



103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SESSION  N

HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER  
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ILLINOIS HOUSE REPUBLICANS

BRIEF  
**2023**

# SESSION BRIEF

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# SESSION BRIEF

## TALKING POINTS

### ABORTION

- Illinois already has the most permissive abortion laws in the country, but there doesn't seem to be any law progressive enough to satisfy the most radical elements of the Democrat Party when it comes to abortion expansion.
- In the first six months after Democrats required Medicaid to cover elective abortions, the number of abortions paid for by taxpayers jumped a staggering 1,758% according to IDPH data.
- The most recent data available from IDPH between 2018 and 2020 shows that those from out-of-state who came to Illinois for an abortion nearly doubled.
- In the past six months, Democrats have expanded the procedure even more to allow non-medical doctors (physician's assistants, nurse practitioners, midwives) to perform surgical abortions, and even stripped co-pays for medication abortion.
- All of this means more and more taxpayer dollars are being spent on abortion.
- On top of that, Democrats' plan to spend another \$18 million to create a hotline and training program to make it easier to get an abortion in Illinois.
- There doesn't seem to be any end in sight to Democrats' spending of taxpayer dollars on abortion.



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## TALKING POINTS

### BIPA REFORM

- Illinois is currently one of only three states with legal protections for a person's biometric information, the Illinois Biometric Information Privacy Act. The Act provides that a private entity in possession of biometric identifiers or biometric information must develop a written policy, made available to the public, establishing a retention schedule and guidelines for permanently destroying biometric identifiers and biometric information when the initial purpose for collecting or obtaining such identifiers or information has been satisfied or within three years of the individual's last interaction with the private entity.
- While this legislation is well meaning, the inclusion of a private right of action has resulted in a cottage industry of attorneys threatening small businesses who may have unknowingly violated the Act with high dollar lawsuits.
- The Act provides for liquidated damages of \$1,000 per negligent violation. In many situations, this can add up quickly. For example, if an employer uses an employee's fingerprint for their time clock system, each time an employee clocks in or out could be \$1,000 in damages. The result is that a business can be bankrupted by a violation of the Act, even one that resulted in no data breaches. This could not have been the intention of the Act. Additionally, a recent Illinois Supreme Court decision gives BIPA violations a five-year statute of limitations, instead of one. This means that Plaintiffs' attorneys are out looking for clients who suffered no actual injury.
- In recent years, BIPA has been the source of lawsuit abuse. House Republicans have worked in a bipartisan manner to pass reforms over the last few years.
- The Supreme Court has stated that the General Assembly has to weigh in to clarify the law to prevent potential fines like the \$17B for White Castle. This presents a huge weight on our businesses and we need a clear path forward to ensure businesses aren't hurt by this.
- House Republicans have filed multiple bills this session and in previous sessions to narrow the scope of BIPA and protect business owners. BIPA discussions are ongoing. The lack of clarity is a disservice to businesses – the financial burden alone is unsustainable. We know it needs to be fixed, it's just paving that path forward – and getting bipartisan support on it.

# SESSION BRIEF



## TALKING POINTS

### BUDGET OVERVIEW

- Illinois families are still grappling with high inflation. Groceries, utilities, gas, and other living expenses have all gone up. That isn't stopping Illinois Democrats from working to lock Illinois taxpayers into long-term spending commitments for new programs and pet projects.
- There are no more federal pandemic relief funds, and repeated projections from the Governor's Office of Management and Budget and the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability show state revenues are declining.
- Yet once again, the Democrats' budget is spending more money.
- This path is not sustainable, and it's shocking when you consider Democrats are spending more money on health care for undocumented immigrants, their dangerous so-called "SAFE-T" Act, pay raises for themselves and their ever-increasing effort to expand taxpayer-funded abortion.
- Without designated revenue sources to pay for the Democrats' pet projects, Illinois taxpayers will be on the hook for tax hikes, cuts to vital programs, or both. This could mean cuts that harm our most vulnerable populations like seniors, youth in the care of DCFS, and those with disabilities and their caregivers.
- These are taxpayers' dollars, and taxpayers deserve to know that their money is being spent efficiently. While Illinois families are forced to tighten their belts due to inflation, we should not be funding politician pay raises as the Democrats are doing, again. Accountability matters.
- This budget contains no significant structural changes to our spending pressures, like our long-term pension obligations. Nor does it include permanent property tax relief or regulatory relief.
- Republicans came to work. We repeatedly called for reforms to fund our shared priorities and keep government functioning effectively by living within our means.
- House Republicans voted "NO" because they refuse to be a willing accomplices in setting up residents for tax hikes to fund an aggressively liberal agenda.

# SESSION BRIEF



## TALKING POINTS

### THE DEMOCRATS' FY24 BUDGET MISSES THE MARK

**Delivered late, without reforms and full of gimmicks, the Democrats' budget favors new spending over existing promises**

#### Gimmicks and fiscal tricks

- Exploding Medicaid costs handled through fiscal tricks like half-year programs starting in January to shield full-year costs of long-term benefit expansions.
- Local government funding sleight-of-hand that shorts local governments through an IDOR reallocation, shifting \$700 million from PPRT into the General Revenue Fund in FY24.
- Does not include funding for the unknown, but significant, costs of the FY24 AFSCME contract (up to \$300 million).
- FY24 BIMP gives the Governor the ability to transfer up to 8% (traditionally 4%) between line items to help with AFSCME cost increases.
- Plays shell games with General Revenue Fund and COVID costs to hide the actual spend.

#### Perks for politicians

- Pay raises for legislators (\$89,675 base-level salaries per year) Up from \$85,000 for an increase of 5.5%.
- Majority party capital projects using ARPA funds, including \$1.5 billion for operational costs for favored entities and \$1 billion in capital.

#### Missing & shortchanged shared priorities

- Invest in Kids: Economically disadvantaged students will see their scholarships eliminated at the end of the calendar year due to Democrats' inaction on the Invest in Kids scholarship fund.
- Estate Tax: Small farms and businesses will continue to be punished by the state's overly burdensome estate tax.
- R&D Tax Credit: Communities who would stand to benefit from major investment from businesses that are clamoring for a larger R&D tax credit, but you won't find it in the Democrats' budget.
- Developmentally Disabled: The developmentally disabled population and those who have been waiting for years on the PUNS list because there is a staff shortage due to the abysmal pay these workers receive will have to wait even longer. Illinois has been the worst in the nation for helping the developmentally disabled for decades.
- Hospital Rate Increase: Hospitals without a rate increase for 29 years will now only see half of their Medicaid rate request fulfilled for this budget year.

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## TALKING POINTS

### BUDGET/FISCAL POLICY

- Our priority has been to be at the table so we can make positive change. We must also have transparency in our budget and our budget process, AND a responsible budget that keeps spending in check.
- There have already been considerable errors in the budget arena – Due to the increased pressures from the Healthcare Benefits for Immigrant Seniors Program, the State will be required to pay over \$1 billion in GRF in FY24 for these expansions – an \$880 million unexpected increase over FY23 estimates which totaled \$222 million.
- That Medicaid situation is just one example of how even a well-intended program can have unforeseen consequences.
- This is about striking a balance between what we have promised to deliver in our state - and not spending beyond our means (including through new programs).
- We all have wish lists - we want to deliver for families in need and support overburdened taxpayers...but we have limits. House Republicans should be at the table when it comes to budget negotiations and not in the dark about what is happening. Democrats should not pass a last minute, go-it alone budget in the late hours of the night.
- April 18th was Tax Day – the State saw significant downward revisions in FY23 revenue and it was only after the Illinois Department of Revenue indicated they were reallocating important PPRT funding from local governments into the state coffers that the FY24 revenue estimate was held flat. But make no mistake, Illinois is entering into a recession and the days of free money from the feds and revenue over-performance have passed. This FY24 budget will put continued cost pressure on FY25, which will result in cuts to services or a tax increase.

### **In addition, the following issues are being under-prioritized by the Governor's Administration:**

- Burdensome regulations on small business.
- Ever-growing reach of prevailing wage mandates into the private sector.
- Poor investment climate generated by the creation of new programs demanded by caucuses within the General Assembly Democrats.
- Threats to Illinois infrastructure spending generated by the ever-growing cash gap posted by Illinois public transit system .

# SESSION BRIEF



## TALKING POINTS

### BUDGET/EOS POSITIONING

#### Budget gimmicks

- Despite what the Governor and Democrat Leaders told everyone, this budget is loaded with gimmicks.
- Defers \$300 million in costs associated with the Medicaid Working Group Omnibus Bill by implementing the changes halfway through the fiscal year.
- Includes \$550 million in funding for undocumented immigrants, which is a \$550 million shortfall compared to current law estimates showing an over \$1 billion liability for the program.
- Medicaid omnibus contains a provision that allows the Governor to propose unchecked emergency rules for two years.
- It is undetermined how he will achieve \$550 million in savings, but taxpayers and ratings agencies are expected to trust that he will find the savings to balance the budget.
- Does not include appropriations increases to pay for the new upcoming AFSCME contract that will be in effect in FY24 - unknown fiscal impact, but potentially \$200-\$300 million.
- FY24 BIMP gives the Governor the ability to transfer up to 8% (traditionally 4%) between line items to help with AFSCME cost increases
- Failed attempt to balance the budget on the backs of local governments through an IDOR reallocation that shifts \$700 million from PPRT into the General Revenue Fund in FY24.
- FY24 passed the Senate chamber without clear guidance on what the revenue estimate vs. the spending.
- It seems as though the revenue cited in the Senate (\$50.744 billion) vs the spending cited (\$50.468 billion) doesn't include the near \$2 billion in GRF transfers into other State funds that are authorized in the BIMP.

#### Democrat spending

- Includes legislative pay raises, with specific salary appropriations per member of \$89,675 (increased from \$85,000 in FY23).
- Maintains hundreds of millions of GRF Democrat pork projects and adds millions more in areas like such as the SAFE-T Act, violence prevention, and direct rants to units of local government and non-for profits in their districts.
- Continues the tradition of funding Democrat pork projects using ARPA funds, including \$1.5 billion for operational costs for favored entities and \$1 billion in capital driven into Democrat districts.



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## TALKING POINTS

- Funds the brand new programs, such as the Governor's Home Illinois and Smart Start Program despite the fact that we are facing a failure in revenue.
- Contains \$150+ million in brand new capital for Democrats using Build Illinois Bond Funds that is not part of the bipartisan capital agreement that created the revenue to fund the Rebuild Illinois Capital Program.

### The winners this year

- People who live and stand to benefit from the goodies that Democrats are bringing home to their districts.
- Democrats who created an out of control Medicaid program for undocumented workers but refuse to fix their mess in statute and instead are abdicating that responsibility to the Governor through an unheard of expansion of emergency rulemaking authority.
- Pensioners who have seen their benefits increase.
- Companies pushing green energy policies on the state at the expense of Illinoisans.
- Safety Net Hospitals and other non-for-profits serving Democrat districts.

### The losers this year

- Anyone who just saw their budget requests pushed to the back of the line so Democrats can fund their own pet projects and continue to fund an ill-conceived and poorly implemented healthcare program for undocumented workers which has seen runaway costs with no relief in sight.
- The developmentally disabled population and those who have been waiting for years on the PUNS list because there is a staff shortage due to the abysmal pay these workers receive.
- Hospitals that have been without a rate increase for 29 years, and now will only see half of the request come to fruition.
- The taxpayers in Illinois - This budget sets Illinoisans up for a major tax increase by adding major programmatic spending and hiding those costs in future fiscal years.
- A recession will hit the Illinois budget hard, and if this year proves anything, it is that Democrats will not cut spending. The tax increases are coming.
- Economically disadvantaged students who are going to see their scholarships eliminated at the end of the calendar year due to Democrats total inaction on the Invest in Kids Act.
- Those who live in crime-ridden areas of the state, who continue to suffer and live in fear as Democrats continue to ignore victims and further enact policies that incentivize crime and reward bad behavior.
- Small farms and businesses who continue to be punished by the state's overly burdensome estate tax.

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## TALKING POINTS

- Communities who would stand to benefit from major investment from businesses that are clamoring for a larger R&D tax credit.
- Communities that suffer from runaway energy costs due to CEJA.
- All of these favored programs by Democrats come at the expense of the most vulnerable.
- If there is extra money laying around, or if Democrats are willing to use gimmicks to fund budget items, then shouldn't we be providing much needed relief to our most vulnerable population groups like the Developmentally Disabled?

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## TALKING POINTS

### CHICAGO SCHOOL BOARD REDISTRICTING

- It's déjà vu all over again.
- Back in 2021, we witnessed a partisan map-making process that disingenuously checked boxes instead of collecting real input from community groups, echoed in a judicial subcircuit remap in January 2022. Feedback from both were rushed and lacked opportunities for witnesses to prepare and meaningfully testify.
- Now, in 2023, the General Assembly is working on a map for an elected Chicago School Board. With lackluster notice, a subject matter hearing was called with less than 24 hours for witnesses to prepare on a second map dropped at the last minute.
- We have had over a year to debate these maps and include witnesses and community advocates in this redistricting process. Yet once again, we have a rushed process with poor notification, a lack of transparency, questions about implementation, and a repeat of the usual “we’ll get back to you on that” when asking critical questions about this important measure.
- This is happening while witnesses and people who will live and send their children to school in these communities are voicing their concerns that the second map breaks up communities, and that they don’t feel listened to by their own elected officials.
- Constituents are bringing up critical points of how these maps do not reflect the racial diversity of Chicago Public Schools districts and disenfranchise voters. We need to include the people we serve in these mapmaking processes, not rush drafts through the legislature when we’re in the final days and overtime of session and quickly approaching a July 1st deadline.
- It doesn’t have to be this way. We need fair maps in Illinois that truly incorporate the input of the people who will live in these communities and who entrusted us to serve them in Springfield.

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## TALKING POINTS

### COMED FOUR GUILTY VERDICT AND HOW WE GOT HERE

- After 27 hours of deliberation, the jury reached a guilty verdict on all four counts in the ‘ComEd Four’ trial on May 2, 2023.
- The defendants found guilty of bribery conspiracy and falsification of business records include former ComEd contract lobbyist Michael McClain, a longtime Madigan confidant; former ComEd CEO Anne Pramaggiore; ex-ComEd executive John Hooker; and Jay Doherty, who worked as a lobbyist for ComEd for 30 years.
- The ‘ComEd Four’ guilty verdict on all counts has been decades in the making.
- This guilty verdict spells bad news for former House Speaker Mike Madigan as his connection to the ‘ComEd Four’ was clearly visible in this trial.
- Juror Amanda Schnitker Sayers told reporters the panel was well aware of Madigan’s stature in the case. “I don’t want to speak for the whole jury about Madigan — we tried not to discuss him as far as outside of this case. But his involvement with this case of course was key, and our perception was that he really did cause this all to happen. If it wouldn’t have been for him then these people would not be in the position...to commit the crimes in the first place.”
- Madigan invented this corrupt culture during the 50 years he served in the Illinois House of Representatives, especially during his 36 years as Speaker of the Illinois House.
- The guilty verdict proves what Republicans have been saying for years – Illinois needs real ethics reform.
- In fact, on August 31, 2020, House Republicans petitioned the Speaker’s office to invoke House Rule 91 to create a Special Investigating Committee to consider whether or not the House of Representatives should take disciplinary action against then House Speaker Mike Madigan.
- House Republicans demanded answers to serious questions involving Speaker Madigan and the Deferred Prosecution Agreement that implicated Madigan in a bribery scheme now known as the ‘ComEd Four’ trial.
- On December 14, 2020, House Democrats, including Speaker Welch, ended the Special Investigating Committee by voting against the charges against Madigan.
- Speaker Welch, Chair of the Special Investigating Committee, said on December 14, 2020 that Republicans instigated the House investigation as an act of political theater. “It’s a stunt. It’s a joke. And that joke ends today.”
- Throughout Madigan’s tenure in the House, Republicans have long been pushing for stronger anti-corruption reforms.
- With Madigan’s corruption trial up next, how many more lobbyists and politicians need to go to jail before the Democrat majority will work with Republicans to enact stronger ethics reform laws to enhance penalties and help stop corruption?

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## TALKING POINTS

- Even more disturbing is the fact that not a single bill to enact stronger anti-corruption reforms has been voted on by the House Ethics and Elections Committee.
- For 36 years Madigan developed and mastered his arts and craft in corruption.
- During Madigan's 36 years as Speaker of the House, he gave himself the power to decide the fate of all 118 lawmakers' legislation moving in the House of Representatives.
- The House Rules were Madigan's corruption tool used to pass or fail a Representative's legislation.
- Since Madigan was ousted as Speaker of the House in 2021, his corruption tool, which serves as the official House Rules, is alive and well and still used as a step-by-step guide for the House Democrat majority.
- It's time to tear down the corruption built by Madigan for 50 years and start fresh with stronger anti-corruption laws new laws and fair and equitable House Rules.

### What Must Be Done? Here's a Start...

- A complete overhaul of the House Rules to allow all 118 lawmakers in the House a chance to have their legislation called for a vote in committee.
- Prohibit loopholes that allow lawmakers to serve as lobbyists.
- Provide the Legislative Inspector General with the authority to issue subpoenas to investigate allegations of corruption toward lawmakers.
- Send a strong message to lobbyists and politicians that corruption will not be tolerated by increasing penalties and fines.

### 2023 Proposed Rules Changes

Ensuring good legislation receives a fair shake:

- Discharging bills from the House Rules - If a bill has at least five co-sponsors from each party, then the bill shall get a vote in a substantive House committee. A bill that has significant bi-partisan support should at least get an opportunity to receive a vote in committee.
- To suspend any House Rule, there must be a 3/5 vote in favor of suspending the Rules.
- Equal time for testimony for all witnesses. No set time minimum, but each witness shall be granted the same amount of time. Should the committee wish to allow for unequal time, a 3/5 vote of the committee is required.
- Revise the Rule limiting chairpersons and spokespersons to those in their third terms to allow for members in their second terms to be eligible under certain circumstances. If a member is required to be a chairperson or spokesperson for three or more committees, then the leader of that caucus may appoint a member in their second term to be a chairperson or spokesperson of a committee.



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## TALKING POINTS

### ELECTIONS

#### SB 2123 – Elections Omnibus Talking Points

- After the severe and unconstitutional gerrymandering of legislative and judicial maps following the last US Census, Illinois Democrats have lost all credibility when it comes to reforming our elections.
- Democrats have no problem changing the rules midstream when they don't like the outcome. We saw it when they created judicial sub-circuits to draw seats for individual people connected to influential politicians, and we're seeing it in other legislative efforts by Democrats. If they don't like the outcome, they just change the rules.
- Ranked-choice voting is a flawed and failed system that leads to people questioning the legitimacy of the elections that they vote in. That has a chilling effect on Americans going to the polls.
- Democrats in Illinois are hell-bent on getting minors and illegal immigrants the right to vote in our elections. This session, legislation has passed that would grant illegal immigrants real driver's licenses despite their illegal status. In this elections bill, Democrats are "Pre-registering" 16-year-old kids to vote. These two measures represent the kind of slippery slopes that further undermines the public's trust in our elections.
- Vote by mail is a good thing, and we support it. What we do not support, however, is the mass mailing of ballots to voters that did not request them.
- This legislation establishes General Election Day as a state holiday. That means our schools will be closed on Election Day. That is not necessarily a bad thing, as many schools serve as polling places. However, the bill does not allow for that day of learning to be made up. Students are already behind in Illinois, and Democrats are offering no plan to help them catch up.

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## TALKING POINTS

### ETHICS

- Illinois is plagued with corruption and the recent ‘ComEd Four’ verdict tied to former House Speaker Mike Madigan reaffirms what has been wrong with our state government for decades and further proves why we shouldn’t provide a perk to lawmakers indicted for corruption.
- “Bad behavior doesn’t strike once...” (words from ComEd jury member).
- We are in the minority in the House, we are constantly reminded of that...but we will always stand for what’s right, and call out a problem when we see it. Why aren’t these fixes to our ethics laws being enacted?
- There is no more transformational change we can make to the State Government in Illinois, than enacting stronger ethics reforms and returning mapmaking to the people. Despite numerous Illinois legislators being indicted or imprisoned on corruption charges since 2019, Illinois lags behind other states in enacting meaningful reforms that would eliminate conflicts of interest and empower the Legislative Inspector General. The Ethics and Elections Committee is a great opportunity for ethics bills to be reviewed, to begin the process of changing our laws for the better...but nothing was done other than another election expansion bill.
- Ethics reform should be transparent, open and clear. We’ve seen before how well backroom deals work out (“fair” map). The push for ethics reform can’t be in the dark of night; we need to hear from advocates, good government groups, and the public. Ethics can and should be a bipartisan issue.

#### **We have countless examples of conflicts of interests, here are a few:**

- Welch punishes disruption in his caucus, but covers up corruption.
- Pritzker’s blind trust, built on profits of managed care.
- Welch and the SIC.
- Hernandez/SIC and the Fair Map - now chair of DPI.

Illinois’ reputation for public corruption is sadly well-earned. But, our state’s reputation is not beyond saving. It can be rebuilt.

#### **House Republicans have long advocated for sweeping corruption and ethics reform:**

- We believe legislators shouldn’t be lobbyists.
- We believe in halting the revolving door.
- We believe in ending pay-to-play politics. We believe in public service over self-interest.
- We believe in empowering the Legislative Inspector General with subpoena powers, so that the office may perform thorough corruption investigations and root out bad behavior.

These principles have guided our legislative agenda for years, and are more important now than ever.

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## TALKING POINTS

### Transparency:

- For all bills that will cost the State money, there shall be a mandatory 24-hour waiting period after the bill or amendment is posted before the chamber may vote on the legislation. In cases like the State budget, the general public should have at least 24 hours to review the bill or amendment after it is filed before we take a vote on the bill.
- To rule a fiscal note, or state mandate note, or other note inapplicable, a 3/5 vote is required.
- When there is a “gut and replace” amendment to a bill that is substantive in nature or changes the subject of the bill entirely, the principal sponsor shall confirm with each co-sponsor that they wish to remain as co-sponsors of the bill.
- All measures out of committee are granted unlimited debate unless 3/5 of the committee members vote to change the debate status for the House floor.
- All amendments filed to a bill shall receive a recorded vote.
- Revisions to the consent calendar – limit the number of bills that may be on the daily consent calendar to 20-30 per day, down from the current limit of 80. The reduced amount will ensure that members can review all the bills on the consent calendar before passage and are able to change their vote in the allotted time. In addition, the provision in Rule 42 requiring a motion be adopted by the committee to place a bill on the consent calendar should be enforced.

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## TALKING POINTS

### EXPANSION OF HEALTHCARE BENEFITS FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

- Over the past four years, Democrats have continuously expanded a healthcare program for undocumented immigrants. Each time slipping the expanded use of taxpayer dollars for the program in the budget at the last minute to avoid public debate.
- Now they're doing it again in this budget. This is despite an analysis by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) that shows estimated costs for this year have nearly doubled from an estimated \$220 million to over \$400 million.
- New estimates say this program, in its current form that only covers undocumented immigrants 42 and older, will cost more than \$1.1 billion dollars for the coming fiscal year.

