

Climate Change-Energy and Air Quality

Laura Kratz and Di Niesman, Issues Specialists

Bills we're watching:

- Volkswagen Diesel Pollution Settlement: \$108.7 million
- SB3101 requires a public hearing and comment process on how the Illinois funds should be spent in the state. [Castro and 5 other sponsors] NB: ILEPA has drafted a plan; Di and Laura are evaluating and will recommend whether or not LWVIL should submit comment.
- SB3055 - specifically requires that settlement funds be used to create the infrastructure necessary to electrify state the transportation sector [Stearns and 3 other sponsors]
- O'Hare Airport Environmental Impact Study
- SB2494 - a hold-over from last session. [Cullerton; no additional sponsors]
- Community Aggregation
- HB5101 - would expand renewable energy community aggregation programs to include natural gas. If it gains traction, LWVIL would probably oppose it on the grounds that burning natural gas is not a clean alternative to coal. [Evans, Jr.; 9 co-sponsors]
- Utilities
- SB3131 - A bill that would amend 39 Illinois statutes regulating various utilities - electricity, water and sewer, internet - This bill includes repeal of "provisions concerning emissions allowances." [Rezin, no co-sponsors]

And in Other News....

Illinois: The Illinois Commerce Commission has launched Next Grid, an 18-month study addressing the challenges that the state's electric utilities will face as the Illinois Clean Power Plan is implemented and new technologies replace outdated systems, transitioning to a "smart grid". Through education and consensus-building, the project will result in recommendations for a state-wide energy strategy. The final report is expected to "outline the opportunities and challenges, identify areas of consensus and disagreement, educate policymakers, and provide a range of recommendations aimed at empowering customers and communities, driving economic development, and creating a regulatory model that supports innovation and optimizes the electric utility industry for all constituents."

Of particular concern will be the concept of the power grid as a "platform", described by David Unger of Midwest Energy News as "a hub that coordinates energy transactions between various producers and consumers rather than a one-way delivery system. He adds that the platform model "is central to the way Illinois is building a blueprint for its grid of the future."

Illinois will need to incorporate systems and procedures that to prevent cyberattacks such as those reported this week by Bloomberg News and others:

"Since at least March 2016, Russian government cyber actors" have targeted "government entities and multiple U.S. critical infrastructure sectors," including those of energy, nuclear, water and aviation, according to an [alert](#) issued Thursday (3-15-18) by the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation. Critical manufacturing sectors and commercial facilities also have been targeted by the ongoing "multi-stage intrusion campaign by Russian government cyber actors."

National:

LWVUS joined the Environmental Defense Fund and other organizations to launch and promote the [U.S. Clean Energy Progress Map](#). The Map shows the economic impact of clean energy growth across the country. The map is a non-partisan, free-to-use public resource that captures investments and jobs in the U.S. wind, solar and energy efficiency industries. Local Leagues are encouraged to use the map and share it with others.

From Eleanor Revelle, LWVUS Climate Change Task Force Chair

On March 5th a three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously rejected the Trump Administration's mandamus petition calling on the appellate court to stop the climate lawsuit, Juliana et al v. United States, from going to trial. The panel's ruling sends the case back to the district court where the youth plaintiffs' charge will be heard, namely that the federal government is violating their constitutional rights by promoting the use of fossil fuels, despite knowing for decades that fossil fuels are destroying the climate system.

Background about the lawsuit and a timeline of key events in Juliana et al v. United States are available [here](#) in the **LWVUS Climate Action Toolkit**.

Criminal Justice Report

Janet Kittlaus, Issues Specialist

The Bills LWVIL is supporting to date:

- *HB3142 Higher Education Ban the Box* - For admissions, prohibits colleges and universities from asking about or considering a record. LWVIL submitted witness slips in March and again in May (2017). Passed the House 4/5/17; in Senate.
- *HB4469*: This bill requires county jails and election authorities work together to ensure that pre-trial detainees can vote and provide to eligible citizens released voter registration applications and information about their voting rights. In Committee.
- *SB3023*: The Community-Law Enforcement Partnership for Deflection and Addiction Treatment Act, addresses the opioid crisis and criminalization of substance use disorders. The bill authorizes law enforcement to partner with addiction treatment and community orgs/members to create deflection programs that connect people to treatment as an alternative to arrest.
- *SB338*: Expands eligibility for Adult Redeploy Illinois so that all probation-eligible offenders are eligible for ARI. LWV submitted a witness slip.

