**Illinois Updates – September 3, 2021**

General Assembly Approves Revised Maps

Legislators convened in special session on Tuesday to revise legislative maps passed during the spring session. The first set of maps were drawn using data from the American Community Survey and past election data, rather than data from the 2020 U.S. Census. Analysis of the census data revealed that multiple legislative districts exceeded the allowed deviation from median population requirements necessitating adjustments.

House and Senate Democrats were able to pass the revised maps without any Republican votes and the Governor is expected to sign the maps into law. But the legality of the maps remain in question. Republican legislative leaders and community organizations including the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) have filed suit against the original maps for using ACS data rather than actual census numbers. Additional organizations including Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting and the Latino Policy Forum have spoken against the maps, claiming the process lacks transparency and that Latino and Black residents will lose minority majority districts with the new plan.

It is possible that additional lawsuits will emerge against the revised maps. If the courts rule in favor of the plaintiffs, the redistricting process will be decided by a bipartisan commission. Should the commission fail to reach agreement, a tie-breaking member will be randomly selected to give one party greater representation in the process.

Still No Deal on Energy

The Illinois Senate convened regular session this week while in Springfield for special session to try and finalize action on the Governor’s energy package. Firm closure dates for two downstate coal powered generators and the looming closure of two of the state’s nuclear facilities remain points of contention. Senators worked into the early morning Wednesday and passed energy legislation on a Senate bill, essentially putting the ball in the House’s court. In response, House Speaker Chris Welch reiterated his position that the House would not take up any energy legislation that had not been agreed to by the Senate and the Governor. Sources report that House Democrat legislators were being polled regarding their ability to attend session in the next two weeks, indicating that stakeholders may be closing in on an agreement.

Ethics Bill Fails on Override

The House failed to override an amendatory veto of ethics legislation passed during the spring legislative session. The underlying bill made a number of changes intended to tighten restrictions on legislators-turned-lobbyists, lobbying of local governments by legislators and holding legislative fundraisers in Springfield during session weeks. Although the bill passed with large majorities and the Senate overrode the veto by a near unanimous vote, Republican House members withdrew their support on Tuesday. Detractors, including the former Legislative Inspector General, were critical of the underlying bill saying it did not go far enough and failed to empower the LIG to act independently in investigating legislative misconduct. Republicans in the House have asked the sponsor, Rep. Kelly Burke, to reopen negotiations on ethics reform to produce a stronger bill. The House has fifteen days to take additional action on the bill by accepting the Governor’s amendatory language or a total override. Failure to do so will result in the bill being declared dead.

Dates to Remember

* October 19-21, 26-26 – Veto Session