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## TALKING POINTS

### LEGISLATOR PAY RAISE

- In January, late on a Friday night when Illinois taxpayers wouldn't notice, Democrats gave themselves a 16% pay raise.
- This takes the salary for being a part-time legislator to \$85,000 annually (not including leadership or committee stipends). That's \$12,000 more than the average household income in Illinois.
- Inflation is still high and families across the state are struggling to make ends meet.
- So what have Democrats put in the State budget this year? That's right, they've given themselves another pay raise.
- It's a disgrace, and all Illinoisans deserve better from their government.



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## TALKING POINTS

### PROPERTY TAXES

- According to a Wallet Hub study released on February 21, 2023, Illinois has the second-highest property tax burden in the country.
- Illinois has a statewide 2.23% property tax rate burden when all 102 counties are combined.
- The facts are clear, Illinoisans have one of the highest overall tax burdens – largely due to out-of-control property tax rates.
- Yet, as families struggle to make ends meet, the majority party has done nothing to address high property taxes. Instead, they focus on adding social programs to our General Revenue liabilities while failing to properly fund education and local governments as promised in the state constitution.
- Numerous proposals from House Republicans would freeze, suspend, or outright reduce property taxes, various sales taxes, income taxes, and fuel taxes throughout this General Assembly.
- Democrats have refused to call these property tax relief proposals for a vote. Instead, they focused their energy on bills that would increase taxes on Illinois families or only provide temporary tax relief that expired after the November election.
- Most of our communities deal with annual increases to the local property tax burdens on hardworking Illinoisans because the State is not paying its share of local education expenses. House Republicans continue to call out the majority party to fulfill these promises to our kids instead of putting the state down a rabbit hole of never ending spending and impossible financial burdens for working families.
- Illinois does not have a revenue problem, but rather our state leaders have a serious spending addiction.
- We have to stop promising our citizens fiscal responsibility when the average family is being bombarded by record high inflation, energy costs, state taxes, and ever rising property tax rates.
- Illinois Democrats claim they care about working families, but their disastrous fiscal malfeasance is the main culprit to our rising property tax burdens each fiscal year.
- Our property taxes in Illinois are so out of control in some areas of the state that families are making the equivalent of two mortgage payments just to enjoy their own home.
- House Republicans stand ready and willing to work through the budget line by line and promote sustainable spending priorities that ensures our citizens see an end to the never-ending property tax burden placed on our households.
- The people of Illinois need property tax relief now, not tomorrow. They demand property tax relief today!

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## TALKING POINTS



### SAFE-T ACT/CRIME

- Democrats have repeatedly tried to claim their so-called “SAFE-T” Act, and their approach to criminal justice reform, would make Illinois safer and save taxpayer dollars.
- That could not be any further from the truth.
- Illinois still has one of the highest murder rates in the country, and criminals are so emboldened they commit violent crimes in broad daylight.
- This consequence-free, no-cash bail approach will put criminals and repeat offenders back on the street, sometimes within hours of their last criminal act.
- Costs have risen dramatically at the state and local level, all while putting more pressure on an overburdened and demoralized police force.
- Unfunded mandates are driving up costs as our dedicated law enforcement officers try to manage the requirements of the SAFE-T Act, and courts are forced to turn to taxpayers to foot the bill.
- Meanwhile, Democrats continue to shortchange our communities for these egregious cost increases and reject calls to restore full funding for local governments through the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF).
- What do the citizens of Illinois get? Increasing costs and less safe communities.
- Our citizens deserve safe communities and neighborhoods where they can live, work, play and raise their families without fear.

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## TALKING POINTS

### SECOND AMENDMENT

#### Firearms and magazine ban details – Public Act 102-1116

- The original firearms ban legislation was filed on December 1, 2022. There were three hearings, all in Chicago on December 12th, 15th, and 20th.
- On Jan. 5, 2023, the original firearms ban legislation was changed from HB 5855 to SB 2226.
- On Jan. 6, 2023, SB 2226 passed the House. Over the course of two days, five different amendments were filed before HB 5471 passed the Senate. On January 10th, the House passed the firearms ban contained in HB 5471 and the Governor signed the bill.
- What is the effect of the firearms and magazine ban?
- Immediately bans the manufacture, delivery, sale, importation, or purchase of certain firearms and firearms attachments, .50 caliber rifles, and .50 caliber cartridges.
- Immediately bans the manufacture, delivery, sale, or purchase of magazines capable of holding more than 10 rounds for long guns and 15 rounds for handguns.
- Bans the sale, manufacture or transfer of certain semi-automatic rifles, semi-automatic pistols, and semi-automatic shotguns that contain certain equipment (i.e. switches, pistol grips on semi-auto rifles, .50 caliber rifles, and .50 caliber cartridges)
- Long guns have a limit of 10 rounds per magazine and handguns are not be allowed to have more than 15 rounds of ammunition.
- Bans “switches”.
- Extends the duration of firearm restraining orders from 6 months to 1 year.
- Requires existing owners of semi-automatic rifles to register firearm serial numbers.
- Codifies the Illinois State Police’s internet-based system for reporting stolen firearms.
- Requires certain gun transfers taking place after July 1, 2023 to be filed with a federally licensed firearms dealer and extends the record-keeping time for firearms dealers from 10 to 20 years.
- Multiple state and federal lawsuits were filed by individuals, by the National Rifle Association, Illinois State Rifle Association and other firearm groups and dealers to stop the implementation of the law.
- There have been several consolidations of the lawsuits as they have moved through the legal system.
- The ban is now in effect as to the purchase or guns or magazines as it was signed by the Governor on the final day of the Lam Duck Session (January 10, 2023).

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## TALKING POINTS

### Firearm and magazine ban talking points

- From the beginning of Illinois Democrats' efforts to pass sweeping legislation seeking to ban a multitude of weapons in common use for personal protection, House Republicans argued the legislation was unconstitutional.
- If they truly wish to tackle the rising tide of gun violence in our state, Illinois Democrats would be well served to end their continuous assault on the Constitutional Rights of law-abiding citizens and focus on enforcing laws that are already on the books, prosecute criminals to the fullest extent of the law, stop their defund the police movement, and halt their never-ending attacks on our law enforcement officers.
- House Republicans stood with law-abiding gun owners from the beginning of this rushed and flawed attempt to unconstitutionally restrict the rights of our citizens to exercise their God-given rights to protect themselves, their families, and their property.
- Law-abiding citizens who wish to exercise their constitutional right to own and operate a firearm for personal protection, sporting and hunting, and for the protection of themselves and their families and property have been unfairly targeted by Illinois Democrats with extra burdens and costs.
- The Constitution of the United States is the Supreme law of the land. We firmly believe that the recently passed firearms ban is unconstitutional.
- The Governor and Democrats in the State of Illinois would do better by the people of this state to stop passing laws that are easy on criminals and tough on law-abiding citizens.
- This gun ban will do nothing to stop criminals from committing crimes, but it will turn innocent, law-abiding citizens into criminals.
- Gun bans like this do nothing to take illegal guns off of the street. Gun bans like this do nothing to improve public safety.
- Banning guns, banning standard capacity magazines, banning commonly used devices, even those many with disabilities rely on to shoot safely, creating gun registries, and making criminals out of law-abiding citizens does nothing to address the growing mental health crisis in our state and nation.
- Challenges like this to the Second Amendment Rights of our citizens have failed time and time again because the right to bear arms is central to the founding of the United States of America and to the preservation of the Republic.

### Firearms and magazine ban timeline

December 1, 2022 – HB 5855 filed in the Illinois House

December 12, December 15, December 20 of 2022 – House Judiciary Criminal Law Committee Subject Matter Hearings held in Chicago

January 4, 2023 – 2023 Lame Duck Session begins

# SESSION BRIEF



## TALKING POINTS

January 5, 2023 - HB 5855 becomes SB 2226. SB 2226 is amended to include firearms ban language.

January 6, 2023 – SB 2226 passes the Illinois House 64-43 and heads to Illinois Senate.

January 9, 2023 – Senate President files five amendments to HB 5471.

Senate passes HB 5471 34-20.

January 10, 2023 – Illinois House passes HB 5471 as amended. Governor signs HB 5471.

TOTAL TIME LAPSE TO INTRODUCE AND PASS FIREARMS BAN – 41 days.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **If I currently own a gun that is now banned, what does this law say that I must do?**

Beginning January 1, 2024, it is unlawful for someone to knowingly possess certain semi-automatic firearms or firearms attachments, .50 caliber rifle, or .50 caliber cartridge unless the person registers each weapon's make, model, caliber, and serial number with Illinois State Police on a form they will provide.

Also starting on January 1, 2024, someone who has registered their weapon can transfer the weapon only to an heir, an individual residing in another state maintaining it in another state, or a dealer licensed as a federal firearms dealer under Section 923 of the federal Gun Control Act of 1968.

#### **What happens if I don't register my firearm prior to the deadline?**

If you get caught in possession of an unregistered assault weapon or .50 caliber rifle after the deadline it is a Class A misdemeanor for the first offense and a Class 3 felony for subsequent offenses.

#### **Who is exempt from this law? If I meet the exemption requirements, does that mean I can still purchase these firearms in Illinois?**

Peace officers, qualified law enforcement officers, and qualified retired law enforcement officers.

Federal, State, or local law enforcement agency for the purpose of equipping the agency's peace officers.

Wardens, superintendents, and keepers of prisons, penitentiaries, jails, and other criminal detention institutions.

Active duty (or traveling to or from active duty) members of the Armed Services or Reserve Forces of the United States or the Illinois National Guard.



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## TALKING POINTS

Any company that employs armed security officers in Illinois at a nuclear energy, storage, weapons, or development site or facility regulated by the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission and any person employed as an armed security force member at these installations while performing official duties.

Licensed private security firms, contractors, and private security officers while performing official duties.

# SESSION BRIEF



## TALKING POINTS

### TAX HOLIDAYS SUNSET AND THE IMPACT ON TAXPAYERS

The expiration of the one-year sales tax holiday for groceries will mean over \$400 million more in sales taxes will be spent by working families still suffering under high inflation. The sunset of the back-to-school sales tax holiday to cover certain school supplies and clothing will mean an additional \$30 million hit to sales taxpayers. This will mean families are hit with an approximately \$430 million tax hike due to Democrats' failures to renew relief, largely because of new spending pressures for undocumented immigrant healthcare "crowding out" sales tax relief for hardworking families.

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### ACRONYMS:

CGFA:	Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
DCEO:	Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
DCFS:	Department of Children and Family Services
DHS:	Department of Human Services
GOMB:	Governor's Office of Management and Budget
GRF:	General Revenue Fund
HFS:	Department of Healthcare and Family Services
IDES:	Illinois Department of Employment Security
IDOR:	Illinois Department of Revenue
IDPH:	Illinois Department of Public Health
IEMA:	Illinois Emergency Management Agency
ISBE:	Illinois State Board of Education
TRO:	Temporary Restraining Order
TRS:	Teachers Retirement System

## AGRICULTURE

### March - Illinois counties lead the U.S. in corn and soybean production

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has reported the final numbers for crop year 2022. According to the USDA, the **top eleven U.S. counties** for soybean yield per acre were all in Illinois when measured on a county-by-county basis. In central Illinois' Piatt County, farmers brought in 74.2 bushels of beans per acre. Other high-ranking soybean yield counties, headed by Macon and Sangamon, are also located in Central Illinois.

With regards to Illinois' 2022 corn crop, Illinois counties took America's #1 through #5 honors in terms of total production in bushels. With 71 million bushels of corn produced, McLean County grew more corn than any other county in the 50 states. The nation's top-five corn list also included Iroquois, Livingston and LaSalle counties, and was rounded out by Champaign County.

In terms of statewide figures, Illinois was #1 among the 50 states in total soybeans grown and was #2 to longtime rival Iowa in total corn production.

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### BUDGET

#### January - “Closing fund” bill approved by both chambers

Sought by the Pritzker administration and by facets of the business community, the measure will create an unencumbered fund that can be used in the closing stage of negotiations between the state and business firms that are considering Illinois as a location for major job-creating investment. Proponents say that the measure is an essential element in the fight to get additional electric vehicle manufacturing in Illinois.

Creation of the closing fund, a key piece of the new Invest in Illinois Act, followed creation of similar funds in Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, and other states. The state government of Michigan has already begun to use its closing fund to draw investment in electric vehicle assembly and battery manufacturing to its state. The closing fund could also be used for other strategic initiatives and investments. [The Invest in Illinois Act](#) was approved in the House on January 10, by a vote of 86-23-0. Republicans objected to a provision granting the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate exclusive participation in the closing fund agreement process, while excluding the Republican Minority Leaders from the process.

#### January - Fiscal Year 2023 Supplemental Budget approved

[House Bill 969](#), approved on the final day of the lame-duck session, contains the FY23 Supplemental Budget and appropriates approximately \$510 million in GRF.

The FY23 Supplemental Budget appropriates \$500 million in GRF to DCEO for the Invest in Illinois Program. It specifies which entities shall receive \$45 million in previously appropriated GRF funding for violence prevention, community development and operational expenses. To deal with a flood of undocumented immigrants/asylum seekers, it appropriates \$115 million in GRF (rather than \$25 million) to DHS for grants to Illinois Welcoming Centers and \$20 million in GRF to the City of Chicago for costs associated with asylum seekers. The FY23 Supplemental appropriates an additional \$3.12 billion (\$196 million in GRF) for healthcare and MCO costs intended to maximize federal Medicaid matching funds.

#### January - CGFA publishes revenue report for December 2022

The final month of the 2022 calendar year saw a sharp slowdown in revenue trends tracked by CGFA. The General Assembly’s revenue and economic forecasting watchdog office has been looking at tax revenues reported by IDOR and other agencies, particularly income tax revenues and sales tax revenues. While these revenue trends had been sharply positive for Illinois earlier in calendar year 2022, the upward spike in worldwide interest rates had led to projections that these growth trends might soon come to a screeching halt.

In December 2022, [revenue numbers](#) showed that this standstill had come to Illinois. Although two of Illinois’ key cash flow lines, personal income tax payments and sales tax receipts, had increased sharply earlier in 2022, in December 2022 the cash flow growth in these two category lines dropped to zero. These two lines generated \$3.2 billion in cash flow for the state in December 2022, identical to the year-earlier figure. The zeroing-out of this prior growth trend was a strong indicator of

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approaching trouble ahead for Illinois' public-sector cash flow and overall economy in calendar year 2023.

Positive state revenue numbers were maintained by strong upward movement in two historically smaller money categories, federal-source income (up \$311 million in December 2022, year over year) and corporate income tax payments (up \$223 million). By the time Fiscal Year 2024 starts on July 1, 2023, Illinois' economic conditions may be dimmer than they were in January. Trends in federal payments and corporate income tax cash flow were not reassuring. Springfield does not control the federal laws that pay money to the state, and corporate income tax payments are closely tied to specific economic sectors – headed by energy-delivering public utility companies – that pay more income taxes when the prices of energy commodities are moving up. Costlier electricity, natural gas, and propane means less free capital for Illinois consumers and businesses to make purchases and hire additional workers.

### **January - Hammond & Elik named heads of House Republican budget team**

House Republican Leader Tony McCombie announced the **House Republicans' budget team** on January 27, naming Deputy Leader Norine Hammond as Chief Budgeteer for the caucus for the 103rd General Assembly as well as announcing that Rep. Amy Elik will be elevated to Deputy Budgeteer.

"I am pleased that Deputy Leader Norine Hammond has accepted my appointment as Chief Budgeteer. Her in-depth experience in appropriations and policy makes her the perfect candidate for this important role," said House Republican Leader McCombie. "I have no doubt that she will work tirelessly to ensure that the budget benefits all citizens of Illinois and I look forward to the positive impact her input will have on the state. Furthermore, her dedication to serving the people of Illinois ensures that their needs and concerns will be considered in the budgeting process."

As a member of the Higher Education Committee, Hammond has worked for increased funding for universities and community colleges throughout Illinois. She has successfully passed legislation to tackle the teacher shortage; keep Illinois students attending Illinois colleges and universities; and fairly fund public K-12 education. She has also been a strong advocate for procurement reform and other cost-cutting measures which keep dollars focused on strategic goals instead of overhead and administrative costs.

"Rep. Amy Elik has spent the past twenty-eight years working as a Certified Public Accountant and auditor for businesses and government bodies. She is a valuable voice for sensible fiscal management and good government budgeting practices within our caucus. Rep. Elik will provide critical support to the process and to Deputy Leader Hammond in improving the most important piece of legislation to come out of the State House annually," House Republican Leader McCombie continued.

Rep. Elik has previously served on the House Republican budget team, the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability, and other relevant financial committees which have prepared her to take on this role in the budget process.



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### February - House Republican Leader McCombie & House Republican budget team call for bipartisan budget process

At a [press conference](#) in Springfield, House Republican Leader McCombie was joined by members of her newly appointed budget team to call on Democrats to engage in a truly bipartisan budget process and bring reform to the most important legislation passed at the Capitol each year.

“Many people say Republicans want to vote no. That preconceived notion is false,” said House Republican Leader McCombie. “House Republicans are here to govern. We are here to give solutions. We want to help and are willing to share our ideas that address the budget shortcomings and provide tax reform policies that Illinois taxpayers and job creators need to stay in Illinois and need to grow in Illinois.

“The budget process should not be so difficult and it should be bipartisan,” McCombie continued. “The budget bills do not need to come forward in the final hours of the session with little or no Republican input. And, certainly, the budget should not be used as a political football year after year.”

#### The caucus’ primary budget reform ideas include:

- Adopting a revenue estimate and budget based off that revenue estimate.
- Holding REAL, meaningful budget hearings which respect minority voices and provide for public input and transparency.
- Requiring balanced budgets.
- Restoring quarterly bipartisan briefings by the Governor’s administration to the bipartisan Legislative Budget Oversight Commission. These briefings were eliminated last spring after Republicans asked tough questions about how the administration was spending COVID relief funds.
- Respecting the voters’ decision to overwhelmingly reject the Graduated Income Tax Hike.
- Give taxpayers REAL Tax Reform - eliminate the franchise tax on employers, provide property tax relief for families and businesses, and reduce the harmful impacts of the estate tax on family farms.
- Finally, returning excess income tax collections to taxpayers instead of sweeping it to be used to fund things like politician pay raises.

“As a Certified Public Accountant, I know firsthand the importance of good budgeting practices and accountability,” said Deputy Budgeteer Elik. “With inflation seriously impacting every families’ household budget, our constituents rely on their elected representatives to enact a state budget that is responsible, balanced and transparent, without gimmicks and shell games, so that state taxes and fees do not cause even greater financial hardships than they are already facing.”

Joining House Republican Leader McCombie and the budget team were Reps. Martin McLaughlin and Travis Weaver. McLaughlin and Weaver bring a wealth of experience in the financial sector. Both

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cited the need for the state budget to adhere to essential budgeting principles that take into account long-term realities to improve the state's fiscal position without reliance on federal bailouts or tax increases.

### February - CGFA reports on state budget receipts for January 2023

CGFA saw a sharp slowdown in personal income tax receipts in the first month of calendar year 2023, with this key state income line dropping \$566 million from year-earlier levels. Most of this change was attributed to a revision in the January 2022 income tax payment schedule, which was implemented by many Illinois partnerships and other taxpayers in such a way as to swell monies paid in taxes in that month. However, continuing economic storm clouds on the horizon, associated with rising U.S. interest rates and workforce layoffs, could threaten state income tax receipts during the remainder of FY23 (ending June 30, 2023).

**The CGFA report** noted a major January uptick, \$987 million, in money coming in from the Income Tax Refund Fund and not spent in giving tax refunds to taxpayers. This is a one-time-only revenue source that cannot be counted on in any future month. House Republicans continue to point out that the current string of state budgets under Gov. Pritzker are based upon short-term and one-time revenue sources such as this one. Real fiscal reform continues to be necessary if the state is to begin to live within its means.

CGFA staff once again asked lawmakers to pay attention to the significant rates of growth notched by video gaming, casino gaming and other industries connected with gambling. The state tax receipts from video gaming, which are deposited in funds that support roads, bridges and other capital infrastructure, are approaching \$1 billion a year. The House will respond to this trend in the first full week of February by organizing its first-ever Gaming Committee. This Committee will increase the legislative scrutiny imposed on the increasingly profitable gambling infrastructure of Illinois.

### February - Budget Address/State of the State preview

Gov. Pritzker was set to deliver his annual Budget Address/State of the State speech to a joint session of the General Assembly on February 15.

Pritzker will unveil his proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2024. In public statements early in the year, the governor proposed massive expansions of state programs, which would require significant new spending to achieve. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, state spending greatly increased with the influx of federal relief funds. With these short-term revenue sources about to disappear, the well has run dry. If Democrats continue to increase spending for new or expanded programs, taxpayers will be on the hook for the Democrats' spending spree.

The Constitution directs the General Assembly to enact a budget in which "proposed expenditures shall not exceed funds estimated to be available for the fiscal year as shown in the budget." Democrats have often fudged or ignored the language that mandates them to enact a balanced budget. This is often done by passing a **late-night budget**, where appropriations bills suddenly appear in the middle of the final night of session, with no opportunity for legislators or the general public to review the budget.

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## YEAR IN REVIEW

House Republicans are again calling for the General Assembly to adopt and stick to a proper revenue estimate, as required by the Constitution. House Republican Leader McCombie and her budget team are committed to a budget process that is open, transparent, and accountable to hardworking Illinois families.

### February - House Republicans react to Gov. Pritzker's budget plan

Gov. Pritzker delivered his annual State of the State and Budget Address to a joint session of the General Assembly in Springfield on February 15.

The Governor's introduced Fiscal Year 2024 budget includes a \$49.64 billion proposed spending plan, which is a net \$2.75 billion increase over FY23 and represents a 7.9% spending increase.

Despite Gov. Pritzker's rosy outlook and new program proposals, House Republicans remained skeptical about Pritzker's large spending hike and expressed concerns about declining revenues.

"Today we heard a long list of expensive promises totaling \$2.7 billion in new spending, when the Governor himself projects revenue to be down \$1.42 billion. This will require future tax increases or cuts to vital programs serving our most vulnerable," said House Republican Leader McCombie.

Deputy Republican Leader Norine Hammond, the House Republican Caucus' chief budget negotiator, echoed House Republican Leader McCombie's concerns about the Governor's budget plan.

"Some of the Governor's proposals are laudable initiatives, but we have to be cognizant of what the state can afford to continue to fund year after year," Hammond said. "Once new programs or program expansions are built into the base, it will become difficult to meet that baseline spending in later years, when revenues are estimated to decline."

Rep. Amy Elik, the Caucus' deputy budgeteer, discussed the flawed budget process.

