



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

PUBLISHED FOR LABOR ACTIVISTS BY THE ILLINOIS AFL-CIO

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The Illinois Senate completed its business early this afternoon, and will return next Monday at 4pm and is scheduled to remain in session through Friday, March 2. The House completed its business on Thursday this week and will return on Tuesday. The House is scheduled to remain through Thursday. Both chambers now have two weeks to pass substantive bills through committees, with March 9 being the deadline.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Quinn Measures Include Closing Facilities, Pension Reform

Budget Proposals Include Medicaid Reform, Closing Corporate Loopholes

Gov. Pat Quinn made one thing perfectly clear during his Budget Address at the State House Wednesday. The State has to face serious and difficult cost-cutting decisions as it looks to restore Illinois to financial health.

Some of his big picture proposals, however, are a tough sell for working families in Illinois.

Quinn proposed large-scale facility closures and consolidations of 59 state facilities, including closures of Tamms Correctional Center, Dwight CC, Jacksonville Developmental Center, Tinley Park Mental Health Center, Murray DC, Singer MHC, Illinois Youth Center, Murphysboro, IYC Joliet, and Adult Transition Centers in Decatur, Peoria, Chicago, Aurora and Carbondale. Office consolidations are slated for Department of Human Services Community Operations, the Department of Children and Family Services and State Police.

“Gov. Quinn and the General Assembly have some difficult decisions to make concerning the budget, but cutting more deeply into services for our citizens isn’t the place to go to achieve financial stability,” said Illinois AFL-CIO President Michael T. Carrigan. “We have already cut to the bone and Illinois is dead last in the country on per capita state employees to population. The solution lies in shared sacrifice not a continual shift of burden on the backs of the state’s working families.”

The Governor also committed to comprehensive pension reform, saying “everything is on the table,” adding that reforms will be done “in a way that’s meaningful, constitutional and fair to the employees that have faithfully contributed to the system.”

Quinn named a working group on pension reform made up of legislators from both parties and chambers.

Labor: Quinn released a proposed budget for IDOL at a total of \$10.9 million. However, this is a cut of nearly \$1.2 million from FY12.

Education: Quinn outlined flat-lining K-12 education funding and making an additional \$20 million investment in early childhood education. He also announced \$623 million investment in upgrading schools across the state.

Medicaid: Quinn said the state’s Medicaid program is “on the brink of collapse” and options such as reconsidering groups eligible, covered services, utilization of services and amounts paid for services would be examined.

Corporate tax loopholes: Quinn said closing corporate tax loopholes would also be a priority in order to establish more fairness to the tax code. He said that “many of these loopholes are based on politics, not economics.”

Primary Election - March 20

Early Voting Begins Monday through March 15

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/political.htm>

Local Government Revenue Cap Passes House

The Illinois House passed legislation this week that would block local governments from increasing property taxes when overall property values decline. SB 2073 was amended by Representative Jack Franks (D-Woodstock) and assigned directly to the House floor by the Rules Committee. It passed the House 74-39-2. Similar legislation was attempted in November (HB 3793) and failed with just 34 members voting in support.

There are 39 counties in Illinois that impose property tax caps, which effectively limits overall property tax collection increases to 5 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less. Under SB 2073, local governments could not increase their property tax collections when the assessed property value has dropped, except by voter referendum.

Those unions representing local government employees remain adamantly opposed to this measure because it will severely hamstring local government revenue, essentially putting a cap on how much revenue can be generated. Given that each year's tax is based upon the previous year's tax, reductions are permanent, continuous and compounding. Many local governments, school districts, and other groups activated their member base this week to communicate the devastating effects this would have.

The Senate sponsor is Sen. Terry Link (D – Lake Bluff), and he has indicated he does not intend to call this bill for a vote in the Senate.

Construction Stimulus Bill Passes Committee

This Illinois AFL-CIO initiated legislation seeks to allow private equity to spur construction growth around the state. SB 3210, sponsored by Senator James Clayborne (D – East St. Louis), passed the Senate Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support 8-2-1. Under current law, not-for-profit entities are finding it difficult to raise capital through commercial lenders for new construction. This seeks to allow a not-for-profit to undertake a sale/leaseback of their property with a developer.

There is an estimated \$1 billion in not-for-profit hospital projects alone that are ready to be built in Illinois. It comes at no cost to the state. SB 3210 now goes to the Senate floor for consideration.

Other Measures of Note that Were Acted Upon:

- HB 3116 (Jefferson) Authorizes the Governor to execute a compact on behalf of Illinois with any other state to end abuse of public pensions. Passed House Personnel and Pensions 7-1-0.
- HB 3802 (Costello/Koehler) – Pickets at funeral home or graveyard only hour before or after a service and increases distance from service to 1,000 feet. Passed the House 116-0-1.
- HB 3875 (Colvin) Extends by two years (July 1, 2014) the time RTA may issue, sell, and deliver working cash notes. Passed House Mass Transit 23-0.
- HB 4078 (Winters) Toll highway authority may design and construct new railroad tracks (labor supports). Passed House Tollway Oversight Committee 9-1-0.
- SR 585 (Trotter) Expresses serious concerns over an order that the Illinois Commerce Commission entered 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 (labor supports). Adopted by voice vote in the Senate.

Election 2012

Romney Supports Right to Work, Repealing Davis-Bacon, PLAs

GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney addressed the 2012 National Meeting of the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) this week. Romney had this to say:

“One of the first things I will do, actually on day one, is I will end the government’s favoritism towards unions and contracting on federal projects. I will fight to repeal Davis-Bacon...and I will fight for right-to-work laws.”

Right to Work – Won’t Work in Illinois; Labor Set to Rally April 19

The Right to Work-Won’t Work in Illinois Committee is taking action when Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels comes to Champaign to speak at the Republican Lincoln Day Dinner on April 19.

Daniels pushed for and signed legislation this year making Indiana a Right to Work state. In states where Right to Work is law, it has proven to significantly erode wages and benefits for all workers by weakening unions and collective bargaining. For more information contact Larry Swope at 217-840-2288.

USA Holds 3rd Annual SI Sporting Clays Shoot

The Union Sportsmen’s Alliance will hold its 3rd Annual Southern Illinois Sporting Clays Shoot April 11 in Sparta. Details of the event follow:

When: Wednesday, April 11
Registration from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m.
Shotgun start at 9:30 a.m.

Where: World Shooting and Recreational Complex
One Main Event Lane, Suite 510
Sparta, IL 62286

Information: Nate Whiteman
or Heather Tazelaar 615-831-6779.

