



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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

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The Illinois General Assembly adjourned yesterday and will take the week of Thanksgiving off. The House will convene at noon on Monday, November 29. The Senate will return on Tuesday, November 30 at noon. The House is scheduled to adjourn on Wednesday, December 1, while the Senate is scheduled to adjourn on Thursday, December 2.

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### Illinois State House Protects Public Employees

Representative Chapa LaVia (D – Aurora) led the State House of Representatives in voting to override an amendatory veto by Governor Quinn. HB 5154, an initiative of the Illinois AFL-CIO and its public employee affiliates, passed the General Assembly earlier this year. The underlying legislation sought to protect public employees from having their professional personnel evaluations made public under a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. Governor Quinn amendatorily vetoed the legislation in July to limit its protection to just state and local peace officers. The House voted this week 77-36-0 to override the Governor's AV. The motion to override will be considered by the Senate in the second week of Veto Session. Senator Lightford (D – Chicago) is chief sponsor in the Senate, where it will require a 3/5 majority vote (36 votes) to override the veto. The original bill received 45 affirmative votes in the Senate.

### 96<sup>th</sup> and 97<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Schedule

The 96<sup>th</sup> General Assembly added several days to its schedule. The Illinois House scheduled session days for January 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, & 11. The Senate has added the days of January 5 & 6 to their schedule.

The 97<sup>th</sup> General Assembly is scheduled to convene on January 12. The Democrats will retain control of both chambers in the capitol. They will enjoy a 64-54 majority in the House and a 35-24 majority in the Senate. Governor Quinn will retain his position in the Executive Branch.

### State Senate Establishes Workers' Compensation Special Committee

Senate President Cullerton established a Senate Special Committee on Workers' Compensation Reform. The committee will consist of six total members with an equal number from each caucus. The bipartisan committee will review the State's current workers' compensation practices with the goal of creating a more attractive and competitive business environment in Illinois as compared to neighboring states while protecting the rights of Illinois' workforce. The special committee will be chaired by Senate President Cullerton and Minority Leader Radogno. Cullerton has appointed Senator Haine (D – Alton) and Senator Silverstein (D – Chicago) to serve on the committee with him. Radogno appointed Senator McCarter (R – Decatur) and Senator Dillard (R – Westmont) to serve with her. The special committee is being charged to issue a public report containing specific recommendations to the Senate no later than January 3, 2011.

### Special Committee on Medicaid Policies

A similar Senate bipartisan committee was established to review the state's current Medicaid policies and costs to develop specific recommendations on how to reduce expenditures and deliver services more efficiently. The committee will also identify methods for reducing waste and fraud in the State's Medicaid program while maintaining services that are essential to a significant number of Illinoisans. Senator Steans (D – Chicago) and Senator Righter (R – Mattoon) will co-chair the committee. Cullerton has appointed

Senator Trotter (D – Chicago) and Senator Koehler (D – Peoria) to serve on the committee as well. Dave Syverson (R – Rockford) and Pam Althoff (R – Crystal Lake) will serve on the committee with Senator Righter. The committee is charged to issue a public report containing specific legislative recommendations to the Senate no later than January 3, 2011.

### Longtime Members of the General Assembly Say Good-Bye

With the 2010 Election now behind us, some seasoned veterans are leaving Springfield, with a new class of leaders ready to fill their seats. Two long-time serving members said good-bye to the General Assembly this week. State Representative Art Turner (D - 9<sup>th</sup> District – Chicago) has not officially filed his resignation with the House Clerk. However, he has made his intentions known that his son, Art Turner, Jr. will be taking over for him during the second week of Veto Session.

State Senator Dan Cronin (R – Lombard) is resigning effective November 30. Cronin is resigning to assume the responsibility as DuPage County Board Chairman. Cronin also serves as DuPage County Republican Chairman. His replacement in the Senate is Downers Grove Mayor Ron Sandack. Ron won approval of the 21<sup>st</sup> Legislative District committee comprised of Cronin, Riverside Township GOP Committeeman Judy Baar Topinka and Proviso Township GOP Committeeman Mike Corrigan during a meeting Thursday afternoon in Oak Brook. Cronin will also have a large role in picking Congressman Elect Randy Hultgren's replacement in the State Senate.



