**Illinois Updates – June 18, 2021**

No Deal on Energy Package

The General Assembly reconvened this week for the primary purpose of finalizing a comprehensive energy bill. Key components include ethics reforms for public utilities, moving the state to 40 percent renewable energy sources by 2040, incentives for use of electric vehicles and an overall reduction in the state’s carbon footprint.

The carbon reduction goals are the sticking points in the bill. Exelon, parent company of the embattled Commonwealth Edison electric utility is requesting state financial subsidies to keep its nuclear plants open. The facilities in question produce clean energy that is needed to meet state benchmarks outlined in the legislation. The company and the Pritzker Administration have differed on the subsidies needed, with Exelon requesting a higher amount than the state is willing to provide. Also at stake is the fate of two downstate coal powered generation facilities as well as natural gas providers. Environmental advocates want the coal and gas facilities shut down by 2035 but are receiving pushback from the plants and the communities they serve. Unions who represent employees at the impacted facilities are part of the negotiations.

While the Senate convened on Tuesday with the intent to pass a finalized Consumer and Climate First Act, they adjourned later that day without agreement. Failure to pass the bill has resulted in finger pointing by the Senate Democratic leadership and the Governor’s office regarding who is to blame for the breakdown in negotiations, but Senate President Don Harmon has stated he is confident that a compromise can be reached. In the meantime, Exelon announced this week that it has taken the first step in closing the Byron nuclear facility, which could serve to create a deadline for lawmakers to act within the next 90 days.

House Wraps up Several Bills

Although the House was not able to take up the energy bill on Wednesday as originally planned, they used their time in Springfield to wrap up several bills that needed final action post-adjournment on May 31st.

First on the agenda was a change to House Rules to allow for remote voting by members during floor action. The Senate has allowed for remote floor votes during most of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the House had not followed course until this week. The rule change was required to correct an error in the effective dates in the state fiscal year 2022 budget, which requires a supermajority. Due to the short notice given lawmakers of the two-day special session, several Democratic House members were unable to be physically present at the Capitol for voting. Republican House members decried the last-minute rule change, voicing concerns regarding its potential for abuses going forward.

In addition of legislation to correct the effective dates of the budget, the House finalized passage of a bill intended to address the backlog in the state’s Firearm Owners Identification Card program, to transition the Chicago Board of Education from an appointed board to an elected body, and a measure to make Juneteenth a state holiday.

Veto Dates Announced

The House and Senate have released calendars for the fall Veto Session this week. Veto Session will be scheduled for October 19-21, 2021 and October 26-28, 2021. The purpose of the veto session is to allow the General Assembly to act of vetoes issued by the Governor following the spring legislative session.

Dates to Remember

* October 19-21, 26-26 – Veto Session