"Illinois' budgeting process over the past four years has been conducted behind closed doors and filled with broken promises. This year I want to see a process that is transparent. Now that a budget has been proposed by the Governor, I will work with my colleagues to advocate for a budget that is balanced without any tax increases."

### February - Illinois' credit rating upgraded from worst to tied for worst

Illinois' credit rating got upgraded from worst in the country to tying with New Jersey for the worst. For a seventh time in two years, Illinois' credit rating was increased in late February with the announcement from S&P Global ratings.

"The upgrade on the [general obligation] debt reflects our view that Illinois' commitment and execution to strengthen its budgetary flexibility and stability, supported by accelerating repayment of its liabilities, rebuilding its budget stabilization fund to decade highs; and a slowing of statutory pension funding growth, will likely continue during the outlook period," S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Geoff Buswick said.

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Illinois' outstanding \$27.7 billion GO bonds were upgraded from BBB+, the worst in the country, to A-, tied with New Jersey GO bond ratings. The last time Illinois had the A- rating was in December 2015.

The state's appropriation-backed debt saw an increase in February from BBB to BBB+ and moral obligation debt from B+ to BBB-. Build Illinois bonds, paid for with gas tax and other fee increases, goes from A- to A.

Illinois' credit upgrade cannot fully make up for the effect of rising global interest rates. Illinois taxpayers will continue to pay higher interest rates in 2023 on the state's outstanding multi-billion-dollar debt load than was paid in 2022 and previous years.

The credit rating enhancement reflects Illinois' hard work at recovering from the debt crisis created by political dysfunction, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting shutdown orders. The advocacy and outreach of the House Republican Caucus were significant in getting the state to pay back a large debt chunk, money owed by the once-insolvent Unemployment Insurance (UI) Trust Fund. S&P credited Illinois' increased liquidity, and its "deep and diverse" private-sector economic base, for the credit rating move. At the same time, however, S&P continued to point to Illinois' continued significant burden of unfunded pension liabilities.

### March - McCombie stands in support of Comptroller's budget stabilization proposal

House Republican Leader McCombie stood in support of Comptroller Susanna Mendoza's [budget stabilization legislation](#) in early March. McCombie signed onto the bill, [HB 2515](#), as a chief co-sponsor and showed her support in person when the bill was presented in the State Government Administration Committee.

"I am proud to support Comptroller Mendoza's legislation that could improve the financial outlook of our state. Illinois families need more measures like this proposal, which drives excess revenue into our rainy day fund and pays down our pension debt," said House Republican Leader McCombie.

### March - Possible nationwide recession could hamper state spending plans

In testimony presented to the House Revenue and Finance Committee, Revenue Director David Harris and Alexis Sturm, Director of GOMB, presented testimony on the possible impact of a Year 2023 recession on the Illinois economic outlook and state revenues available for spending.

Working with ongoing cash flow numbers that reflect tax payments made by Illinois residents to IDOR, both executives – backed by IDOR chief economist Rubina Hafeez – said that the state's immediate financial position is good. However, their testimony included data on current projections by global economic forecasters. These forecasting groups continue to project that the U.S. economy is deemed likely to fall into a mild recession in calendar year 2023. This projected recession, if it occurs, will have a negative impact on state revenues and plans for more state spending, including multi-billion-dollar spending requests from supermajority Democrats.

Speaking at the Revenue Committee hearing, House Republicans pointed out that Illinois' overall record of economic underperformance relative to other U.S. states means that any possible recession could hit Illinois much harder than other regions of the country. GOMB has not yet plugged Illinois'

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underperformance into its economic numbers and forecasts. The economic testimony was presented to the Revenue Committee on March 2.

### March - Month-by-month picture continues to show healthy revenues

CGFA, the nonpartisan fiscal watchdog office within the General Assembly, continued to track healthy state tax revenue inflows in February. Personal income tax payments, corporate income tax payments, and sales tax payments to state general funds rose \$380 million in February over the year-earlier figure. Non-general funds revenue streams earmarked for spending other than operations, such as sports betting tax payments earmarked for the Capital Projects Fund, also increased.

The CGFA economic team warned that growing volatility in the cash flow pictures of Illinois consumers, and the state, could make these February cash flow trends unreliable as a guide to future outcomes. Starting with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, economic numbers in both Illinois and the U.S. as a whole have changed faster, creating greater ranges of uncertainty, than had been the case prior to the pandemic outbreak, shutdown orders, and economic crash. The [CGFA revenue report](#) for February was published on March 2.

### March - CGFA updates revenue estimate for FY23, provides forecast for FY24

CGFA, the nonpartisan budget watchdog arm of the General Assembly, released in early March its [Economic Forecast for FY24](#). In sharing this forecast with the House Revenue Committee, the Commission also updated its FY23 Revenue Estimate, the estimate covering the more-than-half-completed fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. Although numbers were still coming in for FY23, the state had an improved picture of how the revenues for this year are likely to end up.

CGFA estimated that [FY23 revenues would total \\$51.9 billion](#), a \$575 million increase over CGFA's previous FY23 estimate and a \$545 million increase over the Governor's FY23 estimate published in February. The increase in base FY23 revenue assumptions by CGFA led to a higher FY24 revenue estimate compared to the numbers from GOMB, with FY24 expected to bring in \$50.4 billion in revenue – a \$465 million increase over the FY24 estimate projected by GOMB.

CGFA analysts pointed to gathering uncertainties on the U.S. and Illinois economic horizon that make this healthy picture highly uncertain as the state looks forward to FY24, the fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2023.

Ongoing economic contractions in many U.S. economic sectors, continuing inflation, sharply rising interest rates, and a significant decline in the Purchasing Managers Index variable used as a gauge of the health of the U.S. manufacturing sector, all combine to signal potential troubles ahead. Overall throughout the U.S., real GDP is expected to grow only 0.7% in 2023 and only 1.1% in 2024, numbers that reflect a significant possibility that a brief, shallow recession may occur during several of the economic quarters in this two-year period.

### March - Key global credit rating firm grants Illinois a debt upgrade; still near the bottom of U.S. state governments

[Moody's Investors Service](#), one of the largest credit rating agencies, moved Illinois general obligation debt to a 'single A3' rating. This standing, while far below that posted by affiliate agencies of



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neighboring states such as triple-A Indiana, could grant Illinois taxpayers some much-needed relief in terms of the interest payable on state debts. Illinois is continually borrowing more money, and its credit ratings from Moody's and other credit rating firms help determine the comparative level of interest rates that Illinois bonds must pay when they hit the global debt marketplace. These interest payments, which are made on bonds sold by Illinois and its affiliate agencies, are payments that must ultimately be paid by Illinois taxpayers.

The Moody's Investors Service 'single A3' rating is the lowest A-ranked slot on Moody's chalkboard. While above the 'Baa' slots, it continues to signify standing within the lower half of the set of investment-grade bond ratings that Moody's awards to borrowers. In a comment that accompanied the rating change, **Moody's noted the current "stable outlook"** of the fiscal picture facing the state. The Moody's Investor Service upgrade was announced on March 14.

In a time of sharply rising interest rates, Illinois must set aside more and more money every year to service its new and existing debt load. Moody's decision could make this burden less crushing than it otherwise would have been for Fiscal Year 2024, which begins on July 1, 2023. House appropriations committees heard presentations in March on many facets of the FY24 budget picture.

### March - Rainy Day Fund moves upward to over \$1.2 billion

House Republicans have repeatedly urged Illinois, one of the lowest-ranked U.S. states in terms of credit ratings, to change its budgetary ways in preparation for harsh times ahead. In March 2023, House Republican Leader McCombie became one of the chief voices calling for Illinois to build up a pool of money for future **Illinois budget stabilization**.

Comptroller Susana Mendoza announced the payment of \$150 million into the state's **Budget Stabilization Fund**, a rainy-day fund intended to create a cash cushion in preparation for future changes in the state's cash flow. With this deposit, the rainy day fund will now have \$1.22 billion in it.

Although this is a significant sum of money, Illinois' high spending could outrun this resource in the next recession. With vast cash flows demanded for health care, education, pensions and many other spending programs, the current \$1.22 billion rainy day fund balance is equal to less than six days of Illinois general funds spending.

### April - Revenue numbers show a sharp decline in March

General funds revenues, which cover the ongoing spending programs of state operations, dropped sharply in March. The drop of \$563 million in March cash receipts, put next to comparable figures for March 2022 cash inflows, signals approaching fiscal challenges facing the state. The FY23 budget, which covers state spending through the second quarter of 2023 up until June 30, 2023, is based on an assumption of healthy, booming state tax revenues. **The March revenue numbers** reported by CGFA are a warning that these assumptions may have to be modified or changed in the near future.

As in previous months, the overall state revenue trend for March was driven by changes in income tax payments. The taxes paid in by Illinoisans and their employers as Personal Income Taxes dropped \$384 million in March as compared to March 2022. Even after part of this shortfall was set aside to reflect the participation of the Income Tax Refund Fund in this item of overall cash flow, Illinois

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personal income tax receipts were down \$330 million in March. This accounted for more than half of the overall March net revenue shift of \$563 million. Corporate income tax payments to the state also declined sharply in March.

Other lines within the state general funds revenue picture were flat to down in March as compared to the year-earlier month. These included sales and use taxes, public utility taxes, cigarette taxes, taxes on liquor and alcohol, taxes on estates, and taxes on insurance activities. It was not known whether this negative trend will continue in April, May, and June. Based on worldwide movements toward slowing economic activity based upon higher interest rates and growing risks of international conflict, continued negative movement can be expected.

### April - Three-year budget projection unveiled

The projection by CGFA covers **FY24 through FY26**. This multi-year projection utilizes known information about Illinois' "structural budget deficit" and other trends affecting the state's revenues and spending patterns, to come up with a medium-term projection intended to cover the three-year period ending June 30, 2026.

Illinois general funds revenue trends continue to move state revenue towards income tax, sales tax, and federal aid, and away from other sources of general revenue. This includes major revenue sources such as the Lottery, excise taxes on public utility services such as electricity and natural gas, and other taxes such as the estate tax charged on estates as they pass through probate. While these other revenue sources generate hundreds of millions of dollars annually, next to the state's ongoing need for more than \$50 billion in general funds annual revenues, these once-mammoth revenue sources have become less significant.

In the most recently completed fiscal year, FY22, income taxes on individuals and corporations raised three-fifths of the total of more than \$50.3 billion in base general funds notched by Illinois as state revenues. These income taxes were driven by increasing pay rates earned by Illinois workers, together with the movement of income tax revenue towards automatic payment through deduction from paychecks. Individual income taxes accounted for 49% of the total, and corporate income tax for 11% of the total, to make 60% in all.

Sales taxes accounted for another 20% of the total. This number included healthy revenues from the state's ability to charge sales and use taxes on many items bought by Illinois residents over the Internet for delivery in Illinois. Federal aid covered 9% of the revenue total. Put together, these "Big Three" revenue sources – income taxes, sales taxes, and federal aid – accounted for 89% of Illinois' FY22 base general funds revenues. All other revenue sources, including the Illinois State Lottery and other gaming taxes funneled to general funds, public utility taxes, and other state taxes such as taxes on alcohol, tobacco, and estates – made up only 11% of the whole. CGFA expects these revenue trends to continue and intensify in future years.

The analysts at CGFA also looked at spending trends. They found that state spending, particularly with regard to big-ticket items headed by Corrections, Medicaid, pensions, and education, can be expected to continue to **grow faster than these tax receipts** in future years. This trend should revive Illinois' temporarily-diminished "structural deficit."



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### **April - House Republicans call for a moratorium, audit of Illinois' billion-dollar health benefits program for undocumented immigrants**

House Republican leaders are calling for a moratorium on expansion and a state audit of Illinois' billion-dollar health benefits program for undocumented immigrants.

At a [Capitol press conference](#) on April 20, Deputy Republican Leaders Norine Hammond and Ryan Spain, along with Assistant Republican Leader C.D. Davidsmeyer, highlighted a bombshell [state report](#) detailing the massive cost and enrollment expansions of Illinois' health benefits program for undocumented immigrants.

Hammond, who serves as chief budgeteer for the House Republican Caucus, laid out in detail the dramatic growth in undocumented immigrant participation, which will require nearly a billion dollars in general revenue funds to support the program in Fiscal Year 2024.

"In FY24, Illinois' program of health benefits for undocumented immigrants is estimated to cost \$990 million, which is a \$768 million increase (346%) over FY23," [Hammond said](#). "Undocumented immigrants are ineligible for any federal Medicaid match, resulting in state GRF being used to pay for the entirety of services provided. These ballooning enrollments and costs are unsustainable and could lead to the loss of funding and services for Illinois' most vulnerable citizens."

A recent report from HFS shows that HFS and its contracted actuarial firm, Milliman, repeatedly underestimated actual enrollees and costs.

FY24 estimates now show growth in healthcare benefits coverage for eligible undocumented immigrants totaling 108,400 over original FY23 estimates, and enrollees totaling 31,500 over original FY23 estimates, a 202% and 94% increase respectively.

"Year after year, we saw the majority party continue to double down on these expansions, which are not eligible for federal matching funds. The Medicaid program in the State of Illinois is our biggest area of spending," [said Deputy Leader Spain](#) in discussing [House Resolution 220](#), which he filed to audit and pause new enrollees in the program. "This billion-dollar hole, which is just the beginning, requires the General Assembly to exercise fiscal responsibility in both the short-term and long-term to ensure state budget sustainability."

The additional Medicaid pressure for these expansions is happening at the same time the state is expected to lose \$760 million in additional federal funding through the enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Program (FMAP) that was provided to states during the pandemic.

Several important state programs are still drastically underfunded and could greatly benefit from the \$990 million in GRF that would go to HFS to continue to provide medical services to undocumented immigrants.

Assistant Leader Davidsmeyer discussed the process by which these expansions of health benefits to undocumented immigrants were enacted into law and the absolute lack of accountability and transparency for this program.

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“During the 2020 pandemic-shortened House session, Democrats slipped health benefits for undocumented immigrant seniors into the FY21 Budget Implementation (BIMP) bill. This new benefit was included in the BIMP at the last minute, without a committee hearing, public input, or debate. We had virtually no time to review the massive BIMP and budget bills that were passed at the end of that special session,” [said Davidsmeyer](#).

“In 2021, Democrats again slipped expanded health benefits for undocumented immigrants for ages 55-64 into the FY22 BIMP bill. This was again included at the last minute, with no committee hearing and almost no time to debate the bill.

“Last year, Democrats blew up an agreed Medicaid Omnibus bill by yet again adding a last-minute expansion of health benefits for undocumented immigrants for ages 42-54 at the end of session. Zero transparency, zero accountability, zero public input.”

Democrats this spring filed [House Bill 1570](#), which would complete the expansion of health benefits for undocumented immigrants by adding ages 19-41 to the program. HB 1570 has not been debated and no stand-alone vote has been taken on this benefit expansion. Davidsmeyer suggested that if recent history is any guide, the Democrats will again, for the fourth time, add this expansion to the upcoming FY24 BIMP bill or some other massive omnibus bill at the end of the General Assembly’s spring session.

### **April - Illinois borrows from Wall Street**

Illinois is selling \$2.45 billion in general obligation (GO) bonds in an environment of rising global interest rates. The bonds are being sold in four batches, sized as \$1.1 billion, \$1.0 billion, \$200 million, and \$150 million, with different terms and maturity dates.

The budget proposed by Gov. Pritzker for FY24 includes \$46.5 billion in capital appropriations, which far exceeds available cash flow. In addition, the Pritzker administration has created a wholly new \$400 million Large Business Attraction Fund. This Fund is designed to achieve one-time incentive enhancement goals, especially with respect to so-called “megaprojects.” If and when a megaproject deal is announced, the deal announcement will claim that the deal will pay for itself over time, but the state will need up-front money right now.

The “[Investor Presentation](#)” drafted by the state’s underwriters, with the assistance of GOMB, includes a full section, “Pension Update,” on Illinois’ current pension situation. Illinois’ five state-managed pension systems continue to be severely underfunded with respect to long-term obligations. The five systems currently assume a rate of return on their existing assets of between 6.50% and 7.00, with a weighted average of 6.84%. Should returns drop below this number, the unfunded pension gap of these five systems would further increase. Illinois’ pension systems currently post an unfunded liability number of more than \$100 billion. As of the end of FY22, the five systems were 44.1% funded.

### **April - Illinois House Republican Leader hoping for balanced state budget**

The head of the House Republican caucus says her top priority is to pass a balanced state budget. But she has concerns about how that will be accomplished.

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“The definition of ‘balanced’ will be the question,” said House Republican Leader McCombie.

“The speaker says it will be balanced. But does balanced mean we will borrow funds from other agencies and other funds? Yes. Does it mean that we will move funds from one fund to another? Yes. I don’t hope for that, but it’s been that way ever since I’ve been there.”

She said such maneuvering lacks transparency.

McCombie is in her seventh year as a state representative, and her first year as House Republican Leader.

McCombie said Reps. Norine Hammond and Amy Elik are working hard to make sure Republicans have a presence at the table during budget discussions. Hammond is chief budgeteer for House Republicans, and Elik is the party’s deputy budgeteer.

Read the rest of the [Tri States Public Radio article here](#).

### **May - Revenue numbers for April show sharp decline in state revenues**

Tax receipts for the month, which saw the final submission of many 2022 income tax returns, dropped \$1.84 billion below year-earlier numbers. While a decline had been projected, this shortfall was dramatically higher than the projections. Personal Income Taxes paid to IDOR, which includes income tax payments from individuals, trusts, estates, and pass-through entities, fell \$1.76 billion below the receipts paid to IDOR in April 2022.

The sharp decline in April revenue will have a chilling effect on overall revenue numbers during the remainder of FY23 and into FY24. The trends in Illinois economic activity that led to this payment gap cannot be expected to go away. Based on these April numbers, the nonpartisan **CGFA** has reduced its projection of the state’s FY23 tax-fueled general funds cash flows by \$728 million.

CGFA has also been compelled to adjust its numbers for FY24. After reallocations of certain categories of cash flows, the FY24 numbers – like the FY23 numbers – are now in precarious balance. The state expects to bring in barely enough money to meet its existing spending commitments for FY24, the fiscal year that will start on July 1, 2023. Unfortunately, many spending items within the state’s budget are rising fast. New issues are demanding attention. CGFA’s numbers and revenue projections mean that there is now no new net state money to meet these demands for additional state spending. House Republicans will redouble their efforts to help the state get control over its massive, momentum-driven need to continually spend money the state does not have.

### **May - Expected cost for Illinois’ noncitizen health care program grows to \$1.1 billion. New estimate represents 400% increase from Pritzker’s February budget estimate**

The estimated cost for Illinois to continue providing health care coverage to noncitizens who are otherwise ineligible for Medicaid benefits has been revised upward to [\\$1.1 billion for the upcoming fiscal year](#).

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As of the end of March, HFS estimated it would cost \$990 million to fund the program that provides state-funded health care to individuals age 42 and older who would otherwise qualify for Medicaid if not for their citizenship status.

The new estimate, shared by HFS Director Theresa Eagleson in testimony to a Senate appropriations committee on May 3, is now \$880 million beyond the \$220 million estimate included in Gov. Pritzker's February budget proposal.

The administration also estimated the current-year expenditures for the program at \$220 million, but it has cost over \$400 million thus far with two months to go in the fiscal year.

HFS chief of staff Ben Winick told the committee that the original estimate relied on the Census Bureau's American Community Survey data to estimate the eligible population, then assumed a certain percentage would enroll.

But both the cost of providing care and the number of enrollees have far outpaced estimates.

The projections are now based on the program's current month-over-month growth rate of roughly 10 percent. The number of enrollees is expected to grow to over 120,000 in Fiscal Year 2024. The previous estimate was 98,500 enrollees.

The same Senate committee heard a [proposal](#) from Sen. Omar Aquino (D-Chicago) that would further expand Medicaid coverage to noncitizens age 19 and older. That would cost another \$380 million, per HFS estimates.

In April, House Republican leaders called for a [moratorium on expansion](#) and a state audit of Illinois' billion-dollar health benefits program for undocumented immigrants.

### May - Governor's office revises FY23 revenue numbers sharply downward

The revision came in the monthly report that is required by law to be presented by GOMB to the [Legislative Budget Oversight Commission](#). By statute, the Oversight Commission oversees compliance by the executive branch with the budgets enacted by the General Assembly. In April 2022, the legislative branch enacted a budget for FY23 (the 12-month period starting on July 1, 2022, and ending on June 30, 2023) that was believed at the time to be in surplus.

The General Assembly's budget-monitoring arm, CGFA, has already warned that Illinois' FY23 tax revenues are falling far short of projections. Tax payments made to IDOR in the key tax payment month of April generated disappointing numbers. In early May, GOMB updated its April and FY23 numbers to reflect these tax shortfalls. The gap is a massive one. For example, GOMB had expected that, for April, the state would receive individual income tax payments of \$3.77 billion. In reality, the state received only \$3.13 billion from this source, leading to a shortfall of \$637 million for the month. Corporate income tax payments and sales tax payments also fell short of expectations in April.

The GOMB report confirms that sharp, bipartisan action will be necessary if the General Assembly is to maintain its constitutional responsibilities and enact a balanced budget for the approaching FY24. With many facets of the global economy slowing down, money is coming in well below projections,

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and this is not a problem that going to go away. At the same time, many Democrats in Springfield are pushing for new spending programs and more generous funding for existing programs. The balanced annual Illinois state budget is a Constitutional requirement set forth in Section 2 of Article VIII of the [Illinois Constitution](#).

### **May - Democrats shut Republicans out of budget talks**

The rules of the House and Senate chambers of the General Assembly provide for appropriations committees to meet, hear witnesses, discuss the budget issues facing Illinois, and allocate available money. In a series of moves associated with Illinois' current budget shortfall, and with the sharp cost pressures associated with undocumented immigrants and other needs, the hard numbers in the FY24 budget have been pulled out of the appropriations committees and moved behind the Democrats' closed doors.

### **May - FY24 budget bill clears both chambers**

SB 250 Senate Amendment #3 (Sims) and Senate Amendment #5 (Sims) contain the FY23 supplemental and FY24 budget. Senate testimony indicated that this bill is based off of a budget framework that includes \$50.717 billion in revenue and \$50.599 in spending, resulting in a \$118 million surplus.

### Governor's initiatives

The budget contains most of what was included in the Governor's FY24 budget proposal including \$250 million for the Smart Start Program and \$350 million towards the Home Illinois Initiative, which results in \$85 million in additional funds to address homelessness.

### Rising medicaid costs

The budget proposal also includes insufficient funding to fully address rising Medicaid costs as a result of the Medicaid Omnibus bill (\$317 million for half a year's liability) and \$550 million to address healthcare costs for undocumented workers (half of the \$1.1 billion estimated liability) with the understanding that the Governor can propose emergency rules to help contain an estimated \$550 million in costs.

