



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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On These And Other Legislative Issues Important To Working People

The Illinois Senate will return to Springfield on Monday, March 30th at 11:30am. The Illinois House will return Tuesday, March 31st at noon. Next week is the deadline to pass bills out of their respective chambers.

STATE NEWS

HB 38 – Fire House Construction and Remodeling

Rep. Moffit (R – Galesburg)

SUPPORT

Authorizes the Illinois Finance Authority and the State Fire Marshal jointly to administer a revolving loan program for the construction and rehabilitation of fire stations.

3/26/09 – Passed House 113-0-0.

HB 185 – MRSA Screening

Rep. Bellock (R – Westmont)

SUPPORT

Creates the MRSA Prevention, Control, and Reporting Act. Sets forth methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus ("MRSA") prevention, control, and reporting activities that are applicable to State residential facilities (that is, any State mental health hospital, State developmental center, or State residential school for the deaf and visually impaired; any Department of Corrections operated correctional center, work camp or boot camp; and any Department of Juvenile Justice operated juvenile center or boot camp).

3/26/09 – Passed House 114-0-0.

First Reading in Senate.

HB 267 – Grace Period Registration

Rep. Davis (D – Chicago)

SUPPORT

Amends the Election Code. Permits grace period registration until the 7th day (now, the 14th day) before the election or primary.

3/25/09 – Passed House 70-45-1.

First Reading in Senate.

HB 786 - Roofing Contractors

Rep. Rita (D - Chicago)

Sen. Maloney (D – Chicago)

SUPPORT

A general contractor who fraudulently uses a roofing contractor's license number to obtain a building permit may be prosecuted for Identity Theft under the Criminal Code.

3/24/09 – Passed House 113-0-0.

First Reading in Senate.

HB 952 - Prevailing Wage

Rep. Beiser (D - Alton)

Sen. Haine (D – Alton)

SUPPORT

Amends the Prevailing Wage Act to provide that the Act applies to the demolition of public works.

3/24/09 – Passed House 86-27-0.

First Reading in Senate.

HB 3900 – Alternative Pension Formula for Sign Hanger

Rep. Miller (D – Chicago)

SUPPORT

Provides the alternative (State police) retirement formula for certain sign hangers and sign hanger foremen employed by the Department of Transportation. Provides that the changes apply to persons in service on or after June 28, 2001.

3/26/09 – Passed House 66-48-0.

First Reading in Senate.

HB 4241 – Dependent Coverage for Group Insurance

Rep. Mautino (D – Spring Valley)

Sen. Haine (D – Alton)

Monitor

Amends the State Employees Group Insurance Act of 1971. Changes the maximum age of a dependent who is an unmarried child from 23 years old to 24 years old. Adds an unmarried child age 19 to 24 on a medical leave of absence to the definition of a dependent.

3/24/09 – Passed House 114-0-0.

First Reading in Senate.

SB 39 – Teacher Pregnancy Leave

Sen. Althoff (R – Crystal Lake)

Rep. Froehlich (D – Schaumburg)

SUPPORT

Amends the Downstate Teachers Article of the Illinois Pension Code. Allows a teacher to establish credit for certain leaves of absence due to pregnancy. Includes new benefit increase compliance language. Effective immediately.

3/25/09 – Passed Senate 56-0-0.

First Reading in House.

SB 105 – MRSA Screening

Min. Leader Radogno (R – Lemont)

Rep. Bellock (R – Westmont)

SUPPORT

Creates the MRSA Prevention, Control, and Reporting Act.

(Identical to HB185.)

3/25/09 – Passed Senate 59-0-0.

First Reading in House.

SB 125 – Hauling Debris Permits

Sen. Link (D – Lake Bluff)

SUPPORT

Provides that a facility that accepts construction debris and located in a county with a population over 700,000 as of January 1, 2000 and is used exclusively for the transfer, storage, or treatment of general construction or demolition debris does not need a permit if it is currently receiving construction debris.

3/25/09 – Passed Senate 59-0-0.

First Reading in House.

SB 1369 - State Facility Overtime

Sen. Frerichs (D - Champaign)

SUPPORT

Creates the State Facility Overtime Act. Provides that the Director of the State agency responsible for the operation of specified State facilities (or the Director's designee or agent) may not require an employee to accept work in excess of an agreed upon, predetermined, and regularly scheduled daily work shift, not to exceed 40 hours per week.

