

LWVIL Criminal Justice Report - Janet Kittlaus, Issue Specialist

All of the bills noted in the August report were signed by the Governor except for HB303, the Civil Asset Forfeiture Law Reform bill. If the Governor takes no action, the bill becomes law September 22.

The League has signed on in support of a letter from the Cook County Public Defender to the members of the Illinois Supreme Court Rules Committee. We are requesting that the Illinois Supreme Court adopt a new rule to **eliminate wealth-based pretrial detention** and to ensure that judicial decisions about pretrial detention and release of presumptively innocent individuals are based on legitimate considerations rooted in evidence. This is an opportunity to effect bail reform throughout the entire state of Illinois.

LWVIL Energy & Air Quality Report - Laura Kratz and Di Niesman, Issues Specialists**Energy**

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) approved Ameren's request to lower their energy efficiency goals that were set under last year's Future Energy Jobs Act. The ruling comes despite objections of environmental and consumer groups as well as an administrative judge's ruling denying the request.

Under the legislation, the company is required to meet 9.8% of cumulative annual energy savings by 2012 but the company is planning for 8.24% instead. Critics argue that the plan will scale back savings from energy-efficiency services and customers will not get the same benefits that will be realized elsewhere in the state. Ameren argues that they are committed to reaching their savings target of 13% by 2025 but that the company's "unique circumstances" of its "largely rural" territory made it difficult to achieve higher energy savings. The ICC approval of the modified goals came under condition that Ameren present amendments to its plan that provide additional annual cost savings to assist more of their customers in Illinois.

Air Quality

On August 31, 2017 smoke from the Canadian wild fires dipped down into Kane County prompting many citizens' inquiries. However, the Kane County Health Department had not received any special alerts from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and the air quality was "good to moderate" that afternoon in Kane County.

Did you know?

A 105-year old newspaper clipping (found on Facebook) from New Zealand clearly suggests that the consequences of burning fossil fuel has been known for a long time. It didn't take a few centuries for the effects to be felt, and it makes the claims of climate deniers even more ludicrous.

Of course, the EPA Administrator and chief denier, Scott Pruitt, said it was not the appropriate time to talk about climate change in the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. There will never be an appropriate time to discuss climate change in the Trump Administration.

LWVIL Education Funding Report - Claire McIntyre, Jean Pierce, Nancy Brandt, Issue Specialists**School Funding Reform: (SB1 and SB1947):**

The italicized and bolded section of this report is from an article by WTTW which sums up the lead up to SB1947 and its final passage.

This bill finally gives Illinois the school funding reform it has long sought and will help ease the previous method of funding which was heavily dependent on local property taxes based on local property wealth, leading to unfair and inadequate funding. This Evidence Based Funding Model will now focus on the needs of the individual student while still taking into account local share. It increases funding to high need, low property wealth districts while preventing loss of funding (hold harmless) to all districts throughout the state.

- While passage of SB 1947 is a significant win, it will not fix Illinois' school funding discrepancies immediately. Bill supporters believe an infusion of \$5-6 Billion is needed to fully fund schools. With a cash-strapped state, the addition of dollars will be slow. In FY 2018, that translates to an additional appropriation of \$350 million. While \$350 million is a significant amount and far better than what other budget items will receive, it will take over a decade to reach appropriate funding levels.
- While the goal of adding dollars is the Legislature's intent, it will be dependent on a fiscally healthy state. LWVIL supports a progressive income tax as one method to achieve fiscal health and fully fund state needs.
- LWVIL is still concerned about a property tax freeze being instituted in a future legislative session as that will undercut new dollars schools may receive.

After years of working on school funding reform in both the General Assembly and the Illinois School Funding Reform Commission, lawmakers crafted a bill using an evidence-based funding model to level the playing field between wealthier and poorer school districts across the state.

That bill, SB1, was vetoed by Gov. Bruce Rauner even though his Secretary of Education Beth Purvis said he agreed to 90 percent of it.

