Legislative Update

Session Overview - Spring 2026

By Brittan Bolin
IAFPD Lobbyist

According to the IL Constitution, the General Assembly must convene each year on the second Wednesday in January. This is considered the spring legislative session, although it begins in January and typically concludes on the last day of May. But there are two other times that the General Assembly meets providing additional opportunities for lawmaking: the fall Veto Session and the Lame Duck session.

The purpose of the fall Veto Session is to provide legislators with an opportunity to respond to any veto actions taken by the Governor. There are four different actions that the Governor can take on bills that have been enacted by the House and Senate and sent to his desk. 1) The Governor can sign the bill into law, 2) he can issue a total veto, essentially rejecting the legislative changes, 3) he can issue an amendatory veto, making substantive changes to the bill that the General Assembly can approve or override, and 4) he can make a reduction veto of appropriation bills passed by the legislature impacting the amount of funding for state purposes.

The chamber of origin must transmit bills to the Governor within thirty days of their passage. The Governor then has sixty days to review the legislation and decide if he will use his veto powers. During the current Pritzker Administration, relatively few vetoes have been issued, which leaves legislators with scheduled legislative days during the fall where they can address unfinished business from the previous spring session or advance emerging issues. While the veto session is typically six days divided over two or three weeks, many significant pieces of legislation have been advanced during this brief session.

The second type of session that occurs usually every two years is a "lame duck" session. This refers to additional legislative days scheduled at the end of the two-year General Assembly, usually in January just prior to the inauguration of a new General Assembly. The term "lame duck" refers to legislators who will not be returning to the House or Senate due to retirement or election loss. These so-called lame ducks, without the specter of reelection may be empowered to vote for legislation that they would not support otherwise. Like the Veto Session, the lame duck session provides opportunities for important bills to pass.

This year, the veto session is scheduled for November 17-19, and December 1-3. One bill that could impact fire protection districts is House Bill 5391, sponsored by Representative Natalie Manley (D-Romeoville) and Representative Amy Elik (R-Alton). House Bill 5391 would overhaul the financial reporting requirements for units of local government and replace the current system, which is imposed across multiple statutes, with one statute with four categories of governments based on annual external revenues with levels of escalating reporting requirements.

The Government Reporting Enhancement and Transparency Act is an initiative of the Illinois CPA Society intended in part to address a shortage of certified public accountants in the state that specialize in local government audits. Along with other local government organizations, IAFPD has been represented in discussion that were held over the summer and is supportive of provisions of the act that would provide relief for small units of government from a full financial statement audit.

The CPA's proposal is ambitious and not without opponents among the many stakeholders that would be affected. Although it is expected to be heavily negotiated, the bill's sponsor has stated she make try to get the bill moving in the veto or lame duck session. As always, we will be closely monitoring the actions of the House and Senate during these extra days of session for potential impact on our member districts. ■