### Legislative pay raises

The FY24 includes funding for legislative pay raises, with specific salary appropriations per member of \$89,675 (increased from \$85,000 in FY23).

### Capital

Contains capital appropriations and reappropriations, most consistent with the Governor's introduced levels. Also contains two new Articles of capital spending totaling at least \$150 million.

### ARPA

Contains roughly \$1.5 billion in ARPA operational spending, including funding to specified safety net hospitals and other community organizations for violence prevention. The FY24 BIMP also

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contains language that allows the Governor to transfer up to \$1.5 billion from GRF into the State Cure Fund, which is the fund that is used to pay for COVID-related costs. This \$1.5 billion transfer could potentially be used to sidestep limitations that the federal government imposed on pandemic related funds.

### PPRT

There is not any new/significant spending pressure from the continued use of PPRT to fund state government. However, the FY24 revenue estimate contains an estimated \$700 million reallocation of PPRT funds into GRF through an annual process at IDOR. This could result in roughly a 15% cut based on FY23 levels.

## CHILDREN

### **January - Lawsuit filed in federal court against DCFS**

The **lawsuit** alleges that DCFS, which has legal responsibility over hundreds of children with multiple challenges that include their legal status, misused their responsibilities with regard to juveniles that required care but were subject to detention. Instead of giving these children essential and vital care services, DCFS oversaw their confinement in places of juvenile detention. The lawsuit presents evidence that the non-providing of needed care by DCFS to at-risk challenged juveniles has been and continues to be a full-pledged policy of the Department.

The class action lawsuit, filed in federal court in Chicago, demands recompense for knowingly-detained children deprived of needed care. While in juvenile detention, the children were allegedly exposed to violence and danger, including conduct perpetrated by both security guards and by their fellow detainees, which endangered them as individuals and stood in the way of their developing the psychological pathways needed for healing and care. The lawsuit's lead plaintiff, Charles Golbert, is a court-appointed guardian in Cook County. As a professional "guardian ad litem," Golbert is a lawyer who specializes in guardianship services for vulnerable persons.

In responding to the lawsuit, DCFS said they try to find the best care settings possible for persons under their jurisdiction. Some of these persons are children in juvenile detention. Appointed by Gov. Pritzker, DCFS Director Marc Smith has been repeatedly cited by other courts for contempt of court for failing to comply with previous court orders. DCFS and Director Smith have been repeatedly sanctioned by the court for failing to place juveniles in appropriate care settings.

Gov. Pritzker has failed the children of Illinois by allowing such rampant dysfunction to continue at DCFS. The agency needs to be thoroughly investigated to ensure our state's most vulnerable children are protected.

### **January - House Republicans sponsor legislation to alleviate child care worker shortage**

There is an acute shortage of child care workers in many parts of Illinois, with many parents experiencing a tough challenge to find an available slot that is convenient to their workplace, commute or living area. In cases where slots are available, the worker shortage is helping to further



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swell the cost of child day care. Child care is especially expensive in regions of Illinois where the cost of housing is also spiking upward, creating additional challenges to those who want to buy homes and raises families. Many House Republicans are looking at measures to alleviate this child care worker shortage.

Rep. Amy Elik is the sponsor of [HB 1341](#), a bill to create the new Child Care Reimbursement Act. Many child care workers face financial challenges because they have young children of their own. This Act, if passed into law, will create a new program to reimburse all child care workers for any amounts they themselves have paid for child care services provided to their own children ages 5 or younger at a day care center. By knowing that their own children will be cared for, these workers will be able to re-enter the child care workforce.

Rep. Steve Reick is sponsoring [HB 1240](#), legislation aimed at reducing the burden of credentialism in Illinois child care. This bill would enable current experienced child care workers to be exempted from any new qualifications imposed by DCFS upon Illinois child care service providers by regulation. Regulators are always looking for ways to increase requirements, including requirements for education qualifications and certifications, on the job qualifications of the professions and crafts that they regulate. In some cases, these increased qualification requirements can add to existing worker shortages.

House Bill 1240 was voted down in the Child Care Accessibility & Early Childhood Education Committee. House Bill 1341 remained in the Rules Committee and did not receive a hearing or a vote.

### **May - Sustaining & protecting at-risk kids working group presents proposals to fix DCFS**

At the beginning of the 103rd General Assembly, House Republican Leader McCombie established several working groups within the House Republican Caucus to develop legislation for the priorities of the caucus and the people of Illinois. On May 4, [Rep. Tom Weber](#) and his colleagues provided an update on the progress of the [Sustaining & Protecting At-Risk Kids](#) working group, which Weber leads.

“Protecting vulnerable children is not, and should not, be a partisan issue,” said Weber. “Protecting them is our most basic responsibility as a state, and I’ve spoken with many legislators on both sides of the aisle who agree. That’s why we are proposing [House Bill 3471](#), the AJ Freund Act, to allow local law enforcement to conduct their own abuse or neglect investigations and require DCFS to share their investigation reports with local County State’s Attorneys to play a more active role in prosecuting abusers. We are also proposing [House Bill 3002](#) to create an independent Ombudsperson to investigate complaints against DCFS, provide recommendations for policy changes and report to law enforcement when necessary.

“We believe these proposals, and others can have a real impact on fixing DCFS and I hope they will be considered for a vote before the spring session ends.”



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Also at the press conference was Rep. Steve Reick, who discussed additional proposals:

- **HB 2935** – Requires DCFS to establish and operate a caseload tracking system which shall be designed to monitor and evaluate the interrelationship between client case plans, the Department’s case tracking system, and the work responsibilities of the Department.
- **HB 2937** – Requires DCFS to submit to the General Assembly no later than March 1 of each year a report in relation to the ongoing case files of the Department, the caseload tracking system or systems operated by the Department, the ratio of active case files to active Department personnel, and how appropriations to the Department can be structured to incentivize the Department to manage its caseload and to reduce the burden of individual case responsibilities upon individual Department personnel.
- **HB 3614** – In a provision concerning foster placements, provides that prior to final approval for placement of a child, DCFS shall request that the Illinois State Police conduct a criminal records background check of the prospective foster or adoptive parent, including fingerprint-based checks of national crime information databases.
- **HB 3615** – Provides that DCFS shall initialize, but not complete, the move of Family First functions, carried under the Act and the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Title IV-E of the federal Social Security Act) from DCFS to HFS.
- **HB 3618** – Requires DCFS to develop a plan to phase in mandatory intact family services for at-risk families who are in need of continuing assistance and monitoring following a child abuse or neglect investigation.

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

### March - Sanalitro passes legislation to crack down on deceptive mortgage marketing practices

Rep. Jennifer Sanalitro celebrated the unanimous passage of her first bill through the House. Her legislation, **HB 2094**, aims to protect homeowners from deceptive mortgage marketing practices. The bill cracks down on bad actors who take advantage of unsuspecting homeowners, specifically those who are new to the home-buying process and seniors who may be more vulnerable to deceptive marketing tactics.

**Under Sanalitro’s legislation**, no business can send marketing materials to a consumer indicating that they are connected to the consumer’s mortgage company unless they are employed by the mortgage company directly or an affiliate. Any marketing materials from a mortgage company not connected to the consumer’s mortgage company must comply with specific requirements laid out in the legislation.

Rep. Sanalitro said, “It is our responsibility to protect vulnerable consumers from deceptive marketing practices of all kinds. Specifically, this bill offers essential protections to prospective home buyers who may not be familiar with the home-buying process and seniors who are more susceptible to deceptive marketing material of all kinds.”

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### CRIMINAL LAW

#### **December - Abolition of cash bail, a key element of the SAFE-T Act, declared unconstitutional**

The decision by a circuit court, grounded in the Illinois Constitution of 1970, led directly to a move by the [Illinois Supreme Court to stay implementation](#) of the controversial and far-reaching change to Illinois' Criminal Code. While the initial circuit court decision only would have applied to the 65 counties where law enforcement had filed suit against the law, the Supreme Court's action is valid statewide. [The Supreme Court's stay covers all jurisdictions statewide](#), headed by Chicago-based Cook County, where the circuit court decision would not have reached. The stay order was issued on December 31, just before the law had been scheduled to go into effect.

Based on this stay, courts statewide will continue, for now, to have the right to demand cash bail from defendants as a condition of pretrial release. Law enforcement professionals have repeatedly testified that cash bail is an essential public safety tool. The text of the Constitution of 1970 recognized this fact and included language (section 9 of Article I: Illinois Constitution - Article I (ilga.gov)) that assumed that bail would be one of the tools in the toolbox available to the court when a pretrial process is underway. In its decision on the SAFE-T Act, the circuit court found that by enacting this Act with the language signed by Gov. Pritzker, the legislature and the governor had unconstitutionally combined to interfere with the right of the Courts, a separate branch of the political system, to use the tools in its toolbox.

#### **March - House Republicans push themes heard in court as case against “no cash bail” law moves toward state Supreme Court**

Current state law continues to allow the circuit court to impose cash bail requirements on individuals awaiting trial, but statutory language in the controversial SAFE-T Act passed by Democrats could soon end this longtime practice. Ending cash bail would require the courts and the prosecution teams to collaborate to let most criminal suspects go free while awaiting trial.

In a public order issued in relation to a lawsuit that consolidates cases brought by 64 Illinois state's attorneys, [the state Supreme Court has put a hold on the cash-bail repeal law](#). The state's attorneys, speaking for themselves and their teams of prosecution law enforcers, are setting forth grounds for the controversial law's unconstitutionality. Their arguments continue the themes first set forth by House Republicans when the cash-bail language appeared in a late-night lame-duck session of the General Assembly. The Illinois Supreme Court is reading these arguments. The high court is also reading a counter-brief, in support of the law, filed by the Attorney General, a Democrat. Legal observers expect a decision on the “no cash bail” case later this year.

#### **March - McCombie files public safety legislative package**

House Republican Leader McCombie filed several bills in a robust legislative package aimed at [improving public safety and reducing crime throughout Illinois](#). McCombie's initiative will address public safety by focusing on the rising Fentanyl epidemic, gun violence, and the systemic issues of the SAFE-T Act.

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### The five bills include the following:

- HB1466 – Allows qualified retired law enforcement officers to receive school resource officer training from the Illinois Law Enforcement Training Standards Board, so they can be employed at schools.
- HB3203 – Allows pharmacists to sell Fentanyl test strips over-the-counter so the public can test for the presence of Fentanyl.
- HB3210 – Elevates the criminal charges against a person knowingly and unlawfully selling or dispensing any scheduled drug containing a detectable amount of Fentanyl.
- HB3209 – The Protect our Victims Act, prevents the defense from compelling a complaining witness to testify during a hearing to deny the defendant pretrial release.
- HB3214 – Requires the Cook County State's Attorney to file a written statement with the court if a plea deal is accepted from a defendant who is charged with an offense involving the illegal use or possession of a firearm.

“This package of bills is about making our neighborhoods safer, and looking at how we can best do that by addressing the underlining issues like the opioid epidemic, gun violence, and the ongoing implications of the faulted SAFE-T Act,” McCombie said. “These are real issues affecting our communities every day, and it’s important that these bills advance so we work toward building safer communities across Illinois.”

Since its adoption in 2021, the SAFE-T Act has been amended four different times and is still facing uncertainty due to impending lawsuits against its constitutionality and questions of implementation at the local level. McCombie’s legislation, HB3209, is an initiative to protect victims of crime—who have been against the odds of the new law.

“We have seen victims’ rights be sidelined through the SAFE-T Act and it’s something that needs to be rectified if we are truly going to make our neighborhoods safer; it means we stop empowering criminals,” continued McCombie.

The legislation coincides with the Republican-led working group prioritizing public safety issues that go well beyond the SAFE-T Act. Rep. Patrick Windhorst has taken the lead on the Improving Public Safety working group, which is navigating how to further address the rising crime rates in Illinois neighborhoods.

“Policies passed in Springfield have had detrimental effects on safety across our state—and this reality is hitting families in every community on a daily basis,” said Windhorst. “Leader McCombie’s legislation is a step forward to fixing that discrepancy and I’m proud to support that measure.”

### March - Illinois Supreme Court hears arguments on cash bail

Illinois courts have long had the power to require that a defendant post cash bail as a surety for their good behavior as they get ready for their trial date. The Illinois Constitution protects defendants by

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ordering that the cash bail be set at an appropriate level, and a wide variety of case law gives Illinois defendants a recourse when they face a request for bail as a condition of pretrial release.

Although cash bail has been, and continues to be, a significant part of Illinois' criminal procedure, [a case before the Illinois Supreme Court](#) could soon end it. A major component of the Democrats' so-called "SAFE-T Act" would eliminate cash bail as of this year. Law enforcement officials, including the overwhelming majority of Illinois state's attorneys, filed suit to block the implementation of "no cash bail." Oral arguments on the case of [Rowe and Downey v. Kwame Raoul et al.](#) were heard by the Illinois Supreme Court on March 14. State's Attorney James E. Rowe and Sheriff Michael Downey, the lead plaintiffs, represented a bipartisan group of elected law enforcement officers from across Illinois. These public officials within law enforcement are fighting to retain cash bail as a tool of criminal procedure by the Illinois courts. The state high court's decision will shape the future of pretrial detention in Illinois.

### **April - Truth in Public Safety working group unveils new legislation**

On April 26, the House Republican [Truth in Public Safety \(TIPS\) working group](#) introduced a series of measures designed to balance the rights of the accused while ensuring the safety of the public.

Members of the working group include Rep. Patrick Windhorst, Chairperson of the TIPS working group as well as Reps. Dan Ugaste, Dennis Tipsword, John Cabello, Amy Grant and David Friess.

"The Truth in Public Safety Working group has come up with a package of more than 20 bills through our work," Windhorst said. "We have developed legislation centering around protecting crime victims, restoring cash bail with reforms, and recruiting and retaining police officers."

The working group began meeting in January, and with the final product unveiled, Windhorst says he'll push hard for hearings and votes on the package.

"Our police have been demoralized by anti-police rhetoric and criminal justice policies like those in the SAFE-T Act that prioritize the rights of criminals over the rights of victims. We have to stop the tide of officers leaving the profession and work to attract dedicated, talented, and capable officers to help keep our communities safe," Windhorst said. "The package of bills we have introduced would move Illinois forward toward a safer, brighter future."

According to Tipsword, "These bills, along with the other bills we're proposing, are meaningful suggestions to ensure we're supporting our first responders, and working with them for safer streets and safer neighborhoods...and that we're also fulfilling our responsibility to taxpayers"

The group explained that the measures in the form of legislation, focus on three main areas identified by the TIPS working group after months-long discussions with stakeholders, including crime victim advocates and law enforcement professionals. Those areas include protecting crime victims, retaining and recruiting law enforcement officers, and ensuring pre-trial fairness applies to everyone, including victims and the public.

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“It’s crucial that we support our first responders and police officers so that they can serve the community to the best of their abilities. We must protect public safety in Illinois at all costs, said Friess. “I believe the package of 20 bills we have put together as a group will make great strides toward that need.”

“We want to introduce real pre-trial fairness in Illinois by meaningfully addressing reform that considers the rights of the accused, but not at the expense of the remainder of Illinois residents,” said Ugaste. “For any system to work, cash bail must be part of the equation, and we can restore it in a way that’s fair.”

### **HERE IS A BREAKOUT OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY LEGISLATION PROPOSED BY THE TIPS WORKING GROUP:**

#### **Protecting victims of crime**

HB 3357 (Grant – Ugaste – Windhorst): Creates the offense of domestic assault.

HB 3356 (Grant – Windhorst): Adds a victim being 60 or older to the offense of aggravated domestic battery.

HB 1387 (Haas): Aggravated domestic battery by strangulation is a Class X offense.

HB 3352 (Cabello – Windhorst): Requires DNA collection at arrest instead of indictment or preliminary hearing for serious felonies including felony domestic battery.

HB 1390 (Haas): Sex offenders convicted of a felony sex offense are not eligible for probation.

HB 1388 (Haas): Creation of habitual misdemeanor – for those people who have three or more pending charges for misdemeanor domestic battery, battery, violation of an order of protection, or criminal damage to property when the property belongs to a family or household member.

HB 3329 (Haas): Makes it a Class 1 or Class X felony for a hate crime committed with a firearm or if the victim is under 18 years of age.

HB 3209 (McCombie – Windhorst): Protect Our Victims Act – deletes a provision that allows a defendant to compel a victim to testify at a detention hearing.

#### **The Real Pre-Trial Fairness Act**

HB 4052 (Ugaste – Grant – Windhorst): Reinstate cash bail as recommended by the Illinois SC commission report. Hybrid system that has a presumption of release but allows for cash bail or detention.

#### **Recruitment & retention of law enforcement officers**

HB 4046 (Cabello - Windhorst): Removes the ability to file anonymous complaints against officers. Add automatic expungement of the misconduct records where the officer has been found not to have committed any wrongdoing or the complaint was found to be frivolous.

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Deletes provision that an officer has no property right in their certification, thereby ensuring the officer is afforded due process.

HB 4047 (Cabello - Windhorst): Requires ILETSB to create a waiver process for out-of-state law enforcement officers who want to work in Illinois. In use of force, adds “back” as a place where an officer can discharge kinetic impact projectiles or other non-lethal or less-lethal projectiles in a manner that targets the back.

HB 4048 (Friess - Windhorst): Creates a loan repayment program for officers who are working in under-staffed areas.

HB 4050 (Tipsword - Windhorst): In body camera provisions, exempts undercover officers from the requirement of wearing body cameras, except they must wear body cameras when conducting interviews. Deletes prohibition on review of videos prior to writing reports. Adds the taking or attempting to take a body camera from an officer to obstruction of the justice offense.

HB 1542 (Ugaste): Appropriates \$80,000,000 from the General Revenue Fund to the Law Enforcement Training Standards Board for deposit into the Law Enforcement Camera Grant Fund.

HB 3354 (Friess - Windhorst): Provides that, in matters a sheriff deems essential to preventing or assisting with disasters or events of civil disorder, the sheriff may authorize plain clothes to be worn by auxiliary deputies.

HB 3358 (Tipsword - Cabello - Windhorst): Requires each member of the General Assembly annually complete a ride-along and a simulation training program.

HB 3353 (Cabello - Tipsword - Windhorst): Increases the percentage of moneys that are transferred from the Cannabis Regulation Fund to the Local Government Distributive Fund to 15%. Provides that moneys allocated to counties under those provisions shall be directed to a fund under the control of the Sheriff.

HB 1389 (Haas): Adds the taking or attempting to take a body camera from an officer to obstruction of the justice offense.

HB 3217 (Bunting): Back the Badge Program - Creates within the Illinois Law Enforcement Training Standards Board a Recruitment Division. To assist local law enforcement agencies establish recruitment plans.

### **Additional public safety measures**

HB 4049 (Friess – Windhorst): Removes day-for-day credit on EM, Reinstate provisions that make it mandatory instead of permissive for consecutive sentencing.

HB 4051 (Tipsword – Windhorst): Clarifies the process for when a person is arrested on an out-of-county warrant.

HB 4053 (Windhorst): three phone calls provision – adds protections for victims to the right to communicate and remove presumptions of inadmissibility and allows for it to be used in the



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totality of circumstances determination for voluntariness. Adds to the provision for release by citation that allows an officer to verify the identity of the accused.

HB 3360 (Ugaste – Grant – Windhorst): Adds to registerable offenses, home invasion if a sex offense was committed during the commission of the home invasion.

HB 3359 (Ugaste – Grant – Windhorst): Prohibits auto expungement for attempt to commit a disqualified offense, such as a sex offense, or Class 2 felony or higher.

## DISASTERS

### March - Tornadoes hit Illinois; five Illinois counties declared disaster areas

A severe storm system hit the central United States on March 31. In Illinois, this storm system generated high winds, tornadoes, and severe property damage in many regions of the state. At least four deaths and numerous injuries and massive property damage were confirmed. Three of the fatalities came from an EF-3 tornado that hit Crawford County in southeastern Illinois. A fourth fatality was associated with a tragic structural failure in Boone County.

In addition to Boone and Crawford counties, DuPage, Marion and Sangamon counties are also enumerated in the [April 1 disaster proclamation](#) by Gov. Pritzker. The proclamation authorized a coordinated emergency response effort by teams of workers from state and local governments. State of Illinois disaster responses are led by [IEMA](#).

### April - Spring flooding cycle begins

Authorities posted flood warnings in late April for the Mississippi River's banks from Illinois' northern border, near Galena, to the junction of the Mississippi and the Missouri rivers near Alton. On the opposite bank from Illinois, Iowa's Gov. Kim Reynolds issued a [disaster declaration](#) covering ten riverfront counties in the Hawkeye State. Parallel flooding had begun across the river in Carroll County, Illinois, and the river town of Savanna.

As in previous years, the high water is associated with snowmelt upriver, especially from watersheds in Minnesota and Wisconsin. As the floodwaters rolled south, fresh waters crested on various days depending on location. In Quincy, Illinois, for example, the floodwaters were expected to crest from May 4 through May 6.

### May - I-55 dust storm and deadly crashes

With high winds and dry weather, dirt and dust blew around central and southern Illinois on May 1. Driving visibility suddenly dropped to zero on a stretch of Interstate 55 near Farmersville. A significant number of vehicular collisions, which included several semi-trailer trucks, took place. Many motorists required medical care, including hospital care, and seven motorists were killed. The tragic incident was extensively covered on local and national television news programs as [a weather disaster in Illinois](#).

In the wake of the tragedy, lengths of Interstate 55 were closed to traffic for extended periods. Also, the National Weather Service issued a ["Blowing Dust" warning](#) for wind-affected locations within



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Illinois. The warning spoke of “severely limited visibilities” caused by the weather conditions. Dust warnings have often been issued in the U.S. West and Southwest, especially in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas; however, this was one of the first dust storm warnings issued by federal authorities in Illinois.

### May - Flood crest rolls down the Mississippi River

The snowmelt-fed high waters, the runoff from heavy snows this past winter in Minnesota and Wisconsin, moved down the Mississippi River toward the sea, reaching the [Quad Cities](#) in early May.

Authorities set up sandbag walls in many Illinois towns and cities. Illinois cities along the flooding zone include Quincy, where the crest occurred on May 5, and [Alton](#), with a crest on May 7. South of Alton the riverbed becomes wide and deep enough to handle the added water without excessive flood activity. A once-in-a-lifetime flood, such as the Great Flood of 1993, can cause extensive danger to the riverbanks south of St. Louis.

## DRUGS

### January - Cook County expects record number of opioid deaths in 2022

The Office of the Cook County Medical Examiner oversees death certificates in Illinois’ largest-population county. After examination and lab work was completed for calendar year 2021, the Office reported that 1,936 Cook County deaths – more than five deaths per day – had been caused by opioid toxicity. This was a record high number. Opioid toxicity is the set of things that happen to a body when it takes in too much Fentanyl or other opioid chemicals. These deadly chemicals cause death by several different pathways, including respiratory depression/respiratory failure. All of these pathways are classified as opioid toxicity.

