**Illinois Updates – March 29, 2024**

Miller Steps Down at PRB

LeAnn Miller has resigned from the Prisoner Review Board after the fatal stabbing of Jayden Perkins. Miller and another member of the board had approved the release of Crosetti Brand in spite pleas from Laterria Smith, a former partner, that Brand had threatened her safety and attempted to enter her home. Just a day after his release, Brand attacked Smith with a knife, killing her 11-year-old son Jayden who was attempting to protect his mother. Governor JB Pritzker issued a statement that he agreed with the resignations and would review how the board assesses cases involving domestic violence. Pritzker said that his administration would conduct a thorough search for a replacement.

Cook SA Race Too Close to Call

The primary race between Eileen O’Neill Burke and Clayton Harris III to replace Kim Foxx as Cook County State’s Attorney remains too close to call. O’Neill led by as much as 10,000 votes on election day, a lead that has eroded as mail-in ballots continue to come in and be counted. City election officials said that over 56,000 mail-in ballots remain outstanding, but that not all of those will be returned. Ballots will continue to be counted until April 2 if they are post-marked no later than March 26th. Harris had the backing of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, but O’Neill held the fundraising advantage.

Welch Apologizes for Memo

House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch apologized publicly this week to the Statehouse press corps for a memo sent to his caucus members cautioning them against speaking to reporters. The memo was prompted by inquiries made by the Chicago Tribune regarding Welch and his caucus’ support of Michael Crawford to replace long-time incumbent Mary Flowers in the Democratic primary. The reasoning used by the Speaker was that members should not discuss political activities on session days. State law prohibits legislators from holding fundraisers on session days or accepting campaign contributions on the Capitol grounds but does not address political discussions which are protected by the First Amendment. Welch said that the memo contained incorrect information and was a mistake. His spokesperson also issued an apology and said that the Speaker’s staff would take steps to ensure that their internal processes would prevent such mistakes going forward.

State Police to Pay $90K to New Troopers

The Illinois State Police recently announced it would increase its starting salary for new state troopers to just over $90,000 annually. ISP Director Brendan Kelly said the pay bump will help keep the agency competitive in the job market and will attract quality applicants. To become a state trooper, applicants must be 21 years of age, have no felony convictions, have a valid driver’s license and be willing to work in any region of the state. Additional qualifications include completion of an associate degree or honorable discharge from military service or active service in the National Guard. ISP eliminated a previous requirement of a bachelor’s degree to increase recruitment.

Progressives Break with Johnson on Bring Chicago Home

The Chicago City Council’s Progressive Caucus has broken with Mayor Brandon Johnson on the failed Bring Chicago Home ballot initiative. In comments made after the initiative lost on election day, Johnson indicated he was not ready to give up on the plan to increase real estate taxes on high dollar transactions to fund homelessness services. In contrast, the Progressive Caucus led by Alderman Maria Hadden said they had heard the concerns of voters regarding how the funds would be spent and would take time to rebuild trust. Questions were raised by opponents over how the $100 million in projected revenues would be used given that the city has unspent stimulus funds earmarked for the same purpose.

Governor’s Insurance Reforms Pass Committee

A bill to enact insurance reforms being pushed by the Pritzker Administration cleared a House committee last week. House Bill 5395, which would create the Healthcare Consumer Access and Protection Act, advanced in the House Human Services Committee last week. Governor Pritzker signaled his intent to pursue insurance reforms in his State of the State and Budget Address last month. The legislation will ban step-therapy, eliminate prior authorization for in-patient mental health treatment and prohibit the sale of short-term health insurance policies as well as other changes. The measure faces opposition from the health insurance industry, who have concerns regarding their ability to keep insurance affordable.

Cunningham Defeats Reyes in Primary

Illinois Supreme Court Justice Joy Cunningham was successful in her primary to run for a full ten-year term last week, defeating Appellate Judge Jesse Reyes. Cunningham is a former Circuit Court Judge who was appointed to fill the term of retired Justice Anne Burke.

Recent Gubernatorial Appointments

Robert Vickery has been appointed Director of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice. Vickery had been serving in the role on an interim basis and has served IDJJ as Deputy Director of Programs from 2017 to the present. The appointment is subject to Senate confirmation.

Governor JB Pritzker has made appointments to the following boards and commissions:

* Tamira Brennan is appointed to the Illinois State Museum Board.
* Laverne Backstrom is reappointed to the Illinois State Museum Board.
* Karen Tamley is reappointed to the Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes.

All appointments are subject to Senate confirmation.

Upcoming Meetings and Hearings

* April 16, 2024 – Joint Committee on Administrative Rules

Election Calendar

* November 5, 2024 – General Election

Dates to Remember

* April 5, 2024 – House Committee deadline
* April 12, 2024 – Senate Third Reading deadline
* April 19, 2024 – House Third Reading deadline
* May 3, 2024 – Committee deadline for bills from other chamber, House and Senate
* May 17, 2024 – Third Reading deadline for bills from other chamber, House and Senate
* May 24, 2024 - Adjournment