**Illinois Updates – April 19, 2024**

Sheehan Appointed to 37th House District

Former police officer Patrick Sheehan has been appointed to fill the 37th House District seat previously held by Tim Ozinga. Sheehan’s public service includes serving as a Lockport alderman and on the Lockport Township Park Board. He lost a close race to Senator Mike Hastings in the 2022 election cycle. Ozinga abruptly resigned from the House, raising speculation that he may be positioning himself for a statewide run. At the same time, he recently lost his post as head of the Will County Republican Central Committee, indicating an erosion of local support.

DNR Considers Name Changes for State Parks

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources announced last week that it would consider name changes for department sites that have been flagged by Native American organizations. One site is Starved Rock State Park, which historically traces its name to a battle between three tribes which took place at the location. The Department says it wants to begin having conversations regarding site names and that any discussions will include input from Native Americans. Sen. Sue Rezin, who represents the LaSalle County attraction, cautioned that a name change could have financial repercussions and that the Department should be focusing on needed physical improvements for the park. The Department declined to identify the organization who raised the issue with Starved Rock, and some tribal representatives have pushed back, citing the historical context of the name.

Lawmakers Look at Delta 8 Products

Delta 8 products derived from hemp are the focus of competing legislative efforts in the General Assembly this spring. The Cannabis Business Association of Illinois is leading a push to ban Delta 8 products, which are currently unregulated. Senate Bill 3926 would prohibit the sale of products containing Delta 8, provide for fines for unlawful sales and empower the Illinois Department of Agriculture to investigate possible violations of the act. In contrast, an effort led by Representative LaShawn Ford (D-Chicago) and Senator Lakesia Collins (D-Chicago) would regulate and tax the products, license producers and prohibit the sale of Delta 8 to anyone under age 21. Ford and Collins claim that an outright ban would cause financial harm to minority owned businesses. The state law allowing for adult purchase and consumption of cannabis was passed in 2019.

BIPA Changes Pass Senate

Legislation passed the Senate last week to make changes to the state’s Biometric Information Privacy Act (BIPA) to address concerns of the business community. Senate Bill 2979, sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Bill Cunningham (D-Chicago) would clarify that violations of the act would be limited to an initial scan of an employee’s biometric information and would not apply to any subsequent collections of information. The bill was suggested by the Illinois Supreme Court in response to a lawsuit filed against the White Castle hamburger chain for illegal collection of biometric data. Business groups had pushed for a larger bill that would insulate them against lawsuits and provide a shorter statute of limitations, but the sponsor defended the effort saying it satisfied the request of the Supreme Court for legislative guidance. Illinois was the first state to pass legislation protecting biometric information. Representative Ann Williams (D-Chicago) will serve as the bill’s chief House sponsor.

Johnson Agrees to Migrant Funding

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson has reversed his stance on the city providing additional funds for migrant shelter and services. After initially agreeing to a plan to provide $70 million toward a joint city, county and state effort to provide services to asylum seekers in February, Johnson withdrew from the agreement. Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle has since been lobbying the Chicago City Council to approve funds for the city’s share of the $321 million program. Some members of the city council including Alderman Anthony Beale have opposed the move, calling on the city to meet the needs of residents over those of migrants. The money will be used to operate shelters and provide wrap-around services and healthcare to asylum seekers. The full city council is expected to approve the funding request today.

Pritzker Appoints Executive Director to Prisoner Review Board

Governor JB Pritzker announced the appointment of the first Executive Director of the Illinois Prisoner Review Board. Jim Montgomery will fill the newly-created position, coming from the Suffolk County Massachusetts Sheriff’s Department. Montgomery does have connection to Illinois as the former mayor of Taylorville. The hire followed the resignation of two board members in the wake of the murder of Jayden Perkins by Crosetti Brand, an inmate whose release was approved by the board despite his record of domestic violence. Pritzker said that the addition of an executive director will reduce the workload of the board chair. The Chair is currently empty, with LeAnn Miller having been one of the members who recently resigned.

Conyears-Ervin Fined for Misuse of Resources

The Chicago Ethics Board has apparently fined City Treasurer Melissa Conyears-Ervin for misuse of public resources. While the Board does not identify officials receiving a fine by name, sources have confirmed that Conyears-Ervin was the official in question. The board’s action follows a similar finding made by the Investigative Office of the Inspector General that the city treasurer used city employees to perform personal errands and conduct campaign activities on city time. The fines total $60,000 and reflect the maximum penalty of $5,000 per count.

Ukraine PM Makes Case to Illinois

Ukraine Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal was in Chicago this week to promote financial assistance for the war-torn nation from Illinois businesses. During the visit, Shmyal met with Governor JB Pritzker and his sister, Penny Pritzker, who is serving as the United States Special Representative on Ukraine Economic Recovery. The prime minister invited Illinois-based companies to consider participating in recovery projects in Ukraine. The visit also coincides with Congressional consideration of additional aid to the Ukrainian war effort.

Oberweis Files Chapter 11

Oberweis Dairy filed for bankruptcy on Monday, after a potential sale of the business fell through. Oberweis went up for sale last fall, as the four-generation family business struggled with a series of poor financial decisions and debts incurred by its former CEO, Joe Oberweis. The company confirmed that the financial difficulties will result in the closure of its Illinois production facility, including the layoff of 127 employees. Previous CEO Jim Oberweis served in the Illinois Senate and made unsuccessful runs for Governor and Congress. The company produces dairy products and operates ice cream stores in multiple states. It is unclear how the filing will impact those businesses.

Election Calendar

* November 5, 2024 – General Election

Dates to Remember

* 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