Lab work continues on Cook County cases that arose in 2022. Based on current trend lines, the Examiner’s Office is likely to count [approximately 2,050 Cook County opioid-toxicity deaths in calendar year 2022](#). A total of 1,599 of these deaths have already been counted and confirmed, and evidence is moving forward to classify between 400 and 500 additional deaths due to this cause. Any number within this range would push the 2022 opioid toxicity death count above the 2021 record.

Reports on opioid toxicity repeatedly focus on Fentanyl, a drug that has proven to be far more dangerous than heroin and other opioid controlled substances. Nearly 85% of the opioid toxicity fatalities logged in 2021 were linked to Fentanyl, and the preliminary numbers for calendar year 2022 indicate that this percentage is up to 91%. The Cook County Fentanyl-opioid toxicity report was published on January 3.

### March - McCombie’s Fentanyl bill to combat epidemic

In mid-March, Leader McCombie discussed the impact her [legislation to combat Fentanyl](#) will have in saving lives across Illinois.

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McCombie's bill, [HB 3203](#), passed unanimously out of the House Health and Human Services Committee and allows pharmacists and retail stores to sell potentially life-saving Fentanyl test strips over the counter. Currently, test strips are classified as drug paraphernalia, which has made it impossible to make progress on identifying fentanyl in other drugs. The test strips will be able to identify if Fentanyl is present in any drug, which is essential considering only a small dose (only two milligrams) of Fentanyl can have fatal consequences.

At a [press conference](#) on March 16 in the Capitol, Leader McCombie stood with Republican lawmakers to talk about the Fentanyl epidemic, its effect in Illinois communities, and how her legislation will help provide a solution to a problem that too many families are experiencing across the state.

"This bill will help save lives," said Leader McCombie. "Fentanyl is a deadly drug that is taking far too many lives and as we continue to take steps to address the opioid epidemic affecting Illinois families, our priority with this legislation is to single out Fentanyl."

The legislation McCombie is backing will make a significant stride to protect kids from unintentionally ingesting a deadly drug. High schools across the state have had issues with Fentanyl laced with other drugs like marijuana, which has spurred even more attention to the deadly consequences.

Soaring death rates associated with Illinois drug use are strongly associated with Fentanyl. IDPH reported that in 2021, the most recent year for which numbers have been collated, there were [3,013 fatalities](#) due to opioid overdoses in Illinois. These death numbers were up more than 38% from the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

"As lawmakers, when we see a problem as deep as this one, it's our public duty to try to solve it and I believe my bill is a viable first step forward in combatting this epidemic," continued McCombie.

McCombie's bill passed both Houses and went to the Governor.

## EDUCATION

### April - Illinois claims #1 status in college-ready AP scores

The Advanced Placement course catalog is an array of classes offered in high schools that conclude with a college-level test of the materials taught. A high school student who earns an AP Exam score of 3 or higher, can present this score to a college. Many colleges offer some sort of credit for a qualifying AP score; Illinois' public colleges and universities have come together to offer 100% credit for the coursework deemed to have been taken through the AP process and high exam scores.

Ongoing cooperation between Illinois' public and private high schools, and its institutions of higher education, centered on AP coursework and the AP exam, have led to the widespread availability of AP courses in many high schools. Among members of the high school Class of 2022, 55,025 high school graduates took an AP exam, with almost two-thirds (36,240) scoring a place-out score of 3 or higher. This AP exam-taking subset of Illinois high school graduates was an increase of 42% over the

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less than 40,000 graduates who had taken a comparable exam ten years earlier. **This 42% AP exam-taking increase** far outpaced the 14% nationwide increase of AP exam-takers over the same 10-year period.

ISBE believes that this 42% increase in AP exam-takers was the most massive increase in this data point among the high school graduates of all 50 states.

### **May - Rep. Severin leads House Literacy working group, unveils bold legislative package**

Rep. Dave Severin was appointed to serve as the House Republican chairman of the **Literacy Improves Future Endeavors working group** by House Republican Leader McCombie in February. Since that time, Severin and his colleagues have met several times to hear from educational advocates and interested stakeholders, taking testimony and building a comprehensive legislative package aimed at improving educational outcomes, advancing literacy, and addressing current teacher shortages that are harming students in public schools.

“Pandemic-era lockdowns have really harmed the development of our school children, especially our youngest students in the area of literacy proficiency,” Severin said. “We’ve seen test scores dropping through the floor and too many students being left behind. The legislative package that I’m helping to sponsor takes direct aim at these learning gaps and tackles the tough issue of teacher shortages.”

**The members of the LIFE working group unveiled a sweeping legislative package that includes the following bills:**

**HB 4070** (Severin) – Requires ISBE to develop a comprehensive state literacy plan that includes, at a minimum, the following:

- Developing class size goals for grade K-6 classrooms
- Developing a comprehensive reading teacher content area test
- Establishing a grant program for districts to hire reading and literacy specialists and coaches
- Establishing a grant program for districts to provides bonuses to teachers that receive the reading teacher endorsement on their current license.

**HB 4067** (Swanson) – Provide that professional development providers may offer opportunities on reading/literacy instruction.

**HR 256** (Swanson) – Establishes May 7 through May 13 as “Read with Your Kids” Week referencing the Dolly Parton “Imagination Library.”

**HB 4069** (Friess) – Creates a Temporary Teacher Apprenticeship Program as an alternative pathway to licensure and establishes foreign language endorsements for those fluent in the foreign language to teach foreign language courses.

**HB 4068** (Schmidt) – Extend the sunset date for additional return to service for retired teachers.

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**HB 1213** (Caulkins) – Creates a scholarship program for teachers to get master’s degrees in order to increase dual credit courses.

**HB 1297** (Elik) – TRS optional credit for private school teachers.

**HB 4066** (Weaver) – Creates the Parent Advisory Committee within ISBE to study and make recommendations on proposed teaching and learning standards. Requires school boards to have a policy in place to allow parents/guardians to review curricula and learning material.

## ENERGY

### January - New State law takes away local control over solar, wind farm zoning

Up until now, the principle of local control has governed the interactions between Illinois and large-scale energy projects. The major effects these projects have on the people living near and around them have been reason enough to listen to the local governments with immediate jurisdiction over the sites used to build wind and solar farms. Typically, this control is expressed through zoning codes and other local ordinances enacted by county government.

That could all change soon with a **new law** enacted by the lame-duck 102nd General Assembly. With respect to the location of new wind farms and new banks of solar panels, the new law provides that from now on, no county will be allowed to exceed the very limited statewide powers granted by Springfield to the counties with respect to zoning standards for these projects. Most House Republicans voted against **HB 4412**.

During his re-election campaign, Gov. Pritzker talked about the importance of local control with respect to capital projects. However, although HB 4412 restricts local control, on January 27 Pritzker signed the bill anyway. It became law as P.A. 102-1123.

**The Champaign News-Gazette** editorialized against Pritzker’s flip-flop on local control over wind and solar projects: “Last year, when he was running for re-election, Pritzker specifically rejected the idea of creating statewide controls over the siting of wind and solar projects, saying that he had ‘specifically avoided that’ approach. With his re-election safely behind him, Pritzker is now ready to give the go-ahead to legislation — HB 4412 — passed in the recent lame-duck session of the outgoing legislature that bars counties from banning the projects.”

### May - Energy Update: Nuclear Ban Repeal, Hydrogen Tax Credits, Carbon Sequestration

#### Nuclear Ban Repeal (SB 76) Passed Both Houses

Since 1987, Illinois has effectively had a ban on new nuclear construction. Illinois has prohibited new construction until the federal government creates a system for the disposal of nuclear waste. However, with the push to decarbonize our economy, we cannot keep an affordable, reliable, safe, and carbon-free technology on the sidelines.

With the enactment of CEJA in September 2021, all investor-owned coal plants must close by 2030 and coal-fired power plants owned by municipalities must either reach zero emissions or shutter by

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2045. This means Illinois must close 6.7 gigawatts of coal capacity in the next eight years. Meanwhile, The U.S. Energy Information Administration projects that U.S. electricity demands will grow almost 50 percent by 2030.

In order to meet our energy demand in our state, the legislature made a historic move by passing SB 76 to remove the State's prohibition on new nuclear plant construction until there is a means of disposal of nuclear waste or there is specific approval by the General Assembly. If enacted, provides that any new nuclear reactor after the effective date must be an advance nuclear reactor. This requirement does not apply to the renewal or subsequent renewal of an existing reactor.

### Hydrogen tax credits (HB 2204) passed both Houses

Senate Amendment #1 to HB 2204 (Koehler) becomes the bill. Creates hydrogen fuel replacement tax credits to be enjoyed in calendar years 2027 and 2028. These State income tax credits shall be awarded in line with this proposed new Act. The hydrogen fuel replacement tax credit will enable eligible taxpayers to claim up to \$10 million/year in State income tax credits for a period of two years, or \$20 million in all.

### Carbon sequestration and related pipelines

As the push for a carbon-free economy intensifies, new technologies are being explored to reduce carbon outputs. One of those is carbon sequestration. Instead of shutting down carbon emitting industries, such as coal or natural gas powered energy facilities, carbon sequestration allows carbon dioxide emissions to be captured and diverted underground. By doing this, carbon intensive facilities can theoretically become zero emission facilities and continue operation. This is already being done by ADM in Decatur but not to be done on a broader scale, Illinois will need to address some technology and regulatory hurdles.

#### **These include:**

- Who owns the underground space?
- Will Illinois allow eminent domain or field unitization (similar to Oil and Natural Gas) of underground spaces?
- Who will be responsible for sequestered carbon long term?
- How will Illinois regulate, oversee, and allow such projects?

Related to the sequestration question is the usage of pipelines to transport carbon dioxide for eventual sequestration. Because Illinois has some of the best geologic structures in the nation for carbon sequestration, there is an interest in piping carbon dioxide, not just in state, but from out of state as well for sequestration. However, the use of pipelines does come with additional safety and environmental concerns that would impact Illinois rural communities the most.

This year General Assembly considered a host of bills relating to this matter (HB 2202, HB 3119, SB 2421, and SB 2153).

Information about Federal Tax credits for carbon sequestration can be found [here](#).

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### ETHICS

#### **House Republicans renew call for ethics reform to combat corruption**

**House Republicans demanded more ethics reforms** on the one-year anniversary of former House Speaker Mike Madigan's indictment on federal corruption charges.

"Ethics and corruption are one of the top priorities of the House Republican Caucus and one of the things that needs to change in the most dramatic way in the state of Illinois," said Rep. Ryan Spain.

The caucus argued that Illinois lags behind other states in enacting meaningful legislation to eliminate conflicts of interest and empower the Legislative Inspector General. Republicans told reporters in March that lawmakers need to choose between personal profit and public service.

**Rep. Blaine Wilhour** said he feels the revolving door between lawmakers and lobbyists is a joke, even though state lawmakers approved a one-year window for the revolving door last year.

"We need nothing less than the strongest anti-corruption safeguards in the country to start to restore some much-needed credibility here and to ensure that corrupt politicians like Mike Madigan never get the kind of power over the citizens that they've had in this state ever again," Wilhour said.

#### **May - 'ComEd Four' found guilty on all counts in bribery trial tied to ex-Speaker Madigan**

A federal jury on May 2 convicted three ex-lobbyists and the former CEO of electric utility Commonwealth Edison for their involvement in an alleged bribery scheme aimed at longtime **Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan**.

Former ComEd CEO Anne Pramaggiore and Mike McClain – the utility's longtime contract lobbyist and close confidant of Madigan – were each found guilty of nine counts of conspiracy bribery and falsifying records. Former City Club of Chicago President Jay Doherty, who also served for decades as an external lobbyist for the utility, and John Hooker, a former ComEd executive turned contract lobbyist for the company, were each found guilty of six counts.

Prosecutors alleged the foursome gave Madigan allies jobs and contracts at the utility in exchange for an easier path for ComEd-supported legislation in Springfield.

The six-week trial was borne of a wide-ranging federal corruption probe that has rocked Illinois politics and ultimately unseated Madigan, who had been the longest-serving legislative leader in the nation. The former speaker faces related criminal racketeering charges in his own trial, set for next April.

The verdict could bolster prosecutors' case against Madigan, who, in the course of the trial, was revealed as the initial target of the feds' investigation which opened in late 2014.

Since then, the probe has grown to encompass more than a dozen high-profile players in the state's political ecosystem.



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The jury deliberated for approximately 27 hours since getting the case. A sentencing date was not set before court adjourned.

Speaking to reporters after the verdict, jury member Amanda Schnitker Sayers said the jury grew to like the defendants over the course of the trial.

“All in all, they’re good people that made bad decisions,” she said.

Schnitker Sayers said the jury stayed away from discussing Madigan outside of his role in the case at hand, but said they came to believe the speaker’s involvement with ComEd “was key.”

“He really did cause this all to happen,” she said. “If it wouldn’t have been for him, these people would not have been in the position that they would need to commit crimes in the first place.”

### **May - House Republicans demand ethics reform following ComEd Four guilty verdict**

**House Republicans renewed calls for ethics reform** less than an hour after four of former Speaker Mike Madigan’s closest allies with ties to Commonwealth Edison were **found guilty** of corruption.

**The House Republican caucus leaders** told reporters that the Springfield system has allowed bad actors and political insiders to succeed at the expense of honest hardworking Illinoisans.

House Republican Leader McCombie stressed that every state lawmaker should be compelled to work with her caucus to pass accountability measures.

The Republican members said ethics reform should be the General Assembly’s top priority.

“How many indictments is too many? How many more court rulings do we need to make unethical behavior stop?” McCombie asked. “We will always be ready to work, put ideas forward, and fight for what’s right.”

The Republican leadership team said lawmakers should pass bills to halt the revolving door for legislators becoming lobbyists and end “pay to play politics.”

Rep. Patrick Windhorst said the Legislative Inspector General should also be given subpoena powers to help the office perform thorough investigations and root out bad behavior.

“Illinois’ reputation for public corruption is sadly well-earned,” Windhorst said. “But our state’s reputation is not beyond saving. It can be rebuilt. Let us delay no longer.”

Windhorst and Rep. Ryan Spain serve on the Ethics & Elections Committee. However, both men noted that the group has not taken a single vote or held subject matter hearings about ethics reform.

“Today should be a wake up call,” Windhorst said. “It should start immediately.”

The Ethics & Elections Committee was not scheduled to meet the week of the verdicts.



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“This is embarrassing. For too long, we have allowed the poor ethical behavior of people like Mike Madigan, his associates, and others to become the way we do business in the state of Illinois,” Spain said. “Unfortunately, the Madigan way is still the way in which our government works here in Springfield. It has to stop now.”

### **May - Rep. Ryan Spain calls out Speaker Chris Welch for Madigan obstruction**

In 2020, Republican Reps. Ryan Spain, Jim Durkin and Andrew Chesney launched a special investigation committee to examine then-Speaker Madigan’s involvement in the ComEd bribery scandal. Rep. Emanuel “Chris” Welch, who served as chairman, **called the process a sham** and chose to abruptly end the investigation after hearing from just one witness. Welch now serves as Speaker of the House and was supported in this effort by Rep. Lisa Hernandez, who now serves as Chair of the Democratic Party of Illinois.

“We convened and launched an important investigation with substantive work asking for follow-up and investigation into these matters we’ve heard about in detail in the prosecution and now the guilty verdicts which have been delivered this week,” said Spain. “What was the response from the Democratic legislators that participated in that Investigating Committee? Cover-up and sweeping the facts under the rug.”

On May 2, four of Madigan’s ComEd allies were found guilty of bribery conspiracy in federal court because of their efforts to gain Madigan’s favor while he served as Speaker.

“For too long, we have allowed the poor ethical behavior of people like Mike Madigan, his associates, and others to become the way we do business in the State of Illinois, and unfortunately, the ‘Madigan Way’ is still the way in which our government works here in Springfield. It has to stop now,” said Spain.

“Nothing has changed since Madigan’s indictment to prevent this type of behavior and nothing will change until the majority party gets serious about ending corruption and reforming the Madigan Rules which govern the House of Representatives.

“Emanuel ‘Chris’ Welch is now Madigan’s handpicked successor as Speaker of the Illinois House. Lisa Hernandez is now Chairperson of the Democratic Party of Illinois. It’s time to throw out the Madigan playbook, pass robust ethics reform measures, and give Illinoisans an honest state government they can believe in.”

### **May - Eliminating the culture of corruption in Illinois**

House Republicans called on the Democratic supermajority to join efforts to eliminate the culture of corruption plaguing the state, and to **make ethics reform a priority** heading into the final weeks of session.

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**The legislature needs to take bold steps to weed out the underlying causes of corruption in state government by:**

- Allowing for greater transparency in the budget-making and lawmaking processes.
- Changing the “Rules” set up by Mike Madigan (and that are still used today) that gives a handful of lawmakers the power to decide which bills get a hearing, including ethics bills.
- Enacting stronger laws that prohibit lawmakers from serving as lobbyists, grant greater authority to the Legislative Inspector General, and enact Fair Maps to let voters select their elected officials.

### **May - Illinois House Republicans: Democrats must act on ethics**

Just one week after guilty verdicts were handed down in federal court, sealing the fate of the ComEd Four for their corrupt actions, and following an early May disclosure that former Democrat State Senator Tom Cullerton walked straight from his jail cell and into a lobbying firm, [House Republicans sharpened their criticism on supermajority Democrats in Springfield](#) for failing to clean up their own house and operating under the same corrupt Madigan rulebook.

In December 2020, Speaker Welch, acting as Madigan’s appointed Chairman of the Special Investigating Committee, shut down hearings after previously receiving testimony from ComEd’s compliance attorney. Despite repeated investigations, indictments, and arrests, Democrats have not acted on any meaningful anti-corruption reforms and have rarely called their colleagues out for wrongdoing.

In mid-May, former Democratic Governor Pat Quinn joined Republicans’ calls to address conflicts of interest. Assistant Minority Leader Ryan Spain talked about those conflicts, saying, “Democratic Speaker Chris Welch shut down the Special Investigating Committee looking into Madigan, and then got Madigan’s full endorsement for Speaker. Rep. Lisa Hernandez shut down fair redistricting and then received a plum assignment as Chair of the Democratic Party of Illinois. And Gov. Pritzker pushed to expand Medicaid-like benefits to undocumented immigrants and is now lobbying for managed care administration of these services while his own “blind trust” is reportedly invested in the state’s largest managed care provider, Centene. These are existing conflicts of interest by Democratic politicians in Illinois which should not be ignored.”

Rep. Patrick Windhorst joined Spain and Reps. Amy Elik and Blaine Wilhour in asking, “Gov. Quinn said yesterday we need change; Congressman Sean Casten is calling for change. So, we ask again - what is it going to take to get House Democrats to recognize we need to stop corruption once and for all?”

Rep. Elik further pointed out an obvious ethical loophole left unaddressed by Democrats. “Under current law, former Speaker Madigan will continue to collect a taxpayer-paid pension until a guilty verdict is reached. This means Madigan could go on to collect his elected official pension for several years before it’s taken away. That’s why I’ve filed legislation to suspend a lawmaker’s pension if they are charged with corruption by federal investigators,” said Elik referring to her legislation, [House Bill 1277](#).

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“We have numerous bills to address ethics reforms, but Democrats will never act until the courts or the public force their hands. They have shown themselves totally unwilling to clean up the mess they have created,” said Wilhour, a chief sponsor of more than a half-dozen meaningful ethics reform proposals withering from inaction in the House under Democratic leadership.

## FIRST RESPONDERS

### January - Scott's Law crashes tabulated

State law forbids the act, by a driver, of passing a stopped and shouldered first-response vehicle in an adjoining lane at high speed. The driver, if he or she sees a police vehicle or other first-response vehicle on the shoulder with its lights flashing, must either move over to the next lane or, if this is impossible, must slow down and pass at a rate of speed that will be safe for the first responder. Usually it is best to move over if possible, which is why Scott's Law is also often called the “Move Over Law.”

The [State Police](#) collects and tabulates reports of Scott's Law crashes and violations, including incidents involving their own troopers. If someone's motor vehicle crashes into a shouldered First Responder vehicle, that constitutes evidence that Scott's Law may have been violated. On the weekend of January 14-15, State Police counted the [first Scott's Law crashes of 2023](#). The incidents took place in Cook and Kankakee counties. Both cases involved troopers who had stopped on road shoulders and activated their emergency lights. In both cases, the cited driver was charged with driving under the influence (DUI), a charge that is separate from Scott's Law.

If fully adjudicated, both drivers could be subject to separate sanctions for both charges, as well as other charges connected with each incident. A driver who has violated Scott's Law may be ordered to pay a fine of between \$250 and \$10,000 for a first offense. Called “Scott's Law” by first responders, the law commemorates Chicago firefighter Lieutenant Scott Gillen. In a fatal Dan Ryan Expressway roadside incident, Lt. Gillen was killed by a driver on December 23, 2000.

### March - Illinois House pays tribute to fallen Chicago police officer Andres Vasquez-Lasso

Slain in the line of duty, [Officer Andres Vasquez-Lasso](#) was a five-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department. Responding to a report that a woman was being chased down the street by a man with a gun on Chicago's southwest side, Officer Vasquez-Lasso exchanged fire with the suspect at close range. Officer Vasquez-Lasso was shot multiple times and later died at Mt. Sinai Hospital. The 18-year-old suspect was shot in his head and is in critical condition. Officer Vasquez-Lasso's family and fellow officers honored his heroism and mourned his death. End of Watch: March 1, 2023.

On March 2, the House heard tributes to the fallen officer and paused for a moment of silence to pay tribute to Vasquez-Lasso. In these tributes, House members honored the service performed by Officer Vasquez-Lasso and by his fellow police officers throughout Illinois. The fallen officer's name will be memorialized as part of the Illinois Police Memorial, which stands on the grounds of the Capitol.

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The death of Officer Andres Vasquez-Lasso added fuel to the ongoing discussion about the status of persons who have been arrested, including arrests for violent felony offenses, and are awaiting trial in Illinois. Often, under Illinois criminal law, these trials face long delays, leading to people awaiting trial for extended periods of time. The suspect in the Vasquez-Lasso murder case is a man who was under criminal charge awaiting trial and had been released on a bond of individual recognizance (the so-called I-bond). The suspect's arrest took place on July 29, 2022, and he had been on the streets following his arrest for seven months while awaiting adjudication of his offense. The suspect allegedly shot and killed Vasquez-Lasso at near-point-blank range during this period. Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx [defended the decision to give the suspect an I-bond](#), stating that prior to his July 2022 arrest the defendant had not had a criminal record.

### **April - Firefighters join list of Illinois first responders who paid the ultimate price in 2023**

[Two Chicago firefighters died in the line of duty](#) in the second week of April. Jermaine Pelt, age 49, died on April 11, while facing a house fire in Chicago's West Pullman neighborhood on the city's Far South Side. On April 12, a separate blaze broke out in a condominium high rise on Chicago's Near North Side. Those who fought the fire were told it was on the building's 27th floor. Fire Lt. Jan Tchoryk, age 55, gave his life in the skyscraper inferno.

