**Illinois Updates – September 16, 2022**

Burke to Step Down

Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Ann Burke announced this week that she would be retiring from the bench effective November 30, 2022. Burke has served on the Supreme Court since her appointment in 2006, going on to win successive terms and serving for the past sixteen years. Illinois Appellate Judge Joy Cunningham will be appointed to serve out the remainder of Burke’s term through December 2024. Cunningham, a Democrat, will be the second Black woman appointed to the state Supreme Court this year following the appointment of Lisa Holder to the court in July. Justice Mary Jane Theis will take over as Chief Justice on October 26, 2022 and will serve a three-year term.

Taxpayer Rebates Arrive this Week

Governor JB Pritzker held a press conference this week to announce that taxpayer rebates authorized by the state’s fiscal year 2023 budget would begin to arrive in residents’ mailboxes and bank accounts. Lawmakers approved $1.8 billion in tax relief as part of the state’s budget this spring, including $1.2 in direct payments. Illinois taxpayers earning less than $200,000 per year will receive a rebate payment of $50 per person, and homeowners earning $250,000 or less per year will receive property tax relief up to $300 based on income. Governor Pritzker said that the timing of the payments was due to supply chain issues experienced by the Illinois State Comptroller’s office, and that it could take up to eight weeks for all payments to be delivered.

Rail Strike Averted

A threatened rail worker strike that would have impacted Illinois residents who use Amtrak and Metra has been averted for now. The strike was threatened by The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and the SMART Transportation Division, two unions that represent 115,000 rail workers. Labor has raised concerns regarding working conditions for conductors and engineers, citing cases of workers being required to work extended hours with little notice and lengthy on-call requirements. Both Amtrak and Metra use rail lines owned by freight railways in addition to their own lines. While Amtrak lines impacted by the potential strike would primarily impact routes from Chicago to other states, both rail carriers had announced cancellations in anticipation of the strike. The cancellations have been rescinded following the announcement by the Biden administration that a tentative agreement has been reached.

National Guard to Assist with Migrants

Governor JB Pritzker this week announced that he will issue a disaster proclamation to address the arrival of migrants from Texas. A disaster proclamation allows for coordination between state, county and municipal governments and will allow Pritzker to deploy the Illinois National Guard for assistance. The Governor also said he will be seeking federal assistance and resources to provide care for the migrants. Approximately 500 asylum seekers entering the country in Texas have been bused to Chicago at the direction of Texas Governor Greg Abbott. Transportation of the migrants to Chicago began on August 31, and mirrors similar operations to bus immigrants to New York City, Washington D.C., and most recently Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts.

The Illinois National Guard will assign 75 of its members to aid with logistics and assist arrivals with obtaining emergency shelter, food and healthcare. Pritzker says the Illinois Department of Human Services has the necessary financial resources to support the migrants in the near term.

Uihlein Funds Opposition to Workers’ Rights

Republican mega-donor Richard Uihlein has contributed $1 million to defeat an effort to codify workers’ rights in the Illinois Constitution. Voters will have the opportunity in November to vote on an amendment to create a constitutional right to collectively bargain for wages, hours and working conditions. The amendment is being advanced by the Indiana, Illinois and Iowa Foundation for Fair Contracting. Opponents to the effort include the Illinois Chamber of Commerce and the Illinois Policy Institute, who argue that unions can advance their rights through the legislative process. Uihlein’s donation will be used by opponents to defeat the measure at the ballot box, as efforts to stop the amendment through the judicial process have failed. Labor organizations believe the amendment will result in safer workplaces and higher wages for Illinois workers.

Pritzker Rolls Back Covid Measures

Governor Pritzker will update Covid-19 testing guidelines for unvaccinated school and daycare workers this week. Following recommendations by the CDC and based on medical advice, unvaccinated workers will no longer be required to test twice a week for Covid. The Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers have stated that their members are supportive of the updated guidelines. The change will go into effect today.

Dates to Remember

* November 8, 2022 – Illinois General Election
* November 15-17, November 29-December 1, 2022 – Veto Session
* January 4-10, 2023 – Tentative “Lame Duck” Session, 102nd General Assembly
* January 11, 2023 - Inauguration of the 103rd General Assembly