**Illinois Updates – June 21, 2024**

Tracy To Step Down as GOP Chair

Springfield attorney Don Tracy announced on Wednesday that he would step down as the chair of the State Republican Party in the wake of continuing controversy following the state GOP convention last month. Members of the State Central Committee sought to oust Tracy previously, with the latest criticism focusing on his handling of Mark Shaw, the recent vice chair who allegedly used fake delegate credentials at the recent convention. Coverage of the resignation focused on a lack of confidence in Tracy’s leadership. Potential candidates as his replacement include former Cook County Republican Party Chair Aaron Del Mar, State Senator Jason Plummer (R-55, Vandalia) and former State Representative Jeannie Ives. Tracy has said he would like his successor to be in place no later than July 19, 2024, immediately following the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee.

ISBE Dismiss Bailey/Proft Coordination Complaint

The Illinois State Board of Elections voted Tuesday to dismiss a complaint filed by the Democratic Party of Illinois alleging cooperation between Darren Bailey’s failed gubernatorial campaign and a super PAC run by Republican operative Dan Proft. The complaint alleges that Proft coordinated campaign strategy with the gubernatorial campaign of Bailey in violation of state law, constituting an illegal in-kind contribution. Board members agreed with a hearing officer’s argument that the Illinois law cited by the DPI is not specific enough to determine whether coordination truly occurred, with one board member adding that legislative changes are preferred over rulemaking.

Poll Has Sorensen in Lead in 17th Congressional Race

A Republican-sponsored poll of 400 likely voters has incumbent freshman Congressman Eric Sorensen (D-Moline) with a 44 percent lead over Republican candidate and former judge Joe McGraw in the 17th Congressional district. The poll was conducted June 8-12, 2024 with a margin of error of +/- 4.9 percent. The district is considered the best opportunity for a Republican pick up in the U.S. House as Sorensen won the seat in 2022 by just four percentage points.

IEPA Receives Federal Funding for Energy Efficiency Grant

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency announced it has received $15 million from the U.S. Department of Energy – Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund Grant Program. Working with the Illinois Finance Authority, IEPA will use the money to establish an accessible financing program at the state level. Funding will flow through the Department to help building owners finance energy efficiency capital projects. The Illinois Finance Authority will conduct statewide stakeholder engagement and outreach to inform design of the program including community-based organizations, business groups, consumer and environmental advocates and BIPOC energy contractors.

Correctional Plan Receives Local Backlash

A plan to rebuild the women’s correctional facility located in Lincoln at Stateville Correctional Center is generating strong backlash from Logan County residents. The Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability delayed an advisory vote on the plan at a recent meeting due to a lack of quorum, but legislative members of COGFA present at the meeting raised concerns about the lack of details provided by the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Governor’s office and urged better collaboration between the Department and the community going forward. The possible move from Lincoln to Crestwood became public in March. At a recent public hearing, IDOC claimed that the department has 850 positions available within a 90-mile radius of Lincoln to offer to employees displaced by a potential closure. Correctional employees and community members argue that many of those positions would effectively be a demotion and that personal circumstances would make it impractical for many of the Lincoln correctional officers to move. The state has said that deferred maintenance and the age of the Lincoln facility make it essential to rebuild, and that many inmates and their families are from the Chicagoland region.

Pritzker Says SCOTUS Bump Stock Ruling Will not Apply in Illinois

At a press availability this week, Governor JB Pritzker said the U.S. Supreme Court’s recent ruling on the sale and possession of bump stock attachments would not apply in Illinois. Bump stocks, which are firearm attachments that allow for rapid fire of gunshots, were included in Illinois legislation to ban use and possession of automatic weapons enacted after the July 4, 2022 Highland Park mass shooting. The case before the U.S. Supreme Court focused on a previous ATF ban of bump stocks. In the case, SCOTUS ruled that the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms had exceed their authority in issuing the ban. The Illinois law has also faced multiple legal challenges which were consolidated at the federal level, but the courts ruled that the Illinois law would stay in place while those cases move through the court system.

Cook County Faces Budget Deficit

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle this week acknowledged that the county’s upcoming budget negotiations will need to account for a $218 million shortfall. She cited employee cost of living adjustments and pension payments as the reasons for the budget gap but pledged that the county would not assess any tax increases or pursue program cuts or layoffs to balance the budget. The shortfall is confined to the county’s general fund and Preckwinkle highlighted gains by the county health system. She said she would present the county board with a balanced 2025 budget plan later this year. The county’s total budget is estimated at $9.26 billion which includes unspent ARPA funding received during the pandemic.

IDPH Urges Caution as COVID Cases Rise

The Illinois Department of Public Health cautioned residents against rising cases of COVID in recent weeks. Illinois is one of twelve states experiencing an uptick in COVID cases, and emergency rooms have seen a 30 percent increase in patients testing positive for the virus over the last month. The majority of cases are of the “FLiRT” variant. Public health officials say that those at additional risk should seek treatment with anti-viral medications if they contract COVID.

INCS Aims to Influence CBE Election

It appears that the Illinois Network of Charter Schools is amassing funds to influence upcoming elections of the Chicago Board of Education. After long-sought legislation was enacted to transition from an appointed school board to elected, many thought the power dynamic of an elected board would favor the Chicago Teachers Union. CTU was successful in electing one of their own, Brandon Johnson as Mayor and CTU allies figure prominently in his administration. Johnson’s tenure as mayor has been plagued with missteps, however, and public opinion of his administration has suffered with voters. INCS has released information showing the organization has $2.9 million available to help charter-friendly candidates for the CBE, much more than CTU has in their campaign fund. Legislation proposed during the spring legislative session intended to protect charter, magnet and selective enrollment schools stalled in the Senate, putting additional pressure on charter proponents to perform well in November when ten of the twenty seats on the board are up for election.

Upcoming Meetings

* July 16, 2024 – Joint Committee on Administrative Rules

Election Calendar

* November 5, 2024 – General Election

Dates to Remember

* November 12-14, 19-21, 2024 – Veto Session