The House paid tribute to the fallen first responders in their session in Springfield on April 18. [The Illinois Fallen Firefighters Memorial](#), a combination sculpture and gathering place, commemorates all Illinois firefighters, but especially those who have given their lives in the line of duty. The Memorial is the site for the annual Firefighter Medal of Honor Ceremony and Memorial Service each spring.

### **May - Chicago police officer killed in line of duty**

[Officer Areeanah Preston](#), driving home from work on May 6, was targeted by robbers looking for a lone victim. The incident took place in the Avalon Park neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. Preston was armed and a gunfight took place, resulting in the officer's death. Five suspects are reported to be in custody.

The targeting behavior reported to have been carried out by the suspects is standard practice for persons looking for lone drivers who get out of their cars. In Preston's case, she had parked and was approaching her family home. Police officers, responding to a report of gunfire, found Preston lying in her front yard. The 24-year-old officer was seven days away from being awarded her Loyola University [master's degree in criminology](#). As she had been in the final minutes of leaving her shift when she was struck down, the Chicago Police Department has ruled Officer Preston's death to be a [death in the line of duty](#).

The House of Representatives honored the life of Officer Areeanah Preston with the adoption of [House Resolution 276](#).

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### GAMBLING

#### February - State grants Bally's initial approval to move towards operation of temporary Chicago casino

The operation is slated to commence at the Medinah Temple, the Near North Side building built in 1912. The action in early February by the Illinois Gambling Board (IGB) was the first round of approval for the [Chicago casino operation](#). The IGB's action authorizes the building's management to sign contracts with suppliers to start delivering the goods necessary to refit the building space and prepare to operate the casino. The names of the contractual suppliers then have to be submitted to the Board for a second round of licenses and permits. As the full licensure of the Medinah Temple gambling floor is an ongoing process, no firm casino opening date has been set yet. The developers, and the city of Chicago as a chief tax collector, are going to push to open the doors during calendar year 2023.

The Medinah Temple casino is slated to be a “temporary” space for gambling experiences and entertainment. It will operate during the period that Bally's is pursuing its separate application, in what will be a third and a fourth round of licensure permits, for final approval to construct and operate a permanent casino on an industrial site adjacent to the North Branch of the Chicago River. This property is now slated to become the footprint for what developers hope will be a [\\$1.7 billion casino complex](#) of hotel rooms, gaming, and entertainment. In June 2019 action, the General Assembly granted legislative approval to Chicago to be the host city of the future casino complex, and this February 2023 action continues the implementation of the multi-year planning process. The resulting casino complex will pay gambling and hotel occupancy taxes to both Chicago and the state.

#### February - Lottery reports results for the first half of FY23

[The Illinois State Lottery reported record sales of \\$1.8 billion](#), with a net revenue intake of \$468 million, in the six-month period. Sales were paced by a succession of multistate jackpot games that rolled over into super-sized prizes. One of the \$1 billion-plus ticket winners, awarded in July 2022, was [a ticket sold in Des Plaines](#). In addition to this mammoth ticket, other Illinois Lottery players collected almost \$1.2 billion in prizes during the six-month period. The reporting period began on July 1, 2022, just before the Des Plaines jackpot, and ended on December 31. Net proceeds from Illinois Lottery ticket sales, other than specialty scratch-off tickets to benefit specific causes, are deposited in the [Common School Fund](#) to benefit public education.

#### April - Gaming Board approves plans by Hollywood Casinos to move Aurora, Joliet casino locations

Hollywood Aurora and Hollywood Joliet are located on the banks of the Fox River, physically distant from a limited-access highway. Although these operations are now land-based casino complexes, they had their roots in cruising “riverboats” that moved up and down the river. Gaming industry data shows that the best location for a casino hospitality property is a space close to a major highway.

To enable the creation of new permanent casino positions and trade construction jobs, the General Assembly enacted legislation in May 2019 to allow the holders of established “riverboat” casino licenses, including Hollywood, to move away from their riverfront locations to spaces better suited to revenue maximization. The owner of the Hollywood brand, Penn Entertainment, responded to the

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2019 law by putting together a [detailed plan](#) to locate more optimal Aurora and Joliet locations, to build new casino-hospitality complexes in both metro areas. Under the strict regulations imposed by Illinois law on casinos operating in-state, it was this Penn Entertainment planning structure that was approved by the [Illinois Gaming Board](#) in April. The actual construction of the new casino complexes will come before the Board in another approval application cycle at a later date.

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### January - House convenes for inauguration, House Republicans elect new House Republican Leader Tony McCombie

The inauguration of the House of Representatives for the 103rd General Assembly took place January 11 at the University of Illinois Springfield. The House Republican Caucus formally elected [Rep. Tony McCombie as the new House Republican Leader](#).

“It is a sincere and heartfelt honor to be given the responsibility to restore balance to our system of checks and balances in Illinois,” said House Republican Leader McCombie.

McCombie is the first woman to serve as House Republican Leader in Illinois. McCombie has focused her work in Springfield on job creation, property tax relief, and improved government accountability.

“During the recent lame-duck session, House Republicans stood against pay hikes for politicians, fought vast overspending, and worked passionately against restrictions on the Constitutional rights and freedoms of law-abiding Illinoisans. I am extraordinarily proud to lead this caucus,” McCombie continued.

### January - Lame-duck General Assembly enacts pay hike for legislators, top Pritzker admin officials

Approved by the House on a Friday night, January 6, after the sun had set, the measure was promptly signed into law by Gov. Pritzker. Democrats in the General Assembly voted themselves a pay raise of almost 17%. The measure granted similar hikes to top officials in the Pritzker administration, including Cabinet-level officials who head major state agencies.

House Republicans voted against the legislative pay raises contained in [Senate Bill 1720](#). The base pay rate for members of the House will increase to \$85,000/year for members of the 103rd General Assembly, starting immediately. In addition to this base pay, House members are eligible for additional stipends and compensation for their travel expenses, housing when in Springfield or otherwise traveling on state business, and service on House committees and in legislative leadership. The pay hike measure was not revealed to the public or publicly debated before it was presented and passed. [Gov. Pritzker promptly signed the pay hike bill into law](#); it was on his desk and signed before most Illinois residents knew about the controversial measure.

### January - McCombie takes the helm, assembles leadership team

House Republican Leader McCombie hit the ground running by announcing her new leadership team on January 12. She has assembled an accomplished group of lawmakers from across the state who will help guide the Republican caucus through the 103rd General Assembly.



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McCombie and her team will focus their efforts on restoring checks and balances in state government and protecting the rights and freedoms of Illinois residents.

### Members of the House Republican Leadership Team include:

#### Norine Hammond (Macomb) - Deputy Republican Leader

Leader Norine Hammond has spent her time in the General Assembly focused on improving fiscal accountability. She is a supporter of veterans, higher education and ensuring state agencies deliver high quality services to the people of Illinois.

#### Ryan Spain (Peoria) - Deputy Republican Leader

Leader Ryan Spain believes Illinoisans deserve strong ethical leadership and led the charge to expel the indicted Michael Madigan from his long-time role as House Speaker. He fought against gerrymandering during the legislative map-making process.

#### John Cabello (Machesney Park) - Assistant House Republican Leader

Leader John Cabello has served nearly three decades as a police officer and is currently on the roster of the Rockford Police Department. He rejoined the House of Representatives this week after having previously served from 2012-2021.

#### C.D. Davidsmeyer (Jacksonville) - Assistant House Republican Leader

A supporter of mom-and-pop business owners, Leader C.D. Davidsmeyer works to make sure Illinois laws and regulations don't force the state's small businesses to close their doors.

#### Jackie Haas (Kankakee) - Assistant House Republican Leader

With more than 30 years of experience working as a social worker in underserved communities, Leader Jackie Haas is a strong proponent of improving public health and safety, as well as addressing the state's larger systemic fiscal issues.

#### Mike Marron (Fithian) - Assistant House Republican Leader

Leader Mike Marron is a small business owner and operates a family farm with his father in rural Vermilion County. His experience as a business owner and farmer provides him with keen insight into the issues facing rural Illinois.

#### Charlie Meier (Okawville) - Assistant House Republican Leader

During his time in office, Leader Charlie Meier has been vocal in his support for the agricultural community that fuels Illinois' economy and the well-being of individuals with disabilities

#### Brad Stephens (Rosemont) - Assistant House Republican Leader

Leader Brad Stephens brings his experience as CEO of Rosemont, one of the most successful municipalities in the nation, to the statehouse.

#### Jeff Keicher (Sycamore) - Conference Chair

Leader Jeff Keicher's positive energy is contagious and appreciated by his colleagues. As a leader in both the public and private sectors, Jeff seeks first to listen and understand a problem before offering solutions, earning him a reputation as a bipartisan problem-solver.



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### **Patrick Windhorst (Metropolis) - Floor Leader**

Leader Patrick Windhorst has been a leading voice in the legislature opposing unconstitutional measures like ending cash bail and restricting the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

### **January - House prepares for 2023 spring session**

After convening on January 11 to take their oaths of office, the new House members continued to work with their staff to draft and file legislation. House members filed more than **1,200 bills** in the first ten days of the new General Assembly for their colleagues to consider this spring. Each bill is sent to the Rules Committee for assignment to a standing committee. The House reconvened for committee action on January 31, beginning **a six-week period** for the House and its committees to hold hearings and discuss the measures before the House. During this time period, the House also began work on the state's budget.

### **January - BGA criticizes Illinois' "weak" legislative ethics oversight**

Under the constitutional separation of powers, the General Assembly is supposed to get first crack at overseeing itself. An in-house panel, the Legislative Ethics Commission, and a watchdog, the Legislative Inspector General, are supposed to oversee the General Assembly and to take initial action when reports and allegations are heard. House Republicans have long called for the Commission and the Inspector General to receive real powers to match these responsibilities. Unfortunately, Democrats have not heeded these calls and warnings.

Now, a research analysis and report from the Illinois-based **Better Government Association** backs up our long-standing concerns and criticisms. Pulling no punches, the BGA report calls Illinois' legislative oversight "weak compared to other states." The BGA reaches this conclusion in comparison with what an ideal system ought to look like, but the Association also finds that Illinois' legislature has a weak ethical setup even in comparison with other self-regulating legislatures in other states. The BGA report was published on January 30.

### **January - House reconvenes for 2023 spring session**

**The House of Representatives** reconvened on January 31. The members of the House for the 103rd General Assembly organized themselves into committees in order to discuss the legislation proposed for the 2023 spring session. Members were appointed to the new House committees. More than 2,100 House bills had been filed by February 3. Bills filed in the House are all posted on the **General Assembly website**.

Changes which took place with the House in spring 2023 included a renewed requirement that all members be present to cast votes on the House floor. As with the U.S. House, during the pandemic years a "proxy vote" rule allowed representatives to cast distance votes. Like the federal House, the Illinois House will abolish this proxy-vote emergency procedure going forward; Illinois House members will have to be on the floor in person to cast their votes. Committee witnesses will continue to be allowed to testify remotely, with the permission of the committee.

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### February - Welcome new representatives, Jason Bunting and John Egofske

House Republican Leader McCombie and members of the Caucus welcome two new Republican legislators who took the oath of office in early February. Joining the ranks of the Illinois House are State Reps. Jason Bunting and John Egofske. Both were in Springfield February 7 to take up their legislative duties.

On February 4, Livingston County Board Member and family farmer Jason Bunting was sworn-in as the new Representative of the 106th House District, replacing Tom Bennett, who was appointed to the Illinois Senate. Bunting's district covers portions of Ford, Grundy, Iroquois, LaSalle, Livingston, McLean and Will Counties. [Learn more about Rep. Jason Bunting.](#)

Rep. John Egofske took the oath of office on February 5, and will fill the vacancy left by former House Republican leader Jim Durkin. Egofske will continue to serve as the unpaid Mayor of Lemont a position he has held for six years. Egofske serves the residents of the 82nd District which includes parts of Cook, DuPage and Will Counties. [Learn more about Rep. John Egofske.](#)

### February - House committees post first hearings

The 44 standing committees of the 103rd General Assembly will consider the bills to be brought forth in the 2023 spring session, as well as in the remainder of this General Assembly. This committee count includes 38 substantive committees to hear statutory bills, five appropriations committees to hear budget bills, and the Rules Committee.

Under House rules, each committee is required to post a public notice of its meetings, including a list of the bills and other actions on the agenda. These postings are available on the "[House Committees](#)" page of the General Assembly website. The overall Committees webpage includes hyperlinks to each committee for which a meeting has been posted and scheduled. Anyone who is following a particular bill, and learns that bill has been assigned to a committee, can look up that committee's webpage to see whether it is on the agenda.

### February - McCombie unveils House Republican legislative priorities

House Republican Leader McCombie was joined by several members of the House Republican caucus at a Capitol press conference on February 14 to unveil [legislative priorities for the 103rd General Assembly](#). House Republican Leader McCombie announced the creation of five working groups to produce actionable solutions to some of Illinois' most pressing issues.

#### The five Republican working groups include the following:

- **Sustaining & protecting at-risk kids:** to protect children in the state's care from abuse and neglect.
- **Supporting women and families:** to make Illinois a place where families can move and grow for generations.
- **Reigniting Illinois' strong economy:** to improve Illinois' business climate, while still protecting workers and using our strengths - geography, workforce, and resources - to bring job creators and opportunity home.

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- **Literacy improves future endeavors:** to address learning loss, improve reading literacy, and restore Illinois students to a place where they are competitive in today's world.
- **Improving public safety:** to make our neighborhoods safe again, protect law-abiding citizens, and respect law enforcement.

The working groups are each chaired by House Republican members, which include Reps. Tom Weber, Jackie Haas, Dan Ugaste, Dave Severin and Patrick Windhorst. The working group chairs will spearhead the progress of these top issue areas with input from policy experts and residents across the state.

"Republicans are here to work and these groups reflect not only that commitment but also our governing priorities," said House Republican Leader McCombie. "We are ready to be part of the solution to some of our state's biggest challenges. These working groups are our first steps toward solving the problems impacting residents throughout Illinois."

McCombie unveiled these priorities ahead of the Governor's annual State of the State and Budget Address to outline issues House Republicans believe are some of the most imperative to solve.

### **April - Emerging Women Leaders recognized by trailblazers**

On April 18, House Republicans hosted the [2023 Emerging Women Leaders Recognition Event](#). Nearly 50 women from across the state were honored at this event. All of the honorees were invited by their respective Representatives for their achievements as leaders in their careers and communities.

The event kicked off with a brunch that was highlighted by a keynote address delivered by Supreme Court Justice Lisa Holder White, the first black woman to serve on the state's high court. Justice Holder White discussed the obstacles she and many other women face when working to achieve positions of leadership. She ended her speech with a strong message of empowerment and the need to make space for women in government.

Following the brunch, the honorees attended a listening session hosted by the first female Minority Leader in the Illinois House, House Republican Leader McCombie, and the first black Lieutenant Governor in state history, Juliana Stratton. Both women spoke in depth about the connection they share as women in politics, even though they sit on opposite sides of the aisle. Together they asked questions about the challenges the honorees faced as women and encouraged suggestions on how Illinois government can help.

The honorees were then guided to the Speaker's Gallery where they watched the day's legislative session in the House. House Republican Leader McCombie took a moment to recognize the guests from the House floor, commending their achievements as Emerging Women Leaders.

This event concluded with a tour of the Capitol, led by the first female Architect of the Capitol, Andrea Aggertt.

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“We were privileged to host an extraordinary group of women from every corner of Illinois who are truly making a positive impact in their communities,” said House Republican Leader McCombie. “I would like to thank each of them for sharing their stories with us and for their dedication toward improving the quality of life for women and families in this state we are proud to call home.”

House Republican Leader McCombie and House Republicans plan to make the Emerging Women Leaders Recognition an annual event, building on the success of the first such event hosted in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the recognition to be postponed from 2020-2022.

## HEALTH CARE

### March - House approves Rep. Hammond's proton therapy cancer treatment legislation

Legislation sponsored by Rep. Norine Hammond that requires health insurance plans to provide coverage for [proton beam therapy cancer treatment](#) has been approved by the House.

Rep. Hammond has spent the past two years working on legislation to make it easier for cancer patients to receive proton beam therapy as part of their treatment plan. Hammond said that while proton beam therapy is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, insurance companies often restrict or refuse coverage for the treatment.

“Proton therapy is a very effective treatment for certain types of cancer,” Rep. Hammond said. “The legislation that I introduced last year was for a constituent that had brain cancer. She was told that proton therapy was the option that she should take for her treatment. However, it was not an in-network expense so they paid tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket. That being said she is doing wonderfully as a result of the treatment.”

House Bill 2799 would require that a health insurance policy provide coverage for medically necessary proton beam therapy for the treatment of cancer. The bill further provides that the policy shall not apply a higher standard of clinical evidence for the coverage of proton beam therapy than for any other form of radiation therapy treatment.

According to the Mayo Clinic, proton beam therapy uses positively charged protons that release their energy within the tumor. There is a small amount of entrance radiation, but virtually none travels beyond the tumor. Because the beams can be finely controlled, higher doses of radiation can be delivered to a tumor. Traditional X-ray treatment delivers radiation to everything in its path. That means tissue in front of and behind the tumor receives some damaging radiation.

An initiative of Northwestern Medicine, [HB 2799](#) passed the House on March 22 by a vote of 111-0-1.

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### May - Supporting Women & Families working group urges action on legislation to help mothers' & families' health

As the General Assembly approached the end of the spring legislative session, House Assistant Minority Leader Jackie Haas joined House Republicans in providing an update on the [Supporting Women & Families working group](#). Haas has led this group since its inception in February 2023.

“We introduced constructive pieces of legislation to make our state better for the health of Illinois women and families,” said Haas. “I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to debate these bills and move them to substantive committees for consideration. With our ideas, we can help address Illinois food deserts, increase Illinois’ healthcare workforce, and improve maternal healthcare in our state. We still have a week left, let’s get to work and debate these critical issues for our constituents.”

Bills introduced by Haas include [HB 4056](#) to create the Maternal Health and Well-Being Workgroup within IDPH’s Division of Maternal, Child and Family Health Services in the Office of Women’s Health Services. According to an IDPH 2021 report on Illinois’ maternal morbidity and mortality, in 2016-2017, 34% of women who died while pregnant or within a year of pregnancy died from a cause related to the pregnancy. Black women were also about three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related condition than white women, and the leading cause of pregnancy-related death, comprising 40%, was mental health conditions (including substance use disorders).

Bills co-sponsored by Haas to address related issues are [HB 4073](#) to work with graduate medical education and training programs and address the healthcare workforce shortage in Illinois. [SB 1360](#), also co-sponsored by Haas, would require the Department of Agriculture to conduct an access to nutritious food program in Illinois food deserts.

All three of these bills have been referred to the Rules Committee. Haas also serves on the Appropriations – Health & Human Services, Health Care Availability & Access, Human Services, and Mental Health & Addiction Committees. She has worked as a social worker in her communities for over 30 years.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

### January - University of Illinois raises tuition for incoming students

The [1.9% tuition hike](#) was approved by the University’s board of trustees. It will be imposed on students from within Illinois who win admission for the 2023-24 school year to the campuses at Urbana-Champaign and at Chicago. The in-state tuition at Urbana-Champaign will increase to \$12,712/year, plus fees and student expenses. Parallel but slightly higher (up to 2.5%) increases will be imposed on students at the same campuses from outside Illinois (out-of-state U.S., and abroad).

By state law, persons who are already enrolled in the University’s programs are held harmless from tuition increases like these. The U of I system is celebrating record enrollment in its three-campus system during the current 2022-23 school year, with 94,861 students enrolling last fall. These current enrollees, if they continue their studies next fall, will be among the beneficiaries of this hold-harmless

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tuition policy. However, existing enrollees are also charged fees for non-tuition services such as university housing, and these fees are also scheduled to increase for the 2023-24 school year.

## HOUSING

### **April - CNBC study shows Downstate has underperformed rest of U.S. in terms of housing investments**

For many U.S. families, buying a home is one of the biggest investments they will make to raise children and prepare for retirement. The retirement of a working-class or middle-class couple, and their children's higher education, often depends on the buildup of equity in a home. Ideally, this equity will appreciate well beyond the face value of the mortgage taken out to purchase the home.

However, the CNBC study looked at changes in housing prices during the generation-long period from 1998 through the end of 2022. The study found that housing costs have mushroomed in many parts of the U.S., but have stagnated in other parts. Of the six metropolitan areas with the smallest increases in fair-market housing prices during the past generation of U.S. life and work, **five were located in Downstate Illinois** (Bloomington-Normal, Decatur, Peoria, Rockford and Springfield).

The stagnating property values reflected an overall decline in Illinois' national image as a place to live and raise a family, and a decline in the population of the state. The population of Illinois declined from 2010 to 2020. Illinois joined Mississippi and West Virginia as the only three states to decline in population during this ten-year-long period.

## HUMAN SERVICES

### **February - Republicans demand hearings on Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center, propose a plan to make improvements**

House and Senate Republican legislators held a **Capitol news conference** February 23 to call for immediate joint House and Senate hearings to investigate disturbing reports of abuse and neglect of the residents of Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center.

Reps. Paul Jacobs, Charlie Meier, Norine Hammond, and Dave Severin, along with Senators Terri Bryant, Dale Fowler and Jil Tracy called for public hearings to discuss the serious concerns regarding disturbing reports of neglect and abuse of the residents at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center located in southern Illinois. In addition to their request for public hearings, the legislators discussed their plan called 'Help Protect Us and Improve Our Home' which offered eleven changes needed to make improvements at Choate.

The press conference was held after all members of the House and Senate Republican caucuses signed on to a **letter** that was sent to the Chairpersons of the Committees charged with oversight of DHS requesting the hearings and following news reports that have quoted Gov. Pritzker threatening to close down the facility if changes and improvements aren't made.



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“We’ve got an opportunity to implement a plan to help the residents and employees at Choate to once again make it a safe, healthy and respectable facility. But we must start by bringing in officials from Choate and from DHS and gathering members of the relevant House and Senate Committees so we can have our questions answered about past abuses and ongoing problems at the center,” **Jacobs said**. “It is the proper role of the legislature to investigate and offer oversight and solutions into matters that are this important.”

**A portion of the letter sent by all members of the House and Senate Republican Caucuses reads:**

*It is our sincere hope that as the chairpersons of the House and Senate Committees charged with the duty of overseeing the operations of and funding for the State of Illinois’ various mental health facilities, you would act with urgency in cooperation with us to get to the bottom of, and eventually solve, the many problems at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center. It is vital that we address these issues immediately so that this critical facility can continue to serve the 270 residents who depend on it. This is their home. We cannot displace these vulnerable individuals because, for many of them, this is their last resort. The state of Illinois has a duty to them. They deserve better, their families deserve better, and the staff that serves them deserve better.*

“Gov. Pritzker has only recently made threats to close down Choate,” Jacobs said. “I want the Governor to know that I share his frustration and stand ready to work collaboratively to fix these issues and keep Choate open. We can and will not accept a policy that gives up, a policy that throws our hands in the air in disgust and says nothing can be done. And I will fight every attempt to close down a facility that means so much to the residents of Choate and their families.”

