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**Illinois Updates – September 18, 2020**

Special Committee Can Call Witnesses

The special investigative committee formed to consider disciplinary measures against House Speaker Michael J. Madigan received information from the U.S. Attorney’s office this week regarding witness testimony. Republican members of the committee presented a list of individuals they wish to provide testimony, including Speaker Madigan and others named in the ComEd bribery investigation. At last week’s meeting, committee chair Rep. Chris Welch (D-Westchester) stated he would contact U.S. Attorney John Lausch regarding the request.

Lausch has said that his office does not object to the committee calling witnesses, but there is disagreement between the Republicans on the committee and Chair Welch regarding what can be asked of potential witnesses. Welch said the U.S. Attorney has asked that the committee avoid any line of questioning related to ComEd’s deferred prosecution agreement that are confidential, including any documents in the possession of the federal government. Republican committee member Tom Demmer (R-Dixon) disputes Welch’s characterization of the discussion, claiming that questions regarding the prosecution agreement are allowed and that the committee will provide an opportunity for Speaker Madigan to answer questions from fellow lawmakers regarding the case. While the complaint filed in the ComEd bribery investigation names the House Speaker as Public Official A, Speaker Madigan has not been indicted or charged at this time. The next hearing of the special investigative committee is scheduled for September 29, 2020 in Springfield.

Link Resigns, Pleads Guilty

Senator Terry Link (D-Gurnee) resigned his senate seat last Friday, weeks after federal charges were filed against him for income tax evasion. Link had earlier resigned his position as chair of the Lake County Democratic Party, a position he held for nearly thirty years. A key figure in the development of gaming legislation, Link was first elected in 1997, and his current term in office would expire in 2023.

Link was charged with underreporting income for tax year 2016, and this week plead guilty in federal court. The former senator’s problems with the federal government led to his cooperation in a bribery investigation, agreeing to wear a wire and be recorded accepting a bribe from another lawmaker, Rep. Luis Arroyo (D-Chicago). Arroyo resigned his seat in the House following his indictment but has pleaded not guilty to the charges. The Lake County Democratic party will name a replacement to the seat in the next few weeks. Representatives Rita Mayfield (D-Waukegan) and Daniel Didech (D-Buffalo Grove) have expressed interest in the appointment.

Department Agrees to Delay Cannabis License Lottery

The Illinois Department of Professional Regulation has agreed to delay a lottery to award seventy-five recreational cannabis licenses following strong pushback from lawmakers. Controversy began immediately after IDFPR released the list of companies eligible for the lottery when just twenty-one companies out of seven hundred applicants were included. The announcement of the eligible applications was initially scheduled for May but was delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic and the need to develop administrative rules in the event that applicants have a tied score.

IDFPR contracted with KPMG to evaluate the applications using criteria included in the underlying legislation with a focus on awarding licenses to social equity candidates. Other factors including veterans’ preference were also part of the process. The twenty-one successful applications had perfect scores, but many of the unsuccessful applicants claim discrepancies and errors on the part of KPMG and the Department in the evaluation process. At least two applicants have filed suit to stop the lottery until an investigation of the process can take place. Legislators are echoing the call for answers on behalf of their constituents and are also looking at the racial makeup of KPMG’s management and how the firm was awarded a no-bid contract by the state. While IDFPR has agreed to the delay they maintain that the department is committed to a fair and transparent application process.

Pritzker Outlines Grim Budget, Calls on Congress for Aid

During a press conference this week, Governor JB Pritzker said that he has asked state agencies to identify spending cuts of 5% for the current fiscal year 2021, and reductions of 10% for upcoming fiscal year 2022 if Congress fails to enact additional federal stimulus by the end of the month. In his comments Pritzker warned that budget cuts would have numerous negative implications, including reduced public safety services, human services, cuts to elementary and secondary education and additional job losses. The Governor sent a letter delivering the same message to the entire Illinois Congressional delegation this week calling on federal lawmakers to help state and local governments meet their fiscal needs.

While not the first time that the Governor has warned of potential budget cuts, his latest remarks were the most pointed yet. A number of Republican legislators have pushed back at Pritzker’s warning, claiming that the budget enacted in late May could have been more austere and should not have included $5 billion in borrowing. The Pritzker administration has not indicated when spending cuts identified as part of the budget exercise could be implemented.

COVID-19 Updates

The Illinois Department of Public Health announced today that Region 7, comprised of Will and Kankakee Counties had effectively reduced Covid-19 positivity rates below 6.5% and would return to Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois plan. The region had previously been placed under additional mitigations. The Department also said that twenty-four counties are considered to be at the warning level based on positivity rates. Those counties are: Bond, Bureau, Cass, Clinton, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, DeWitt, Edwards, Effingham, Greene, Jasper, Jo Daviess, Lawrence, Madison, Marion, Rock Island, St. Clair, Shelby, Washington, Wayne, Williamson, Wabash, and Union.

New Executive Orders

Governor JB Pritzker has issued additional executive orders in the past week related to the coronavirus pandemic. The orders are summarized as follows:

EO 2020-55 - REISSUES EXECUTIVE ORDERS - Reissues most executive orders, extending a majority of the provisions through October 17, 2020.

**Illinois COVID-19 Resources**

* State of Illinois: <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov>
* Illinois House Republican Caucus: <https://ilcovid19info.com>
* Chicago residents can access information about the city’s response to the outbreak by texting “covid19” to 78015, or visiting the city’s dedicated webpage at <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home.html>
* A list of public and private testing sites can be found on the IDPH website at <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/testing>.

**Dates to Remember**

* November 3, 2020 – General Election
* November 17, 18, 19 – First week of Veto Session
* December 1, 2, 3 – Second week of Veto Session