

Issues Specialists End of Session Reports

June 2018

§ Campaign Finance Report - Paula Lawson and Elizabeth Lindquist

HB 5531: Small Donor Matching campaign funding for candidates in elections for Illinois Constitutional Offices and the Illinois Senate and Illinois House - the bill remains in the Rules Committee.

Small Donor Matching and the Governor's Race

There was an attempt to make the issue of small donor matching a factor in the gubernatorial race. Indivisible and Action for a Better Tomorrow groups crafted a [Letter to JB Pritzker](#) urging him to support small donor matching for state races. Fifty-one grassroots groups signed on to the letter. At an ABT event in Evanston on May 22nd, Pritzker declined to sign the pledge and stated he supports small donor matching for ILGA and judicial races, but not for statewide offices. His campaign has not responded to requests to sign a pledge modified to support ILGA and judicial races only.

Governor Rauner has not indicated support for small donor matching or public campaign financing of any type. Republican Senator Sam McCann is reportedly gathering signatures to run for governor under the new Conservative Party label and did vote in favor of the Senate small donor matching bill, **SB1424**. Whether he will get on the ballot or make small donor matching an issue in the election remains to be seen.

§ Common Cause Illinois - Public Financing for Evanston Municipal Elections

The LWV supports efforts to empower citizens and remove barriers to participation through optional public financing for campaigns at all levels of government. Common Cause Illinois is spearheading an effort to implement optional public financing for City of Evanston races. Right now they are working to connect local equity issues to policy decision making and engage with community members.

They've targeted Evanston's 5th Ward due to its low voter engagement and have several events planned in the coming weeks. All events are at 1601 Simpson Street in Evanston.

Wednesday Phone Bank - June 20 at 5:30 pm

Saturday Canvasses - June 16 and June 23 at 10 am-1pm

Public community meeting - Monday, June 25 at 7 pm

Contact Ibie Hart at 630-947-5252 and ihart@commoncause.org for more information.

§ Consolidation of Government – Jane Ballengee

A summary of legislation adopted by the General Assembly this session related to the mission of Transform Illinois may be found on the [Transform Illinois website](#).

§ Criminal Justice – Janet Kittlaus

State:

LWVIL Supported These Bills Which Passed Both Houses:

HB4208, HB4469, HB4741, HB5104, HB5341, HB5494, SB3023, SB3388, SB3503

Since the last report, LWVIL submitted witness slips for these bills: Opposing SB2580-HFA1 (Rauner's veto amendment which includes death penalty), opposing SB2339 (hijacking bill harmful to juveniles) and supporting HB5341 HFA 4 (sealing bill.)

LWVIL signed on to a fact sheet supporting HB5341.

A TFA was sent, asking the Governor to sign into law HB4469, HB4741, HB5104, HB 5494.

A TFA will be sent, asking the Governor to sign into law these bills: HB4208, HB5341, and SB3388.

SB1265 LOST in a vote in the Senate—would have provided greater protections for juveniles during police interrogations.

LWVIL Opposed SB2581, SB2339, and the amendatory veto bills (SB2580& HB1468): Victory! No Final Action was taken on these.

LWVIL sent a LTE, responding to Governor Rauner's amendatory veto of gun legislation which included a return of the death penalty. The letter appeared in the Elgin edition of the Chicago Tribune.

The LWV of Greater Rockford sent an op ed regarding the Governor's action to restore the death penalty that appeared in the *Rockford Register Star*.

The Illinois Supreme Court has agreed this fall to hear an appeal from the State Attorney General challenging an appellate court ruling that Dimitri Buffer's sentence of 50 years imposed when he was a teenager violated the federal constitution. The Appellate Court found that because the average life expectancy for prisoners like Buffer is 64 years "at best," the sentence left Buffer without a meaningful opportunity for release. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled six years ago that life sentences without hope of parole imposed on juveniles violate the U.S. Constitution. Because Illinois had almost entirely abolished parole in 1978, 167 juvenile offenders lack the chance to show rehabilitation and change that they might get in other states. The only juvenile offenders with parole opportunities are those convicted before the law changed. The U.S. Sentencing Commission considers a 39-year prison sentence the equivalent of life.