According to **Rep. Charlie Meier**, “The ‘Help Protect Us and Improve Our Home’ proposal is a realistic plan to help make the improvements needed at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center. A place residents call their home. I am more than willing to work with DHS and the elected officials to help foster a safe, loving, and healthy home where they can happily live fulfilling lives.”

In a **report published by ProPublica** on February 10, lawmakers learned that multiple investigations by the Inspector General designated to oversee DHS revealed serious and unacceptable incidents of neglect and abuse and a culture of intimidation and retaliation against whistleblowers. Choate has been the subject of more than 1,500 complaints to DHS over the last decade.

**Republicans unveiled an 11-point proposal they say could begin to fix issues at Choate right away. The plan includes:**

- Install cameras in common areas.
- Implement ongoing staff training.
- A mass hiring of qualified staff to help.
- Track staff incidents by location and trends.
- Increase administrative and security inspections.
- Improve overall accountability of staff performance.



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- Remind employees if they see something is wrong, report it.
- Increase the amount of active treatment and activities for residents.
- Encourage and welcome parents/guardians visiting their loved ones.
- Assign an interim director or assistant director to Choate Developmental Center.
- Reevaluate the Office of Inspector General reporting system as it currently operates.

### **March - Southern Illinois lawmakers react to Governor's proposal to repurpose Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center**

Reps. Paul Jacobs and Charlie Meier have been the lead House Republican members working to identify and correct ongoing problems at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center with the goal of keeping the facility open to serve residents living with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In late February, the representatives joined Senators Dale Fowler, Terri Bryant and Jil Tracy for a Capitol news conference to demand immediate public hearings into abuses of residents of Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in Anna. Choate is located within the boundaries of Rep. Jacobs' district.

"My colleagues and I in the House and Senate Republican caucuses sounded the alarm on Choate, and we demanded hearings into the abuse and neglect that was laid out in very disturbing media reports. We are still demanding that those hearings take place," Jacobs said. "There's no reason they shouldn't. The House and Senate must act in their role as appropriate legislative oversight bodies to put on the record what happened at Choate and to allow families and loved ones and employees of Choate to testify. I'm not going to stop demanding these hearings take place as soon as possible."

The abuses that were detailed in a February 10, 2023, ProPublica report showed an unacceptable pattern of abuse, neglect, cover-up, and intimidation of whistleblowers over a decade-long period that resulted in more than 1,500 complaints to the Office of the Inspector General overseeing DHS.

Since that time, Jacobs joined Bryant (GOP Ranking Member of the Senate Mental and Behavioral Health Committee) in distributing a letter to all members of the House and Senate that provides an update on the "good things" that are happening at Choate. The letter was accompanied by another letter that was penned by the President of "Friends of Choate," Rita Burke. Friends of Choate is the parents and family advocacy group that works on behalf of the best interests of the residents of Choate.

"The fear that Friends of Choate had was that despite some very positive improvements that are underway at the facility, the Governor was just going to close it down and send the residents hundreds of miles away anyway," Jacobs said. "This is these residents' home. Their families are close by in many instances. The alternative to today's transformation announcement was permanent closure. I am cautiously optimistic that this transformation plan will meet the very real and urgent needs of the residents of Choate. For now, we will trust, but we will continuously verify."

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On March 8, Gov. Pritzker held a news conference at Southern Illinois University's School of Medicine to announce that Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center will undergo a three-year transformation that will effectively repurpose Choate while implementing new safety enhancements and expand support for families and the residents living there.

DHS announced the same day that it will partner with SIU's School of Medicine to shape [Choate's transformation](#).

"Our goal was to keep Choate open and make it a safer place for the residents being cared for there," [Jacobs said](#). "The Governor had previously threatened to shutter the facility, and that would have been devastating on many levels for the residents, their families, and the community of Anna. I am encouraged that SIU's School of Medicine will have a role in keeping Choate open and making it the best mental health facility that it can be. I am greatly concerned for the residents that will be moved from Choate to other facilities. I am greatly concerned for their families as well. It remains to be seen if this transformation plan will accomplish its stated goal. I will continue to hold this administration accountable for the promises that they have made to invest in building and grounds improvements, implement new safety measures, and provide direct support for residents and their families while this transformation takes place."

Meier says he is encouraged to see some of his recommendations being implemented at Choate, but cautions against the mass movement of residents into [Community Integrated Living Arrangements \(CILAs\)](#).

"Less than two weeks ago, we rolled out [a plan to protect the residents at Choate](#) and improve their home. Today, DHS affirmed they agree with us on making sorely-needed improvements. We are here to fight for our most vulnerable population under state care and to make sure they are safe and healthy. We will continue to provide oversight during this transition and will not turn our back on our developmentally disabled residents that call Choate their home," Meier said.

"Today is a positive step, but the job is not done yet. I want to ensure both Community Integrated Living Arrangements (CILAs) and State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs) are safe for all residents and want assurances that residents are only relocated to a new CILA or SODC if approved by their parent or legal guardian. We want residents to live as close to their loved ones as possible."

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### March - Rep. Keicher's bill supporting human trafficking victims receives unanimous support

In March, the House gave unanimous approval to legislation sponsored by Rep. Jeff Keicher. [House Bill 2418](#) creates a pathway to expunge criminal records for victims of human trafficking as they seek to recover from the trauma they have experienced and pursue a normal life. Human trafficking victims are often forced to participate in unlawful activity by their traffickers.

"Human trafficking is a much more pervasive problem than many of us realize, and it can happen in any community regardless of size or location," said Keicher. "Even though sex trafficking is most common, this form of modern-day slavery traps victims for many reasons, and they are often forced

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to engage in criminal behavior under threat to themselves, family or friends they may be trying to protect.”

“If the trauma of being trafficked wasn’t bad enough, victims often face legal penalties themselves for the actions they were forced into by their abusers. House Bill 2418 helps us support victims through the recovery process by creating a pathway to expungement.”

**As Keicher referenced**, HB 2418 helps trafficking victims by allowing them to petition for vacation, expungement, or immediate sealing of their sentence. It also allows the victim making the petition to attend hearings remotely to avoid undue hardship or create a risk of harm. In addition, the bill allows the petition to be filed under seal if a public filing may expose the victim to future harm. These steps help ensure a victim is able to avoid future victimization from their former abuser or abusers.

Keicher credited reporting by WNIJ and the work of the **Polaris Project**, a nonprofit non-governmental organization that works to combat and prevent sex and labor trafficking in North America, for raising awareness about the difficulties survivors face once they escape their abuse. This led him to work with state and local resources to bring HB 2418 forward.

“I want to thank many partners for helping us make this legislation a reality, including the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, DeKalb County State’s Attorney Rick Amato, the Illinois Attorney General’s Office, and my policy staff,” said Keicher. “I hope to see it receive unanimous support in the Senate and be signed into law by the Governor.”

Madeleine Behr, policy director for the **Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE)**, which provides free legal services to trafficking survivors who need criminal records relief, said, “Our attorneys see the hardships survivors face as they rebuild their lives, including trying to clear criminal records they received while being trafficked. HB 2418 is a terrific step forward. It adds protections for confidentiality and privacy as survivors undergo this process. We urge the state Senate to support this critical legislation.”

## JOBS

### January - Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund debt finally paid off

The appropriation of \$1.37 billion was a key ask of House Republicans and the Illinois business community. These funds represented money appropriated by Washington, D.C. to the state for COVID-19 relief, and this transfer relieves the state’s unemployment insurance system of some (but not all) of the burden imposed on this system by federally-mandated and state-mandated COVID-19 shutdown orders.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit North America in March 2020, public health authorities and Gov. Pritzker ordered many places of business and enterprise to shut down or to confine themselves to remote work processes. In addition to creating much hardship in the day-to-day lives of Illinoisans, these orders forced the layoffs of hundreds of thousands of Illinois residents. Unemployment rose to double-digit levels, and significant sums of money were paid out in unemployment benefits. Much of this money was paid out by the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, which compiled a deficit in

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calendar years 2020 through 2022 of almost \$5 billion. Ever since the outbreak of the pandemic, the Trust Fund has been working to [pay back this debt](#) and re-launch itself as a cash balance with the standing to prepare for future economic downturns.

[Senate Bill 2801](#), an appropriations bill enacted by the lame-duck 102nd General Assembly, does two things. It appropriates \$1.37 billion from state GRF to the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund to enable this Trust Fund to clear the remaining deficit. In addition, SB 2801 appropriates \$450 million from GRF to the Trust Fund. This money, defined as a loan, will serve as a temporary rainy-day fund. IDES has already begun to charge higher unemployment insurance taxes on many employers in order to raise the Fund's own resources, enable this loan to be paid back to GRF, and build a larger trust fund for future needs.

The Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund appropriation and loan measure, SB 2801, was signed into law on January 23 as PA 102-1121.

### January - State publishes unemployment numbers for final month of 2022

The December 2022 Illinois unemployment rate was 4.7%, making [Illinois 49th among the 50 states](#) in terms of employment. Nearby states have much lower unemployment numbers (Missouri: 2.8%, Indiana and Iowa: 3.1%; Wisconsin: 3.2%). Only Nevada, with casino-hotel operations still struggling in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, had a higher statewide unemployment rate than Illinois.

As reported by IDES, the December 2022 unemployment rate of 4.7% was unchanged from the same rate in November 2022. This stability masked the effects of continued changes in the Illinois economy as a whole, with jobs continuing to shift from professional and business services to the growth sectors of education, health care, and government. Professional and business services have been the backbone of Illinois' economy in recent decades, but continuing trends in technological efficiency and work placement are starting to take a toll on this sector (down 3,000 jobs in December 2022). Education, health care, and government services gained 7,000 jobs during the same period.

IDES also reported on December 2022 joblessness as calculated by metro areas. Sprawling Chicagoland is divided up into three metro areas, which cover greater Chicago, Lake County (and adjacent Kenosha, Wisconsin), and Kane County centering on Elgin. Many of Illinois' metro areas had jobless rates in December 2022 that were actually lower than the 4.7% number in Illinois as a whole, with low unemployment marked by regions (Metro-East, Quad Cities) where prosperity could be spilling over from bordering states. The Metro-East jobless rate was 3.4% in December 2022, and the Quad Cities rate was 3.7%. Traditionally industrial Decatur, Kankakee, and Rockford continued to have jobless rates above 5%.

### February - Financial analysis firms post Illinois layoff notices

When larger businesses (100 or more employees) choose to lay off 50 or more employees and the layoff is not an emergency, federal law requires the employer to post a layoff notice to provide the employees with fair warning and give them the chance to seek additional educational credentials or new employment. The layoff notice requirement is called the [Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act \(WARN Act\)](#).

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Two major players in the American industries of insurance and risk adjustment have both posted [Downstate Illinois layoff notices](#). State Farm, which is historically based in Bloomington-Normal, will eliminate 451 positions by March 31, 2023. Wells Fargo, which operates an insurance, risk adjustment, and financial analysis office in Springfield, will lay off 140 Central Illinois workers.

### February - Illinois ranked high for regional workforce development

Illinois' #1 status among states in the East North Central region of the U.S. was bestowed by [Site Selection](#), a magazine and website oriented towards professional challenges related to workforce development. Illinois' high score across a variety of career-readiness metrics was attributed to statewide economic development efforts oriented towards workplace-ready training. Illinois replaced Indiana, the previous #1 Midwestern state, in the multistate ranking.

Illinois' orientation towards workforce development includes strong institutional ties between community colleges and local employers. House Republicans have championed the creation of [employment advisory boards](#) within the community college system. Illinois manufacturers and other employers have pioneered new ways to use the concept of [registered apprenticeship programs](#) as a tool for regional workforce development.

### February - Moody's Analytics releases Year 2023 economic report with downbeat aspects

CGFA contracts with economic database firm Moody's Analytics to survey current numbers and trends generated by the Illinois economy as a whole. These trend lines can be significant in developing a picture of the future economic prospects of the state, including during the approaching Fiscal Year 2024 and the out-years to follow it.

An economic crash took place in Illinois in March 2020. It was associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and private-sector shutdown orders. This crash was followed by a relatively powerful economic recovery that made back most of the lost ground. Some sectors of the Illinois economy are now in better shape than they were in February 2020, before the crash. However, Moody's analysts are starting to see storm clouds on the horizon which they would like the General Assembly to look at. One of the data sets used by Moody's Analytics is a regular, repeated household survey of employment. This is a granular, household-oriented survey of who is working full-time and part-time. Moody's sees the results of this Illinois survey as "[downbeat](#)," noting that fewer Illinois residents are getting jobs than are residents of other states. These job numbers signal that future income tax payments and sales tax receipts could generate disappointing numbers, based on lower-than-expected numbers of Illinoisans who are collecting paychecks and using household cash flow to make essential purchases.

### February - Abrupt shutdown at Decatur's Akorn Pharmaceuticals results in the loss of more than 400 jobs

More than 400 people who work at Akorn Pharmaceuticals in Decatur were told late in February they are losing their jobs this week. [The company announced it is filing for bankruptcy and closing all U.S. operations.](#)



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Published reports indicate the company's CEO Douglas Boothe made a surprise announcement in a video to employees. According to those who viewed it, Boothe indicated the company was no longer able to secure financing and will file Chapter 7 bankruptcy this week.

The shutdown and Chapter 7 bankruptcy filing was a harsh end to the employment of hundreds of biochemical technicians and production workers at [Akorn's Decatur plant](#).

Prior to the shutdown, Akron Pharmaceuticals manufactured consumer health and animal health products with nationwide scope. Founded in 1971, Akorn specialized in the manufacture of generic pharmaceutical products that can be manufactured off-patent. At the height of its corporate existence, the firm had publicly traded stock on the NASDAQ equity market and was a component of the NASDAQ Biotechnology Index.

However, starting in 2020, Akorn began to face serious financial challenges. The company filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2020. The firm offered itself for sale, but announced on February 22 that it had received no bids. Akorn's shutdown was effective immediately.

### March - Stellantis shuts down Belvidere assembly plant; more than 1,200 layoffs

Traditionally used to assemble liquid-fueled vehicles, until February 28 the complex produced vehicles in the Jeep Cherokee line of products. Built by Chrysler in 1965, [the Belvidere plant has been a backbone of U.S. motor vehicle production](#) for more than half a century. With access to Interstate 90 and the Union Pacific railroad, the Belvidere plant was well situated to bring in parts and components from all over North America to be assembled into finished motor vehicles. The Belvidere plant has made both cars and light trucks. Owners have refitted the complex several times, most recently in 2010-2011.

### [More than 1,200 workers had jobs at the Belvidere plant when the shutdown was announced.](#)

Owner Stellantis did not make public any future plans for the complex; as a mothballed plant, it would be locked up and placed under security guardianship. Following the mothball announcement, only two motor vehicle assembly plants remained in operation in Illinois – the Ford Motor Company plant in Chicago, and the Rivian assembly plant in Bloomington-Normal.

Stellantis, an international motor vehicle assembler, is headquartered in Amsterdam, Netherlands. It is a holding company that includes nameplates sold as Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Fiat, Peugeot, Citroën, Opel, and other brands. [The Stellantis Belvidere shutdown](#) began on March 1.

### March - "Site Selection" magazine grants high ranking to Illinois as a site for corporate facility projects

The ranking reflects the continuing competition between the 50 states for decisions by corporate executives to choose a state as a preferred site for investment. Based on 2022 selection activity decisions by U.S. corporate headquarters, [Illinois rose from #3 to #2](#), shouldering past former #2 Ohio. The Land of Lincoln was chosen for 487 private-sector production, expansion, and operational projects, more than every other state in the Union except Texas. With 1,028 new 2022 projects logged, Texas continued to lead the nation in private-sector job creation.

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Four states with greater total populations than Illinois scored below the Prairie State in the Year 2022 “Site Selection” project count. California, Florida, New York and Pennsylvania all have more people than Illinois by U.S. census count, but won lower numbers of Year 2022 project announcements. When project announcements are statistically weighted by population size to generate project announcements per capita, Illinois continued to score well (#4 among the 50 states). Illinois scored more “Site Selection” projects per capita than Indiana or Iowa but scored below aggressive Kentucky.

March - Preliminary numbers say Illinois’ unemployment rate was 4.5% in January 2023 **Illinois’ 4.5% unemployment rate**, while it marked a 0.1% decline from the comparable rate in December 2022, was 1.1% higher than the nationwide 3.4% unemployment rate for the same month.

The preliminary Illinois January 2023 numbers, which are subject to revision as more data comes in, show continued job growth in the government and hospitality sectors of the economy. Of the net 14,300 new jobs created in Illinois during the month, 7,900 were created in government, and 6,300 were created in leisure and hospitality (including hotels and restaurants). Service sectors lost ground in Illinois in January. Monthly payroll declines were notched in information science (down 900 jobs) and the separate fields of professional and business services (down 900 jobs).

### March - House Republicans call for business reforms to attract manufacturing and keep jobs in Illinois

House Republican members held a Capitol news conference in mid-March to call for reforms to Illinois’ business climate following the shuttering of the Stellantis Jeep Assembly Plant in Belvidere and Stellantis’ previously announced \$150 million investment in Indiana.

Reps. Joe Sosnowski, Dan Ugaste and John Cabello called for reforms to Illinois’ tax code and business regulatory environment, while pointing out that major manufacturers are passing over Illinois to invest in states with friendlier business environments.

**Rep. Sosnowski** spoke on the need to keep manufacturing and other industries in Illinois, pointing out how the policies of the Pritzker Administration and the legislative supermajority in Springfield have given false hope to job creators and local families while failing to stem the exodus of Illinois jobs to neighboring states.

You can watch the press conference [here](#).

### March - Illinois metro areas showed continued strong job outlook in January 2023

The statewide unemployment rate was 4.7% for the first month of 2023, and in mid-March IDES worked with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to develop estimates of these rates within the **major metro areas of Illinois**.

In the highly-populated Chicago region, unemployment was 4.7% during this monthly period, the same as the statewide rate. Downstate metro areas posted numbers that were higher or lower than the statewide average. In many cases, the divergence from the mean was associated with a metro area’s orientation towards manufacturing industry, on the one hand, or tertiary services such as healthcare and higher education on the other. In higher ed/hospital-oriented Champaign-



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Urbana, for example, the January unemployment rate was 3.8%, signaling near-full employment. In nearby, historically industry-oriented Danville, the same rate was 5.7%. Other metro areas with high unemployment were Rockford, with 5.8%, and Kankakee, with 6.1%. Rockford-area jobless rates may bump up soon in association with the recent shuttering of Stellantis' Belvidere motor vehicle assembly complex.

### March - Illinois unemployment rate steady in February 2023, remained unchanged at 4.5%

The jobless numbers were reported on March 23 by [IDES](#). Although statewide nonfarm payroll numbers increased by 10,700 jobs in February, a comparable increase in the overall Illinois labor force meant that the unemployment rate remained unchanged from January. Illinois' unemployment rate continued to be higher than the national rate of 3.6%. Illinois continues to have a higher unemployment rate than most states, and the [highest rate of state and local taxes](#) in the nation.

Total nonfarm jobs increased in thirteen metropolitan areas and decreased in one for the year ending February 2023, according to [data released in March](#) by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the IDES. Over-the-year, the unemployment rate decreased in seven areas, increased in five areas and was unchanged in two.

The metro areas which had the largest over-the-year percentage increases in total nonfarm jobs were the Bloomington MSA (+4.8%, +4,500), the Peoria MSA (3.9%, +6,400), and the Champaign-Urbana MSA (+3.4%, +4,000). Total nonfarm jobs in the Chicago Metropolitan Division were up +2.1% or +77,500. Total nonfarm jobs were down in the Illinois section of the St. Louis MSA (-0.4%, -1,000).

The metro areas with the largest unemployment rate decreases were in the Chicago Metropolitan Division (-0.9 point to 4.1%), the Rockford MSA (-0.8 point to 6.3%), and the Decatur MSA (-0.6 point to 5.9%). The largest unemployment rate increases were in the Lake County-Kenosha County Metro (+0.4 point to 5.4%), the Davenport-Moline-Rock Island IA-IL MSA (+0.3%, +4.6%) and the Elgin Metro (+0.3 point to 5.9%). The unemployment rate was unchanged in the Bloomington MSA (4.0%) and the Champaign-Urbana MSA (4.1%).

### March - John Deere parts distribution announcement in Mattoon

The east-central Illinois community will be getting a [John Deere parts distribution center](#). The center, to be operated by America's largest manufacturer of agricultural equipment, landscaping machinery, and related products, could employ more than 200 workers. Located strategically adjacent to Interstate 57, Mattoon is part of the Charleston-Mattoon metropolitan area.

The Mattoon parts distribution center is slated to reoccupy a site that was, until recently, used to print paper documents. The former [LSC Communications Printing Co. plant](#) closed in 2020.

### April - House Republicans fight to reopen shuttered Belvidere assembly plant

The assembly plant is owned by international motor vehicle manufacturer Stellantis, the successor-in-interest of legendary U.S. car manufacturer Chrysler. The 280-acre complex, built adjacent to Interstate 90 (the Jane Addams Tollway), has supported up to 4,000 workers during boom periods of motor vehicle production. The Belvidere complex has assembled liquid-fueled cars and light trucks

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that carried the nameplates of Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep. Many Belvidere-built vehicles are familiar sights on America's roads and highways. It is not likely, however, that U.S. or global demand will enable the assembly-line-oriented production of gasoline-powered motor vehicles in the near future. When the Belvidere plant closed in February, employment had dropped below 1,250.

Auto industry professionals believe that a future market niche will exist for Dodge Ram-plated, electric-powered light trucks, including pickup trucks. Chrysler design teams have rolled out their projected new **Ram 1500 EV**, a pickup truck to be built for the North American market. The shuttered Belvidere facility could be used to build the new pickup truck.

House Republicans, led by Rep. Joe Sosnowski, strongly support Stellantis choosing Belvidere. They are deeply concerned, however, that the current Chicago-centered style of governance by Illinois Democrats will discourage Stellantis, which can choose any location in the U.S. for its prized new plant, from picking Illinois. Rep. Dan Ugaste points out that Illinois is one of the only U.S. states that has not had **a major manufacturing-oriented business investment since 2021**. During this two-year period, neighboring states, led by Indiana, Kentucky and Wisconsin, have enjoyed massive investments to create new goods production jobs. The high-tax status of Illinois governance, with its heavy reliance on burdensome property taxes, discourages large-scale capital investment in Illinois.

