**Illinois Updates – May 5, 2023**

ComEd Four Found Guilty

Jurors returned their verdicts in the ComEd Four trial Tuesday afternoon, finding the four defendants guilty on all counts. Former ComEd CEO Anne Pramaggiore and lobbyists Mike McClain, John Hooker and Jay Doherty were found guilty of bribery and falsifying business records for providing no-pay contracts, internships and other benefits to former Speaker Michael J. Madigan to advance the utility’s legislative agenda in Springfield. Madigan himself was indicted in relation to the ComEd case and along with Mike McClain will be tried on those and additional bribery charges involving other lobbying entities in spring of 2024.

The jury deliberated over 27 hours before reaching their decision. Interviewed after the verdict, multiple jurors said that they believed the actions taken by the defendants constituted bribery and were done at the behest of Madigan. Sentencing for Pramaggiore has been set for January 16, 2024 and sentencing dates for the other defendants has yet to be announced. The offenses of bribery and falsifying business records together could merit up to 20 years in prison. It is expected that all four will appeal the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Speaker’s Staff Wants to Unionize

Members of the House Speaker’s research and appropriations staff have formed the Illinois Legislative Staff Association with the intent to become a union. The ILSA was formed in November 2022 following the passage of the Workers’ Rights Amendment to the Illinois Constitution protecting workers’ rights to join a union and bargain. The new organization requested that Speaker Chris Welch recognize the union in November, in January of 2023 and again in April. The Speaker has declined to recognize the ILSA, most recently on the grounds that the union has not held an election. Also in question is the conflict between the new amendment to the constitution and previously enacted legislation that prohibits General Assembly staff from forming unions. Attorneys for the ILSA have stated that the constitution supersedes statute.

Members of the ILSA cite low starting pay, inconsistent policies regarding compensatory time and excessive hours as reasons to collectively bargain. They also said that providing better working conditions and pay would address staff turnover and loss of institutional knowledge for the caucus. Their efforts have been supported by the Illinois AFL-CIO and other labor organizations. The association has stated they do not intend to strike during the remaining two weeks of legislative session.

COGFA Issues Updated Revenue Projections

The Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability has released new revenue projections that show state revenues dipping in the month of April. According to COGFA, revenues are currently $728 million lower for the budget year, a dip that equals 1.2 percent. While any drop in revenue can be cause for concern, the agency’s initial revenue forecast was higher than that of the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget (GOMB). The Governor and the legislature have said they are using the lower estimates as they finalize details of the state’s fiscal year 2024 budget.

State Begins Medicaid Redeterminations

State officials will begin reviewing eligibility for the state’s 3.9 million Medicaid recipients beginning in June on a rolling basis. Annual redetermination of eligibility for the healthcare program was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic, which grew by 1 million participants in Illinois during the same period. The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) is urging recipients to make sure their contact information is up to date and to anticipate contact from the Department. Medicaid is funded by the state and federal government and provides healthcare for low income and disabled residents as well as supplementing healthcare for individuals with complex medical needs. HFS is conducting a multi-pronged outreach to keep qualified recipients covered by the program, “Ready to Renew.” Based on estimates from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, over 300,000 Illinoisans may fall off the state’s Medicaid rolls during redetermination.

Judges Issue Conflicting Rulings on Assault Weapon Ban

A federal judge in southern Illinois last Friday ruled against enforcement of the Protecting Illinois Communities Act (PICA), the assault weapon ban passed last year in the wake of the July 4th mass shooting in suburban Highland Park. The law prohibits the manufacture, sale and possession of over a hundred different firearms, as well as large capacity magazines and accessories. The Protecting Illinois Communities Act has been the subject of numerous lawsuits since its passage, resulting in sometimes conflicting legal outcomes.

U.S. District Judge Stephen McGlynn in his ruling stated that the law infringed on the rights of legal gun owners and had the effect of harming the plaintiffs without the preliminary injunction. Meanwhile, a federal judge in Chicago denied a similar request and ruled against a case asking to block enforcement of PICA. Judge Lindsay Jenkins in her opinion held that the government’s interest in protecting public safety outweighs any harm the laws might have on a person’s right to keep and bear arms.

On Thursday Judge Frank Easterbrook of the U.S. Court of Appeals reversed Judge McGlynn’s ruling at the request of Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul and Governor JB Pritzker. The higher court’s move effectively keeps the ban in place, but court action on the controversial legislation is likely to continue to the Supreme Court.

Meet the Lawmakers

Each week we will profile two new members of the 103rd General Assembly. This week we meet Representative Lillian Jimenez (D-4, Chicago) and Representative Gregg Johnson (D-72, East Moline).

Representative Jimenez is an attorney and has focused her practice on labor and immigration policy and advocacy. She holds a bachelor and Juris Doctorate degrees from DePaul University. Jimenez is the former Chief of Staff for U.S. Representative Jesus “Chuy” Garcia and has also held positions with the Illinois Department of Labor and the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Representative Johnson was formerly a correctional officer with the Illinois Department of Corrections. Johnson highlights his union background and has served as the president of his local AFSCME unit. His policy focus includes services for seniors, veterans, and job creation.

Dates to Remember

* May 11, 2023 – Senate Third Reading deadline, House bills
* May 12, 2023 – House Third Reading deadline, Senate bills
* May 19, 2023 – Scheduled Adjournment