## Downstate Fire & Police Pension Negotiations

Police and firefighter coalition representatives met throughout the spring legislative session in an effort to negotiate meaningful pension reforms. While the meetings were productive, it did not produce a bill. Nor were there reforms forced on firefighters as was done to the state's other public employees (SB 1946 – two tier pensions). The police and fire coalition entered the veto session negotiations with a primary goal that public safety pension benefit savings must be coupled with adequate funding by public employers. If municipal underfunding is allowed to continue, public pensions will continue to be placed in jeopardy and the General Assembly will be asked to continue “reforming” the pension systems year after year.

Chairman Kevin McCarthy (D – Orland Park) stated in committee this week that he didn't feel there would be an agreement on legislation before he moved something through the House. The Associated Firefighters of Illinois is requesting that Rep. McCarthy adopt language proposed in HB 5873, Senate Amendment 3, sponsored by Senator Terry Link. It is anticipated that the General Assembly will attempt to pass legislation in the second week of veto session.

The Illinois AFL-CIO asks for your solidarity in assisting our local firefighters in speaking with your Senators and Representatives about fair pension funding. We don't need another “pension reform bill” forcing workers to carry the largest sacrifice.

## N A T I O N A L

### Republicans Again Vote Against Working-Class Americans

On Wednesday, Senate Republicans voted to block any debate on the federal Paycheck Fairness Act. The Paycheck Fairness Act would have strengthened enforcement of women's right to equal pay.

AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka weighed in on the Republican filibuster, “Efforts like this legislation to close the income gap in our country are an essential component to long-term economic recovery. Republicans in the Senate have remained content to leave the middle-class and the poor out in the cold in pursuit of their political goals and interests of their Wall Street allies. They have had but one message to the elderly, unemployed, uninsured and now even women, ‘No.’”

Republican Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins both backed last year's Lilly Ledbetter Act, which lifted the statute of limitations on wage discrimination cases. But this time, they filibustered with their party, and the bill fell two votes short of the 60 needed to advance. The final vote was 58 to 41.

### Sen. Durbin Keeps Leadership Post



Sen. Dick Durbin flanked by Tim Drea and Michael Carrigan at the Illinois AFL-CIO Convention in October.

On Wednesday, Illinois' Senior Senator Dick Durbin was re-elected assistant majority leader of the U.S. Senate. Durbin holds the second highest-ranking leadership post behind Sen. Harry Reid, who was re-elected majority leader.

## 127,767 Unemployed Illinoisans Will Lose Benefits

On Thursday, the U.S. House voted to deny laid-off workers an extension of their unemployment benefits, despite the barrage of calls Representatives received on Tuesday from union members during National Call-In Day urging them to pass the bill.

An estimated 2 million unemployed workers across the U.S., including approximately 127,767 workers in Illinois, will lose their unemployment benefits starting in December.

Congress returned for session this week for only one week of work before the Thanksgiving Holiday break and will have only two voting days left to revisit the extension bill before the Nov. 30 deadline.

According to the National Employment Law Project (NELP) federally-funded benefits have been allowed to lapse twice by Congress, most recently in June when they were suspended for a total of 51 days, leaving 2.5 million long-term jobless workers without modest unemployment benefits. When the benefits were finally reinstated in late July, Congress also eliminated major features of the Recovery Act's safety net, including a health care subsidy that benefited as many as two million households experiencing joblessness and a \$25 boost in weekly state and federal unemployment benefits.

The Unemployment Extension bill (HR 6419) would have extended benefits through February 2011. The vote was mainly along party lines: 237 Democrats voting yes, 11 voting no; 143 Republicans voting no, 21 voting yes. All Illinois Democrats voted yes, along with Republicans Johnson and Manzullo. A two-thirds majority was needed to pass.

## Sweeney to Receive Presidential Medal

On Wednesday, the White House announced that John Sweeney, former president of the AFL-CIO, will receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama early next year.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the highest civilian award in the U.S. It recognizes those individuals who have made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors." Its recipients have included leaders ranging from Mother Teresa to John F. Kennedy.

*Happy Thanksgiving  
from the Illinois AFL-CIO*