IDOC prisoners with mental and physical disabilities are kept in prison beyond their release date because housing cannot be found for them according to a [WBEZ Report](#)

Federal legislation:

[The Marshall Project](#) reports details on the two bills being considered in the Congress:

- **FirstStep Act (HR5682) was passed by the House. The bill:** would add educational and vocational training and mental health treatment in federal prison; allows inmates to accrue up to 54 days of good time credit a year; expands the use of risk assessment tools; bans the shackling of pregnant women; calls for placing prisoners in facilities that are within 500 driving miles of their families; and helps them get identification cards upon release.
- **A bipartisan Senate bill, the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, (S 1917)** is also making its way through Congress. It includes services for prisoners in prison and reducing sentence time including mandatory minimum sentences. Its supporters believe that the House bill is stealing support and momentum from this more comprehensive bill. In a "dear colleague" letter Sen. Dick Durbin and other Senators wrote that the reforms would fail without broader sentencing reforms. S 1917 is the result of years of negotiation between Senate Republicans and Democrats, but the bill's success is doubtful because the White House is adamantly against sentencing reform.

§ Education - Claire McIntyre, Jean Pierce, Nancy Brandt, Ann Courter

End of session bills:

SB 2892: Teacher Salary: SB 2892 passed but has not been signed yet by Governor Rauner. This bill will phase in a minimum salary for teachers: \$32,076 for the 2019-20 school year, then \$34,576 the next year, \$37,076 the next, and \$40,000 by 2022-23. After that, salaries would increase at the same rate as the Consumer Price Index, subject to review by the General Assembly.

Unfortunately, the House chief sponsor Christian Mitchell admits that there is no guarantee that schools will be able to afford the yearly salary increase and hopes that the bill will incentivize the General Assembly to continue to increase school funding.

LWVIL did not support the bill as it did not comport with LWVIL position of local control and because there is no insurance schools will be able to afford the increase but will still be required to meet these new salary levels.

HB 5175 SA1, a bill that would stop the practice whereby the State Charter School Commission can hear appeals and override decisions by local school districts which deny charter applications, passed both chambers and has gone to the Governor. LWVIL supported this bill.

Budget passed

The FY 2019 budget was passed and signed by Governor Rauner. K-12 education received an increase of \$350 million. Of the \$350 million, \$300 million goes to districts through the new, equitable formula. And \$50 million goes to the Property Tax Relief Fund that was created when the new formula was passed to help low-property wealth, high-tax communities lower their property taxes without impacting resources for education. Any funds left from the \$50 million property tax assistance will go directly to the districts.

This increase is in line with the General Assembly's goal of improving education equity under the Evidence Based Funding Model passed last year. The effect is cumulative- the new money is added to the previous year's investment. The goal is to reach full equity in ten years' time and will need to factor in inflation. It will require a significant revenue increase in Illinois through various methods and realignment of ever increasing pension costs.

Actions: TFA sent on HB5175 SA1, a bill that would stop the practice whereby the State Charter School Commission can hear appeals and override decisions by local school districts which deny charter applications.

Fiscal Policy – Jean Pierce

The critical issues of the state debt and the need for more revenue have bubbled up to the top level of consideration. Leagues can bring up these topics this summer and fall when they meet with their legislators for legislative interviews or at parades and community festivals.

The State of Illinois has a budget for FY 2019 which was passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by the governor. The good news is that school districts will be able to set their budgets and start the school year on time, higher education knows how much money it will receive, and federal funds will be sent to their intended recipients because there is a budget with line items. In other words, some certainty has returned to the budgeting processes of Illinois and its local governments and departments.

The bad news is that Illinois still does not have enough money to operate. The structural deficit continues, that is, the budget that was passed has most likely papered over an operating deficit, and going forward, revenues which Illinois collects are not enough to keep up with the increases in operating costs. And the two-and-one-half year budget feud between the governor and the General Assembly left billions of dollars of unpaid bills as well as interest payments on the money borrowed to pay some bills and penalties for failure to pay bills on time. And the problems with the "pension ramp" continue to grow because there is no agreement on how to deal with the problem. Payments for debt service and the pension ramp now take up between 25 and 30 % of the General Revenue Fund, which makes that money unavailable for regular government operations.

There are ways to deal with these problems.

- State debt can be amortized and repaid over a period of years. The advantage to amortizing and achieving approximately level payments is that debts can be paid now and the state will be held to regular payments.
- Pass a constitutional amendment to allow incomes to be taxed at graduated rates.
- Raise income tax rates.
- Expand the sales tax to include more services.
- Tax retirement income.
- Impose a tax on financial transactions.

The League has advocated for these actions for years. This year our two action focuses will be:

- Amortization of the state's debt because it is necessary to stop hemorrhaging money to pay interest on the debt. The state needs to confront its debt and take steps to control the payments.
- Asking the General Assembly to vote to put the question of changing the income tax rate to a graduated rate on the ballot in November 2020.

Look for Time for Action alerts this coming year advocating for these revenue sources.