### **April - Walmart hits Chicago area with major closure announcements**

The Arkansas-based retailing giant, operator of Walmart and Sam's Club stores across the U.S., **released several lists of stores that are closed, or will soon close**. The lists include three stores in Chicago's suburbs and four stores in the city of Chicago. After the Chicago closure, Walmart will have only four remaining stores operating within the limits of Illinois' largest city, and the company states that these remaining stores are also losing money.

The closure of a brick-and-mortar store leads to the layoff of personnel. The Walmart business model includes the retention of approximately 200 associates per superstore. In addition, brick-and-mortar store closures lead to declines in retail and property tax payments to local governments and schools. While some of the lost retail sales are made up because Illinois shoppers continue to buy goods from other suppliers – including Internet retailers – a shut-down retail store will have a lower value as assessed property. Its closure will impose a greater tax burden on other property taxpayers within a jurisdiction.

### **April - Illinois' unemployment rate was 4.4% in March 2023**

Unemployment rates are published monthly by IDES. The IDES numbers indicate that in March, **4.4% of the overall Illinois labor force was unemployed**. This number defines unemployed people who are actively seeking employment as a percentage of the overall nonfarm workforce.

**Metro areas within Illinois** posted March numbers in line with the overall statewide average. Centers of higher education, headed by Bloomington-Normal (3.4%) and Champaign-Urbana (3.6%) have jobless numbers in line with overall national prosperity. Traditional industrial regions, headed by Decatur (6.1%) and Rockford (6.7%), continue to have recession-level unemployment numbers which are much higher than Illinois and the U.S. as a whole.

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The preliminary March figure marked a slight decline from the 4.5% unemployment rate notched in February. Nonfarm payrolls increased by 7,900 during this period. The number of unemployed Illinois workers remained high, at 283,800. Many states that neighbor Illinois have significantly lower unemployment rates than Illinois, such as Indiana's rate of 3.1%. The national unemployment rate was 3.5% in March.

### May - RISE working group provides updates on needed business & litigation reforms in Illinois

As chair of the House Republicans' [Reigniting Illinois' Strong Economy \(RISE\) working group](#), Rep. Dan Ugaste provided an update in mid-May on reforms for business and litigation in the state of Illinois. RISE has been working to improve Illinois' business climate in order to take advantage of the state's other strengths to bring job creators and opportunities home.

"House Republicans are introducing reasonable reforms to help make Illinois a pro-growth state where businesses and families can grow," said Ugaste. "The legislation our group introduced will help lower taxes, decrease regulation, control litigation, and assure reliable and affordable energy. There is more to be done, and we need to move these bills out of the Rules Committee so we can bring commonsense reforms to help job creators and workers call Illinois their home."

The RISE working group has proposed legislation to bring growth and hope for a brighter future in Illinois. The legislation covers tax reduction, business reforms, responsible energy policy, and litigation reforms. This includes Ugaste's two comprehensive workers' compensation bills, as well as two other business reform bills to help attract new investment in Illinois. Additionally, the working group has proposed three bills offering litigation reforms, four bills to reduce taxes, and two bills addressing energy.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

### January - Approaching end to COVID-19 emergency

Gov. Pritzker, who declared the first of a series of coronavirus emergency declarations and shutdown orders, issued an official declaration on January 31 that anticipates the act of making official [the end of the public-health-emergency](#) side of the pandemic. The existing emergency orders will expire by May 11, 2023, and will not be renewed. The declaration means that IDPH will no longer be able to use extraordinary power to issue decrees and "guidances" over public spaces and health care communities.

Variants of the COVID-19 virus continue to circulate in Illinois and throughout the U.S. Some of Pritzker's rules, including controversial state rules that have sparked strong pushbacks, will remain in place as late as [May of this year](#). The virus continues to change and mutate, and a person who has already caught an earlier variant of the disease can catch a new variant. Persons with challenges to their immune systems need to maintain contact with their health care providers to remain informed about the situation.

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### May - Official end to COVID-19 emergency in Illinois

After 1,155 days of continuous rollovers, Gov. Pritzker allowed the coronavirus emergency proclamations in effect throughout Illinois to expire. The expiration marks the end of more than three years of mandatory stay-at-home orders, partial economic shutdowns, and mandatory facial coverings and vaccinations in a variety of workplaces and settings. These government-ordered precautionary measures changed the daily lives of millions throughout Illinois. The **COVID-19 emergency** was first declared by disaster proclamation on March 9, 2020, as infectious coronavirus spread into the United States from mainland China.

Illinois was one of the last states to declare an official end to the coronavirus pandemic. By May 2023, 44 of the 50 states had already ended their **pandemic states of emergency**. The final COVID-19 emergency proclamation orders expired in Illinois on May 11.

## SECOND AMENDMENT

### January - Democrats pass unconstitutional gun ban bill during lame-duck session

Gov. Pritzker and his anti-gun allies in the Democrat-controlled General Assembly rammed an unconstitutional gun ban bill through during the final days of the 2023 lame-duck session.

**House Bill 5471** (P.A. 102-1116) implements a so-called “assault weapon” ban, which begins immediately except for those who complete an endorsement affidavit (aka gun registry) no later than October 1, 2023 or those who fall under the list of exemptions. Endorsement affidavits must include serial numbers of weapons.

This legislation bans the manufacture, possession, delivery, sale and purchase of so-called “assault weapons,” .50 caliber rifles, and .50 caliber cartridges. It further bans the manufacture, delivery, or sale of “large capacity ammunition feeding devices” meaning a magazine, belt, drum, feed strip or similar device that has a capacity of more than 10 rounds of ammunition for long guns and more than 15 rounds of ammunition for handguns. It bans rapid-fire devices. And it amends the Firearms Restraining Order Act to change the duration of a plenary order from six months to up to one year.

This so-called assault weapons ban will prevent law-abiding citizens from accessing and using dozens of commonly used firearms that people use to protect themselves, their families and their property, as well as hunt, target shoot and competition shoot. It will make criminals out of law-abiding gun owners exercising their Second Amendment rights. Gun bans like this do nothing to take illegal guns off of the street. It does nothing to address the growing mental health crisis in our state and nation.

Gun rights advocates indicated that they will file suit against implementation of Illinois’ new gun ban law, as it is blatantly unconstitutional and infringes on the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners.

### January - Lawsuits filed against Illinois’ new gun ban law

Starting on January 13, opponents of the new law have filed **lawsuits in state and federal courts** to have the measure stayed and then struck down. The state-enacted measure is seen by constitutional lawyers as highly vulnerable to court action. The law purports to **ban certain firearms and magazines**,

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and would require the registration of a wide variety of firearms that are listed as so-called “assault weapons.” Action in the courts will continue, with the preliminary goal of staying enforcement of the law.

The new law is also being challenged by many leaders in law enforcement. At least 74 sheriffs have issued statements of opposition to the measure, including statements by many sheriffs that they will take no active steps to enforce the gun ban. The statements, which cover diverse jurisdictions throughout Illinois, reflect complete opposition to the law and express faith that it will soon be struck down in court. Illinois is the ninth state to take action to ban so-called “assault weapons,” although 41 U.S. states have refused to take such actions. The constitutionality of these bans has come under severe challenge in recent months. There are court pushbacks going on at this time against parallel gun laws enacted in other Democrat-aligned states.

The sections of the new Illinois law that ban certain types of gun magazines are seen as especially vulnerable to federal court challenge. The federal courts are bound, under the U.S. Constitution, to uphold the supremacy of the Second Amendment over all other laws. In House debate, proponents of the magazine ban could not point to case laws upholding, with specificity, the validity of this type of prohibition. Despite warnings from House Republicans that the gun ban bill as a whole, and especially this section of it, was blatantly unconstitutional, the Democrats voted to pass the gun ban bill anyway. The controversial gun bill was enacted early in January 2023 by Democrats in the lame duck 102nd General Assembly.

### January - Opponents win restraining order against new gun ban law

The temporary retaining order prevents enforcement of the January 2023 Illinois gun ban law upon specified plaintiffs. The new law also requires Illinoisans to register, and report to authorities, certain types of firearms they may own and have in their possession.

Citing constitutional grounds, Effingham County Circuit Judge Joshua Morrison has issued a TRO against the new law. The order was issued on January 20. The text of the judge’s order sets forth multiple reasons to presume that the law will be judged unconstitutional at trial. Democratic Attorney General Kwame Raoul has appealed the judge’s order.

Other lawsuits, including a federal court lawsuit by the Illinois State Rifle Association, have also been filed against the new gun ban law. A key element of the statute purports to ban certain gun magazines, but in January 2023 floor debate the proponents of the bill could not point to state or federal case law to uphold the constitutionality of such a ban. As well as pointing out the lack of case law, these lawsuits also point out constitutionally questionable facets of the new enactment, including concerns that the enactment violates the federal Second Amendment. Litigation will continue.

### January - TRO against gun ban upheld in state court; actions in federal court

The lame-duck measure, passed by Democrats in January 2023, purports to ban so-called “assault weapons” and large ammunition magazines. The bill also subjects a wide variety of firearms to harsh regulation, including mandatory registration and locational pinpointing of the firearms. The law has been stayed by at least two judicial TROs. One of the TRO efforts results from a case brought by



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[House Republicans Adam Niemerg and Blaine Wilhour](#) in White County. Another TRO, which also blocks the law, was upheld in late January by an [appellate court](#).

Prior to imposition of the TROs, the new law imposed severe restrictions, including mandatory registration and locational monitoring, on a variety of weapons which are capable for rapid loading and rapid firing; the measure covers various semi-automatic firearms, including so-called “assault weapons.” The Second Amendment protects the rights of Americans to keep and bear arms. These rights have been buttressed by a variety of federal court decisions that now make up valid case law. In the General Assembly when the gun ban bill was being debated, opponents of the measure pointed to these case laws and asked the supporters of the bill to defend their measure. In addition to challenges against the law in state court, the course of the debate indicated that the bill could be vulnerable, once passed, to being struck down in federal court.

A challenge to the state gun ban law by McHenry County, originally filed in state court, has now been transferred to [federal court](#). The McHenry County action is only one of many stands by Illinois counties and county officials, including [DuPage County Sheriff James Mendrick](#), against the controversial new law.

Gun-rights plaintiffs have now filed at least [three separate federal lawsuits](#) against the new gun ban law. Plaintiffs include the National Rifle Association. The cases allege that the new law imposes an unconstitutional burden upon the legitimate exercise of Second Amendment rights. The federal lawsuits constitute a backstop against any possible decisions in state courts in favor of the new law, as the federal courts possess a jurisdiction on matters involving the U.S. Constitution that is not bound or limited by the decisions of state courts.

Meanwhile, the gun law remains under TRO stay for specified plaintiffs in a decision upheld in state appellate court. The appellate court decision was handed down on January 31.

### **February - New Illinois gun ban law faces stiffening headwinds in court**

The Democrats’ gun ban law, passed during the January 2023 lame-duck session, bans certain so-called “assault weapons” as well as extended firearm magazines. The law requires that certain firearms already owned by law-abiding gun owners be registered with the State Police.

After the gun ban bill was passed by the Democrat supermajority and immediately signed into law by Gov. Pritzker, the measure began to face serious constitutional challenges. In early February, a [plaintiff’s group](#) that includes Rep. Dan Caulkins won a third TRO against the Illinois gun ban law. The Macon County court decision represented further evidence that multiple Illinois courts are finding that the balance of probable outcomes is shifting against the controversial law. Litigation will continue at the state and federal levels.

### **February - Illinois’ gun ban law already facing headwinds in federal court**

When Democrats passed the controversial gun ban bill just before the end January lame-duck session of the 102nd General Assembly, Republicans warned that the bill would face serious constitutional challenges in court. The new law purports to ban, or heavily regulate, a long list of so-called “assault weapons,” firearm fittings, and extended magazines. Several of the sections of



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the controversial law go into extreme detail to describe specific types of objects to be banned or regulated, while being quite vague about other classes of objects.

It was this disparity between detail and vagueness that drew the attention this week of federal Judge Stephen McGlynn of the Southern District of Illinois. In an order that applied to three separate federal lawsuits filed against the gun ban law, Judge McGlynn ordered the State of Illinois – which as the party that enacted the law and is defending it in court, is the defendant of record – to provide **“illustrative examples of each and every item banned”** under the new law. The phrase “each and every item” was taken by observers of these cases as a sign that the judge was looking with skepticism against the vaguer sections of the gun ban law. “Unconstitutional vagueness” is a legal term that describes one of many pathways that can be taken by a federal court when striking down an unconstitutional law. Judge McGlynn issued his order on February 13.

### **March - House Republicans want clarity from Attorney General concerning enforcement of unconstitutional firearm ban**

Rep. Dan Caulkins participated in a **press conference** on March 8 with the Illinois State Rifle Association and his House Republican colleagues, Reps. Cabello, Elik, Tipsword and Windhorst to urge the Attorney General to provide more clarity to law-abiding gun owners concerning a March court decision ruling that the firearm ban signed by Gov. Pritzker is unconstitutional.

“Our Second Amendment rights are under attack,” said Caulkins. “The court ruled the firearm ban unconstitutional last Friday and law-abiding gun owners deserve to know whether or not the Attorney General is going to continue enforcing the unconstitutional firearm ban.”

On March 3, Macon County Circuit Court Judge Rodney Forbes ruled the firearm ban to be **unconstitutional**. This ruling was in response to Caulkins’ lawsuit filed in Macon County concerning the firearm ban signed into law on January 10th by Gov. Pritzker.

The Illinois State Rifle Association weighed in by releasing the following statement, “After reviewing with counsel the Macon County Circuit Court’s decision, based on how the decision is not explicitly limited to one named person or group of persons, and based on how the Opinion clearly finds the challenged law unconstitutional on a facial basis as opposed to being unconstitutional as-applied to any particular person or persons, the ISRA believes that the Macon County decision is meant to be read to apply to all persons in the state. We acknowledge that the language therein also seems aimed towards facilitating an Illinois Supreme Court review, and we are confident that the skillful attorneys representing the plaintiffs will successfully present their arguments to that Court at the appropriate time.”

### **April - Federal courts take action on controversial Illinois gun ban law**

The new law, passed during the January lame-duck session, bars significant categories of firearms, firearm attachments, and magazines. The new statute was immediately challenged in state and in federal court. In late April, a federal judge issued a **preliminary injunction** to stop the enforcement of the law until the case is fully litigated.

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In order to grant the preliminary injunction, the Court determined that the plaintiffs, who are Illinois gun owners and Illinois federal firearm licensees have shown that the enforcement of the statute will create irreparable harm with no adequate remedy at law. In addition, the plaintiffs had to demonstrate: (i) a reasonable likelihood of success on the merits, (ii) that the public interest is in favor of the relief, and (iii) that the balance of harm weighs in their favor. The Court determined that the Plaintiffs had met that burden, and issued the preliminary injunction on April 28.

The preliminary injunction stopped the enforcement of the law while the case continues to be fully litigated. During his analysis for the preliminary injunction, federal judge Stephen P. McGlynn cited the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court case, *New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen*, current case law that changed the analysis of Second Amendment cases. Judge McGlynn is a federal judge in the Southern District of Illinois. *Bruen* held that the Second Amendment protects the possession and use of weapons in common use. The preliminary injunction is not a verdict after a full-fledged legal proceeding to examine the constitutionality of the law.

In a ruling issued on May 4, [the preliminary injunction was stayed](#) by a federal appellate court.

## STATE GOVERNMENT

### February - Gov. Pritzker elevates the status of Illinois' chief anti-terrorism agency

IEMA will now be known as the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and Office of Homeland Security. The reorganization means that the fight against terrorism in Illinois will now be headed by a person who will be a Deputy Director, a senior law enforcement official. The Homeland Security Advisor will coordinate with cabinet-level public safety agencies throughout Illinois on terrorism-related strategic issues, including cybercrime and electronic sabotage. The change also elevates the current Illinois Terrorism task Force to the level of a permanent board of advisors, the Illinois Homeland Security Advisory Council. The change will better situate IEMA to apply for and pass through federal grants to local law enforcement and the private sector aimed at the reduction and prevention of terrorism and sabotage.

The state government reorganization move was filed on February 21, as [Executive Order 2023-03](#). The Illinois Constitution grants broad powers to the Governor to reconfigure state government agencies. The reconfigurations have to maintain the sets of State government responsibilities previously created by the General Assembly through [state law](#). In this case, the General Assembly has already asked IEMA to fight against terrorism and sabotage, and this executive order continues this General Assembly policy.

## TAXES

### January - Kiplinger's ranks Illinois as least tax-friendly state

Kiplinger's has ranked [Illinois worst among the ten "least tax-friendly states for middle-class families."](#) The low ranking was based on our state's income tax rates, sales tax rates, property tax burdens and motor fuel tax charges. All four of these major tax burdens are higher in Illinois than in most states.

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Like most other surveys, Kiplinger's found Illinois' property tax bills to be the second highest in the U.S., behind New Jersey. If a hypothetical Illinois family bought a family home with a fair market value of \$300,000, then after assessments and exemptions the home would have to pay an annual property tax bill of \$6,219. For many Illinoisans, these property tax bills are bundled together with monthly mortgage payments to create a crushing burden on working families.

Illinois sales tax rates, counting the local sales taxes charged by counties, many municipalities, and at least two public transit taxing bodies, were #8 nationwide. Illinois' 4.95% income tax charged upon personal income tied for eighth-highest among the 50 states. By contrast many other large U.S. states, headed by Florida and Texas, charge no state income tax at all. Illinois' motor fuel tax rates are higher than the rates charged in neighboring states, leading to a familiar sight of streams of cars heading across state lines every day to buy motor fuel. Neighboring Missouri, by contrast, has one of the lowest [motor fuel tax rates](#) in the nation.

### January - Tax-related outmigration continues

A survey of data from the public and private sector, including the U.S. Census Bureau, indicates that approximately [141,656 former Illinois residents moved to other states in 2022](#). The great majority of them picked a state with a tax structure that is more economically-friendly than Illinois. The list of leading states with 2022 outmigration was headed by California, with 343,000 emigrants, New York, with 300,000 persons leaving, and Illinois.

The list of states with net gains was heading by the two largest U.S. states without a state income tax, Florida (up 319,000) and Texas (up 231,000). Other major net gains were enjoyed by North Carolina (up 100,000), Tennessee (up 82,000) and Georgia (up 81,000). Almost all of the migration patterning showed movement from the North to the South and the West (except California), with Rocky Mountain states joining the South as focuses of net U.S. migration. Former Illinoisans are continuing to leave Illinois for other states with more jobs and lower tax burdens.

### March - WalletHub survey finds Illinois scores 50th of the 50 states in terms of state and local tax rates

The survey performed by WalletHub, a private-sector database and analysis firm, calculated the composite of the total state and local tax rates charged within each state. To make this number meaningful to families, the tax number was then contrasted with median U.S. household income.

When state and local taxes are added together, the effective state-by-state rate ranged from 6.05% to 15.05%, depending on state lines. [Illinois scored dead last](#), with the tax burdens faced by Prairie State families taking up 15.05% of the income of a typical American household. This was 50th among the 50 states.

As in previous surveys, many of the lower-taxed states are located in the West or the Sunbelt. States like Nevada (4th), Florida (6th) and Colorado (9th) are able to utilize their overall population growth (including urban population growth in fast-growing cities like Las Vegas, Tampa, and Denver) and their economic prosperity to reduce their tax burdens. The five states that border Illinois all have a [lower tax burden than Illinois](#). Examples include Indiana (35th in WalletHub), Iowa (46th), Kentucky (40th), Missouri (30th) and Wisconsin (42nd).

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### TRANSPORTATION

#### March - Amtrak Chicago-Quad Cities train service still stalled

Enthusiasts have called for decades for the resumption of passenger train service from Chicago to the Illinois-Iowa Quad Cities region. On the current planning map, the route could use an existing train line, the Chicago-to-Quincy BNSF route, for more than two-thirds of its 160-mile line. The Chicago-Quad Cities route, including a necessary track connection near Wyanet, Illinois, has been an official plan of the [IDOT](#) since 2012.

Many promises have been made that passenger train service will be restored in Moline-Rock Island, Illinois, which has not had passenger train services since 1978. However, the [Quad City Times](#) revealed this week that there is no prospect for a train run any time soon. The Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS), a railroad that would own the host right-of-way from Wyanet to Moline, has not yet come to an agreement with IDOT on final terms for operating and paying for the trackage that the line would use.

#### April - “Drop it and Drive” during Distracted Driving Awareness Month

All distractions – whether texting, eating, or talking – can be dangerous when you’re behind the wheel. Throughout April, IDOT teamed up with the State Police and more than 200 local law enforcement agencies to promote [Distracted Driving Awareness Month](#), save lives, and make Illinois roads safer.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 26,004 people died in crashes nationwide involving a distracted driver between 2012 and 2019. While overall crash fatalities decreased slightly from 2018, distraction-related fatalities increased by 10%. The number of deaths linked to driver distraction reached 3,142 nationwide, accounting for nearly 9% of all crash fatalities in 2019. This represents a 10% increase since 2018. Distraction accounted for the largest increase in reported causes of fatalities in 2019. Distracted driving continues to be a problem in Illinois and takes many forms. In 2020, 9,432 crashes on Illinois roads involved a distracted driver. In Illinois, it is illegal to operate a motor vehicle while using an electronic communication device to text or make a call unless using hands-free mode.

#### To keep your attention on the road where it belongs, remember these tips:

- If you need to send a text or check your phone, pull over and park your car in a safe location.
- Make a passenger your “designated texter.” Let them use your phone to respond to calls or messages.
- Do not engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving.
- Cellphone use can be habit-forming. Struggling to not text and drive? Put the cellphone in the trunk or back seat.

Using a mobile phone while driving is dangerous, but getting caught can also be expensive and embarrassing. Save your money and maybe even a life – wait until you reach your destination to text or call. Remember: Drop it and Drive!

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### VETERANS

#### **March - Rosenthal legislation to support veteran-owned small businesses passes House**

In March, the House unanimously passed legislation filed by [Rep. Wayne Rosenthal](#) to improve opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses. The legislation, [House Bill 2288](#), updates the Procurement Code so veteran-owned small businesses are more able to compete for state contracts.

“The Veterans Business Program exists to give our veteran-owned small businesses the chance to compete for state contracts,” said Rosenthal. “When the program was established it set limits for gross sales that are so low today that very few of our veteran businesses are now able to qualify for the program. This legislation doubles the limit to expand access for our veteran businesses.”

As Rosenthal referenced, the number of veteran-owned small businesses who qualify for the [Veterans Business Program](#) had fallen to only 15% of previously eligible businesses by FY21. To improve eligibility for the program, HB 2288 increases the limit for a business’s annual gross sales to less than \$150 million, rather than less than \$75 million as established back in 2011. This change reflects the increase in construction prices of 50-70% that has taken place since 2011.

“When our veterans have more job opportunities after their service, it’s good for our state and our economy,” said Rosenthal. “I want to thank my colleagues in the House for supporting this legislation with unanimous support and I look forward to it passing the Senate with strong support as well.”