The Illinois Senate overrode the governor's amendatory veto, but the Illinois House of Representatives was unable to round up enough override votes. Instead, the four legislative leaders crafted a compromise, SB1947, which eventually passed.

Included in SB1947 is a controversial private school tax credit scholarship program which was never debated by the General Assembly and surprised some who had been working on education funding reform.

"Something this important deserved sunlight. Instead, it was cobbled together in the back room by a handful of people and pushed down the throats of the rank-and-file legislators," said state Sen. Sam McCann (R-Plainview).

"It now introduces a brand new tax credit for the wealthy who donate to scholarship funds for private schools," McCann added. "It is not a voucher system, but it is rather more of a pay-to-play opportunity for the state's most well-connected.

What remains unclear is how the state, which has a \$15 billion backlog of bills, will pay for the \$75 million private school tax credits for the next five years and the billions of dollars needed to fully phase in the evidence-based school funding model.

Action: While supporting the overall bill (SB 1947), LWVIL opposed the use of state funds for a tax credits for private schools pilot program. A Time for Action (TFA) was sent out with that message. LWVIL believes that this should have been offered as a separate bill for debate and vote.

LWVIL Immigration Report - Kim Reed, Issue Specialist

The TRUST Act:

Governor Rauner Signed the Illinois TRUST Act into law on August 28 after it passed the Illinois General Assembly in May of 2017. The Illinois TRUST Act (SB31), which was supported by LWVIL and received bipartisan support in Springfield, prevents local police from holding people for immigration purposes without court-ordered warrants and forbids local police from stopping, searching, or arresting people based on their immigration or citizenship status. This encourages trust between immigrants and law enforcement, which provides a welcoming climate and addresses public safety in Illinois.

On Thursday, September 14, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan issued guidance to Illinois law enforcement regarding the TRUST Act. Additionally, her office recently launched a "Know Your Rights" campaign to help Illinois communities, consulates and non-profit organizations assist immigrants in understanding their rights when interacting with law enforcement.

United States: Sanctuary Cities

The City of Chicago appeared before U.S. District Judge Harry Leinenweber on Monday, September 11th, to bar President Donald Trump's Justice Department from denying public safety grants to "sanctuary cities" that limit cooperation with a federal immigrant crackdown. The lawsuit was filed after U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the Justice Department would prevent cities from getting certain grants unless they allowed immigration authorities to have unlimited access to local jails and also provide a 48-hour notice before releasing persons wanted to immigration violations.

DACA & the DREAM Act

Recently Illinois Attorney General Madigan joined 15 attorneys general to file a lawsuit to protect Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) grantees. She condemned the federal immigration executive orders.

Madigan has filed 12 amicus briefs in five different lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of the travel ban executive orders.

The following statement from LWVUS President Chris Carson was released the day the day – September 5 – the U.S. Attorney General announced the reversal of DACA:

This administration's decision to rescind the "Dreamers" program is shameful and does not serve national interest. As a country of immigrants, we are made stronger for our diversity. Yet time and time again, this administration has discriminated against immigrants and communities of color. Reversing the DACA policy will have a devastating impact on our economy. Ending this program will increase unemployment. Thousands of the Dreamers protected by DACA were brought to this country as babies and have no memories of their birth country. These individuals are paying taxes, contributing to Social Security and are Americans in everything but the name. The League of Women Voters is opposed to deportation of non-criminal undocumented immigrants and we urge Congress to pass a clean Dreamers Act to protect, not turn away, the 800,000 young people who are brought to the United States as children.

The 2017 DREAM Act had been (re)introduced by Senators Dick Durbin (IL) and Lindsay Graham (SC) on July 20, 2017 and would protect DREAMers (undocumented but living in the United States who were brought here before the age of 16 and have lived here continuously since June 2017) who have been covered under DACA.

State/Local League Action

The **League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford** participated in a press conference on August 31 regarding passage of the Illinois TRUST Act. Their Immigration Committee is currently planning an October 17 unit meeting open to the public regarding the DREAM Act, and they hope to have someone from Senator Durbin's office to be part of the panel discussion.