§ Gun Violence Prevention – Mary Klonowski and Holly Fingerle

The Spring session of the General Assembly came to a close this week and what a session it was. Overall we were able to pass 5 gun bills out of both Chambers.

Governor Rauner previously vetoed SB 1567, Gun Dealer Licensing. HB 1468 which increased the wait period to buy assault weapons to 72 hours was amendatory vetoed to include numerous provisions including reinstating the death penalty on mass murderers and law enforcement killers which basically killed any chance of passing the legislation.

The other three bills were bipartisan measures that passed this week.

SB 3256 (Simms/Carroll) which was stand-alone language of the Governor's veto message increasing the waiting period on all gun purchases to 72 hours. The bill received 40 votes in the Senate and 72 in the House- both veto proof majorities.

HB 2354: (Willis/ Morrison) The Firearms Restraining Order, would allow family or law enforcement to petition the courts to have a firearm temporarily removed from the home of a person determined to be a risk to themselves or others. The bill passed with 80 votes in the House and 43 in the Senate (again, veto proof)

The last was **SB 337, Amendment #3 (Harmon/Willis)** The Combating Illegal Gun Trafficking Act requires that Federal Firearms License holders in Illinois be certified by state police. This bill was a result of the bipartisan renegotiation of SB1657, the Gun Dealer Licensing bill. The certification will implement best business practices to help reduce guns entering into the illegal market and allow state and local law enforcement to crack down on corrupt dealers. The vote was 35 in the Senate and 65 in the House (not veto proof).

TFA's:

State:

- Witness slips: SB 337 Amendment #3, HB2354, SB 2343 which would ban the sale of bump stocks in Illinois, SB 2387 Amendment #2, Revoke FOID cards of persons who return firearms to persons cited under the Firearms Restraining Order
- Call the Governor to sign: SB337 and HB2354
- Call your IL Representative: SB337, Amendment #3, IL Senator: SB2387
- Petitions to circulate and collect signatures to have Governor Rauner sign SB337.

Federal:

- Concealed carry reciprocity – unlikely to come up before the November elections. Currently, don't have a majority
- Bump Stocks – Dept. of Justice has been directed to come up with a rule. Public comment periods through 6/27.

After CT enacted strong gun legislation it had the fastest drop in violent crime than any other state.

150,000 students and 170 schools have experienced school shootings.

§ Health Care Issues - Janet S. Craft, Margaret O'Hara

LWVIL Supported Bills: Passed both Houses:

- **SB2332, HB4297 No Tobacco Products under 21** prohibits sale and distribution of tobacco products including electronic cigarettes, alternative nicotine products.
- **HB 2624 SA3 Short Term Limited Duration Health Insurance Act** protects consumers by establishing a maximum coverage of 181 days in a given year; requires clearly written disclosures on all sales and marketing. Compromise bill for: **HB 1337 HA1, SB2388 SFA1**
- **HB 4165 HA1 Do No Harm Healthcare Act** requires the General Assembly to ensure any proposed federal waiver or attempt to restrict access to healthcare to Illinois citizens is open to public debate, oversight and scrutiny. LWVIL signed on to list of 100 organizational supporters.
- **SB 3015 SA 2 & 3 Stock Asthma Rescue Medication in Schools** amends school code to permit schools to voluntarily stock asthma rescue medication for trained staff to administer when an individual experiencing respiratory distress. Purpose to reduce school absences, hospitalizations, long-term healthcare costs, improve health outcomes, and save lives.

Passed in House, Remains in Senate Committee:

- **HB4900 Generic Drugs** regulate Generic Drug market to prevent price gouging. Witness slips: 444 support, 6 oppose including IL Chamber of Commerce, pharmaceutical companies. **4/19 Passed House 5/15 Senate Judiciary, Sub-Committee Business Entities.**
- **Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health Program (REACH):** Request received from Coalition, IL Health Advocates, to sign letter supporting FY 2019 REACH funding to Chairmen and Ranking Members of Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education Committee on Appropriations. REACH is the only federal grant program that addresses racial health disparities at the community level.
 - LWVIL forwarded the request with a Federal Action Request to LWVUS. We were pleased to learn that LWVUS will sign on to the letter in support of REACH. Though racial health disparities are an issue in Illinois, as well as nationally, LWVUS did not agree to have LWVIL sign separately.
 - Part of the rationale in support of the request was the following from the IL Department of Public Health, Health Disparities Report, 2009-14. "While the proportion of minorities living in Illinois has increased since 2000, improvement in overall health outcomes continue to lag behind that of whites." IDPH received REACH grant funding in previous budget cycles.