**Illinois Updates – January 27, 2023**

Pritzker Makes Appointments

Governor JB Pritzker made several new appointments to head state agencies as he begins his second term in office. Six new and temporary appointments include Natalie Phelps Finnie as the Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Finnie served briefly in the Illinois House. Raven DeVaughn was appointed the Director of the Illinois Department of Central Management Services, and Kristin Richards has been appointed the Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Richards previously served as Chief of Staff for the Senate Democratic Leader.

Brandon Ragle has been named the temporary Secretary of the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology, and Ray Marchiori has been named the temporary Director of the Illinois Department of Employment Security. In addition to these new appointments, the Governor has reappointed the directors and secretaries of several state agencies to another term of service. The appointments must be approved by the Illinois Senate.

NRA Involved in Latest Lawsuit

The National Rifle Association has joined the fray in the fight against recently enacted legislation to ban assault weapons. The Protect Illinois Communities Act made Illinois the ninth state to pass an assault weapon ban. Provisions of the bill will allow gun owners to keep weapons that will be banned going forward but require them to register the serial numbers of those firearms with the Illinois State Police. The bill also made changes to the Firearm Restraining Order act to increase the duration of orders from six months to one year.

Opponents of the ban claim it violates the Second Amendment. In addition to a federal lawsuit filed by the Illinois Rifle Association and several state-level suits, the NRA is assisting in a new federal case filed on behalf of citizen petitioners and expected to eventually find its way before the U.S. Supreme Court. The NRA has hired two attorneys who successfully argued against a New York State concealed carry law before the U.S. Supreme Court to take the case.

A Downstate judge granted a temporary restraining order in response to one of the lawsuits last week, effectively blocking enforcement of the law. Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul filed a petition Monday asking the Appellate Court to vacate the order and uphold the law.

Bears Make Their Move

The Chicago Bears NFL franchise has begun to circulate draft legislation intended to finance the team’s move from Soldier Field to a proposed new facility in the Chicago suburb of Arlington Heights. The legislation would create a financing scenario dubbed “PILOT” or payment in lieu of taxes, allowing the property tax assessment of the project to be frozen in exchange for the project owner making payments to the sponsoring local government.

Under the proposed legislation, only Mega Projects, or projects that would create over $500 million in capital investments would be eligible for the PILOT designation. The Illinois Chamber of Commerce has expressed support for the proposal, and the language would require any construction done as part of a Mega Project to involve project labor agreements using union workers.

The Bears’ Organization has already purchased property, formerly Arlington Park Racecourse, to construct a new stadium. Although the City of Chicago wants to keep the franchise in the city, Soldier Field is the oldest and smallest stadium in the NFL and is not owned by the team but by the Chicago Park District.

AG Files Argument in Support of SAFE-T Act

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul filed initial arguments in response to a circuit judge’s ruling against the controversial SAFE-T Act this week. The SAFE-
T Act contains several criminal justice reforms including abolishing the requirement of cash bond for defendants. A Kankakee County judge ruled on a consolidated lawsuit filed by 60-plus State’s Attorneys against the SAFE-T Act in favor of the plaintiffs, finding that legislation to abolish or amend the constitutional right to post bond cannot be done through legislation and should be addressed by a constitutional amendment.

In his filing on behalf of the State, Raoul characterized the lower court’s decision as “flawed” arguing that the bail provisions in the Illinois Constitution do not specifically require monetary securities. The plaintiffs in the case must file a response by February 17, 2023. The Supreme Court is expected to weigh in on the case in March.

Harmon Announces Leadership Team

Senate President Don Harmon announced his appointments to Democratic leadership this week. Serving in leadership will be:

Majority Leader: Kimberly Lightford
President Pro Tempore: Bill Cunningham
Assistant Majority Leaders:

* Mattie Hunter
* Linda Holmes
* David Koehler
* Laura Murphy

Majority Caucus Chair: Omar Aquino

Majority Caucus Whips:

* Julie Morrison
* Napoleon Harris
* Cristina Castro

Majority Caucus Appropriations Leader: Elgie Sims

Lightfoot Releases Poll

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot released poll numbers this week that show her with a small lead in the crowded field of nine candidates. In a poll conducted by GBAO Strategies from January 18-22, 2023 of 800 likely voters, Lightfoot had 25% of votes, compared to former Chicago Schools CEO Paul Vallas at 22% and U.S. Representative Jesus “Chuy” Garcia with 18%. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.5 points.

In contrast, a survey conducted by political consulting firm M3 of 531 likely voters from January 15-17, 2023 had Vallas with a 26% lead, followed by Garcia with 19%, Cook County Commissioner Brandon Johnson with 12.2% and Lightfoot with just 9.8%. The Chicago Mayoral election will be held February 28, 2023. If no candidate receives a majority of votes, a runoff election will be held on April 4, 2023

Dates to Remember

* February 10, 2023 – Senate deadline, introduction of Senate bills
* February 13, 2023 – Lincoln’s Birthday, State Holiday
* February 15, 2023 – Governor’s Budget and State of the State Address
* February 17, 2023 – House deadline, introduction of House bills
* February 20, 2023 – President’s Day, State Holiday
* February 28, 2023 – Consolidated Primary Election
* March 10, 2023 – Senate and House Committee deadline, first chamber
* March 24, 2023 – House Third Reading deadline, House bills
* March 31, 2023 – Senate Third Reading deadline, Senate bills
* April 28, 2023 – Senate and House Committee deadline, bills from other chamber
* May 11, 2023 – Senate Third Reading deadline, House bills
* May 12, 2023 – House Third Reading deadline, Senate bills
* May 19, 2023 – Scheduled Adjournment