



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

**PUBLISHED FOR LABOR ACTIVISTS BY THE ILLINOIS AFL-CIO**

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*The General Assembly reconvened this week, though no major activity occurred as the Senate bill introduction deadline is today. No session is scheduled for next week, however the House bill introduction deadline is Thursday. The House returns Feb. 21 with the Senate returning Feb. 22, the same day as the Governor's budget address to the legislature.*

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### Labor, Trial Lawyers Unveil Insurance Reform Package

The Illinois AFL-CIO joined the Laborers International Union of North America – Midwest Region and the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association in composing legislation that would reform the workers' compensation insurance industry. This was done in response to conflicting responses to last year's workers' compensation reform bill (HB 1698). It was thought the new law would save millions of dollars by reducing medical bills and reducing benefits. In reality, the insurance industry recommended a 3.4% premium increase. Senator Kwame Raoul (D – Chicago) will introduce a series of four bills this week that will take on the real culprit of escalating workers' compensation costs – insurance companies – by drafting legislation that:

- Creates the Workers' Compensation Insurance Fund as an independent body for insuring employers against liability for workers' compensation claims and compete with private insurers;
- Creates the Illinois Compensation Rating Bureau. The proposed bureau would be capable of providing more accurate and verifiable information on premium rates on workers' compensation cases. Currently, the state uses figures provided by the National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI). It would allow the state some oversight on rate increases/decreases;
- Changes how all employers are charged for workers' compensation premiums, from wages paid to an employee, to the hours worked by that employee.
- Changes how construction employers are charged for workers' compensation premiums, from wages paid to an employee, to the hours worked by that employee.

### Primary Election - March 20

### Absentee Voting Begins; Early Voting Starts Feb. 27

Absentee voting for the upcoming Illinois Primary Election began on Thursday this week. Voters could request an absentee ballot starting Thursday.

Early voting for the election begins Feb. 27 and ends March 15.

The Illinois AFL-CIO Executive Board has issued endorsements for the Primary. They can be found at:

<http://www.ilaf-cio.org/endo.htm>

### House Resolution Calls for ICC to Rehear Leucadia

The Illinois House passed HR 755 by a voice vote this week. The resolution was led by Rep. Marlow Colvin (D-Chicago) and Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago).

The resolution expressed serious concerns over an order that the Illinois Commerce Commission entered on January 10 that stripped the Leucadia project from obtaining full cost recovery from consumers, thus making the project difficult to finance. It further calls upon the ICC to rehear the matter.

An identical resolution was filed in the Senate (SR 585 – Trotter), and has been posted for Senate Executive committee on February 23 at 2 p.m.

## House Labor Committee passes Social Networking Legislation

Representative LaShawn Ford (D-Chicago) continues to work on legislation that would ban any employer from asking a prospective employee for account information to gain access to the employee's social networking site.

HB 3782 passed out of committee 18-0-0 this week; however, Ford promised to address concerns with the bill and said he will be bringing an amendment back to committee in the future.

## Funeral Picketing Bill Moves to House Floor

Representative Jerry Costello II (D-Sparta) passed legislation out of the House Judiciary II Committee this week concerning pickets at funerals.

The intent of the bill is to protect fallen veterans' families from a controversial group from Kansas that often holds protests at military funerals.

The legislation regulates when pickets may occur at a funeral home or cemetery, to one hour before or after any service (was 30 minutes). It also increases the distance a picket must be from the site to 1,000 feet (was 200 feet).

## Audio Recording Bill Clears Committee

Representative Elaine Nekritz (D-Des Plaines) passed legislation concerning recording of law enforcement personnel out of the House Judiciary I committee by a vote of 9-2.

An amendment was filed in committee to clarify that the bill pertains to "law enforcement" personnel. It would allow citizens to record audio of law enforcement personnel while performing their public job duties.

Under the current Illinois Eavesdropping Act, a member of the public can be charged with a felony if they record conversations of police officers, prosecutors or other law enforcement personnel without their knowledge. Nekritz clarified that the bill would only change audio recordings, not video recordings. Taking video footage without audio is already legal to do.

## U.S. Congress

### Senate Passage of FAA Reauthorization Attacks Collective Bargaining Rights

House Republicans were successful in demanding that a routine Federal Aviation Administration spending bill include anti-union language that will make it much more difficult for transportation workers to organize.

The change included in the bill will raise the threshold for seeking to join a union from 35 percent to 50 percent for transportation workers. On Feb. 3, the House agreed to the conference report by a vote of 248-169, while the Senate agreed on Feb. 6, by a vote of 75-20.

President Barack Obama is expected to sign the measure. Senator Dick Durbin voted against working families, while Senator Mark Kirk did not vote. Those in the Illinois Congressional delegation that stood with working families included: Bobby Rush (1st-Chicago), Jesse Jackson Jr. (2nd-Chicago), Jan Schakowsky (9th-Evanston), Luis Guitierrez (4th-Chicago), and Danny Davis (7th-Chicago).

## Labor Makes Its Voice Heard Concerning Pension Reform, Facility Closures

Leaders from public employee unions and the Illinois AFL-CIO began meeting this week to discuss the state's underfunded pension systems. Governor Quinn's office called the meeting and a member from each legislative caucus was appointed to attend. The first meeting was primarily used to discuss the positions of the various groups in the

room. No future meetings have been set up, however, the groups will be working on proposals to submit for consideration.

Leaders from AFSCME and other groups continue to battle against closures of state facilities in Jacksonville and Tinley Park, appearing before the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. At the same time they are fighting for the pay raises for their employees under a collective bargaining agreement with the Governor's office.