3/26/09 – Passed Senate 52-5-0.

First Reading in House.

SB 1479 - Furlough Days toward Pension

Sen. Raoul (D - Chicago)

SUPPORT

Amends the State Employee Article of the Illinois Pension Code. Provides service credit for up to 5 days of voluntary or involuntary furlough used to address a State fiscal emergency. Effective immediately.

3/26/09 – Passed Senate 52-1-0.

First Reading in House.



Labor joins Agreed Bill Process on UI stimulus funding

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus package) signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009, contained Unemployment Modernization Act model reforms and provided states with \$7 billion in incentive funding to enact Unemployment Insurance reforms. These model reforms were placed in the Act to expand the unemployment safety net and to provide immediate relief to unemployed workers in communities and workplaces hardest hit by the current recession.

Due to increasing unemployment trends in Illinois, current state law will "trigger" 13 weeks of extended benefits. The stimulus legislation generally provides for 100 percent of federal reimbursement for claimants qualifying for Extended Benefits through calendar year 2009. To ensure unemployed workers, especially those currently receiving Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) benefits, can receive this additional 13 weeks without interruption, changes in state law are needed to enact an "alternate trigger" by April 12, 2009. With the adoption of an "alternate trigger" the state could pay up to \$471 million in extended benefits to Illinois claimants through calendar year 2009 with nearly 100 percent federal reimbursement.

In addition to adopting an "alternate trigger" for Extended Benefits, the stimulus package also provides Illinois up to \$300 million to the UI Trust Fund. Current state law qualifies Illinois to receive \$100 million but changes to current law through the agreed bill process will be needed for Illinois to qualify for the additional \$200 million.

Illinois AFL-CIO President Michael T. Carrigan, has appointed the following individuals to represent labor in the agreed bill process:

Roberta Lynch, AFSCME Council 31
Frank Cavarretta, Steelworkers
John Coli, Teamsters Joint Council 25

John Penn, Laborers, Midwest Region
Dennis Williams/ Mark Haasis - UAW, Region 4
Tim Drea, Illinois AFL-CIO

Illinois Unemployment Hits 17 Year High

The Illinois Department of Employment Security reported this week that in February unemployment in Illinois hit its highest level in over 17 years. The total number of unemployed in Illinois grew to 570,100, the highest since November 1983.

The Department also reported that Illinois employers reduced their workforce by 37,200 last month. The U.S. Department of Labor reported that 321,457 displaced workers filed for unemployment in Illinois during the week of March 7, 2009 which was nearly 7,000 more than the prior week.

NATIONAL NEWS

Spector Turns his Back on Working Families

On Tuesday, long-time supporter of working families Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) announced he was switching his position on the Employee Free Choice Act and that he now plans to oppose the bill.

Spector, the only Senate Republican to co-sponsored the bill in 2005 and vote for it in 2007, now says he agrees with the misinformation business groups are espousing, calling the secret ballot "the cornerstone of how contests are decided in a Democratic society" and saying "mandatory arbitration may subject employers to a deal they cannot live with."

As an original co-sponsor of the bill, Specter is well aware that the Employee Free Choice Act does not remove the "secret ballot" but allows employees to decide if they want a secret ballot – not the employer.

Spector, who is up for election in 2010 and faces an opponent in the Republican Primary, has been under attack from big business to flip his position on the labor bill. The Associated Press reports that

business groups have spent more than \$20 million to defeat the legislation.

With 59 Democratic votes (when Al Franken is seated) in the senate, one additional vote is needed for cloture to allow the bill to come up for a full vote. Specter could have just voted no on the bill but he now says he'll block the full senate from ever voting the bill up or down.

President Obama, Vice President Biden, large majorities in both houses of Congress and 73 percent of the American people say they favor the Employee Free Choice Act. It will be a shame if one vote in the senate disallows this bill from advancing.

AFL-CIO President Sweeney said that Specter's announcement was "a rebuke to working people." He added that the Labor Federation will "not let a hardball campaign from big business derail the dreams of workers" and that in the coming weeks they will "be escalating the EFCA campaign."