illinois full of union members have been traveling to Madison over the past weeks. ■



Chicago rally photos by Orlando J. Velez.