**Illinois Updates – July 9, 2021**

State Received Bond Upgrades

The state received some welcome financial news this week when it received upgrades from both Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s. Moody’s announced their upgrade on Tuesday, followed by S & P on Thursday. The rating changes are the first upgrades for Illinois since 1997. While Fitch Ratings has not joined the other bond houses in raising the state’s ranking, it recently revised its forecast outlook for Illinois from negative to positive, acknowledging that revenue performance had improved Illinois’ long-term outlook. Moody’s and S & P had issued similar revisions to the state’s economic rating earlier this spring.

Covid Numbers Continue to Decrease

A milestone was reached in the fight against coronavirus on Monday, when the Illinois Department of Public Health reported no deaths from COVID-19. It was the first date since early 2020 that no deaths were reported, and the number of new infections and hospitalizations continues to decrease as well. Governor JB Pritzker hailed the good news at a press conference where he shared that seventy percent of Illinois residents age 12 and over have received at least one dose of vaccine against COVID. Over 23,000 Illinoisans have died of the virus, and Pritzker cautioned that citizens should remain vigilant, particularly against the new Delta variant.

Courts to Reopen for Business

The Illinois Supreme Court issued two orders this week providing guidance regarding reopening state courts following their closure for coronavirus in March 2020. One order will reinstate the requirement that defendants receive a speedy trial, and the other will ease socially distancing restrictions currently in place within courthouses. The orders will take effect beginning October 1, 2021, allowing circuit judges and their staff 90 days to prepare to resume normal court operations.

IDPH Adopts CDC Guidance for Schools

The Illinois Department of Public Health on Friday announced that it would follow guidance issued by the national Centers for Disease Control regarding in-person learning for students in grades K-12. Under the CDCs guidelines, fully vaccinated students can resume normal school-related activities without wearing a face covering, unless otherwise required. Face covering and masks are recommended for those who are not vaccinated, and social distancing of three feet is suggested. The CDC also recommends that schools continue to screen, test, conduct contact tracing and observe disease prevention protocols, particularly since students under 12 years of age are not yet eligible for vaccination.

The Illinois State Board of Education in a related announcement said that all students would be required to attend in-person classes for the 2021-2022 school year, with exceptions for unvaccinated students or students ineligible to be vaccinated while under quarantine consistent with guidance or requirements from a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Dates to Remember

* October 19-21, 26-26 – Veto Session