- LWVIL opposed SB2581 which increases the time a minor spends in temporary custody to 48 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and court designated holidays). The chief judge of the circuit may permit the minor's personal appearance to be made by means of two-way audio-visual communication—this is designed to save court costs at the expense of what is best for the minor. LWVIL submitted a witness slip. It has passed the Senate and is in the House.

Other Criminal Justice News

CU Fresh Start in Champaign focuses on offenders with a history of violent, gun-related behaviors. The offenders will be “called in” and given a warning and an opportunity to stop shooting. If they choose to do so, offenders will receive help to access community services and resources. Law Enforcement has worked with community members to identify offenders for the initiative using the following criteria: Age 18 or older, on parole or probation, prior felony arrest, prior gun arrest or a violent crime conviction, credible information of recent involvement in violent crime. The model has three essential pillars: community, law enforcement, and services.

A County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council is being formed throughout the city of Rockford and Winnebago County involving multiple agencies and teaming with Loyola University in Chicago, aided by a \$168,000 grant from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. The council is currently working to identify 60-75 violent offenders in Winnebago County and offer them access to treatment and services that would prevent their involvement in crime.

The McLean County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) fosters collaboration and communication between criminal justice agencies and partners who educate, inform, and explore best practices to continually improve the administration of justice. The goal of CJCC is to provide fair and just outcomes, improve public safety, reduce recidivism, and responsibly use resources for the benefit of McLean County residents.

In an interview with WBEZ, David Olson, co-director of the Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy, and Practice at Loyola University, identifies some of the drivers--changes in admissions, length of sentences--of the 20 percent decline in Illinois' prison population in the past five years. Prof. Olson notes that the decline is partly explained by changes in police tactics and sentencing practices across Illinois. In fact, the decline has "been the result of changes in the decisions by practitioners at the local level of government." One of the political challenges of reform in the future, he says, will be tackling the true drivers of high prison population including sentences for serious crime.

Juvenile Justice

The Illinois Mental Health Opportunities for Youth Diversion Task Force has released a report *Stemming the Tide* with 14 recommended action steps to deliver needed services to youth and help keep youth with mental health conditions out of jails and prisons:

1. Improve mental health screening for justice involved youth.
2. Invest in early intervention for serious mental health conditions.
3. Expand screening and sustain the Illinois Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services (CCBYS) program.
4. Train communities in mental health awareness.

Education Funding Report

Jean Pierce, Claire McIntyre, Nancy Brandt, Ann Courter, Issues Specialists

Issues:

From Bond Buyer article: <https://www.bondbuyer.com/news/illinois-fiscal-report-card-offers-glimpse-of-gains-amid-persistent-challenges>

Good news

Fewer Illinois public school districts borrowed to manage through fiscal 2017, a trend state education officials cast as positive as districts digest an education funding overhaul that bolstered funding for some. More districts earned the top fiscal designation but more also sunk to the weakest category of “financial watch” that can eventually lead to state intervention.

Increased funding and limited expense growth drove an increase in the top category of “financial recognition.” Overall, districts saw an increase in their property values which raised their levy and debt capacity while state aid increased by \$380 million in fiscal 2017. Operational expenses were held in check increasing by just 1.6%.

The number of districts that relied on deficit spending to get through the school year showed improvement, dropping to 344 from 382 in last year’s profile.

Bad news

However, the number is projected to jump in the current fiscal year – which would be reflected in next year’s report – to 388 based on estimates submitted by districts.

The profile falls short of representing the strains districts faced from delayed state grant payments during the budget impasse.

Legislation

The General Assembly continues to try to clean up the EBM bill, SB1947 passed last year: HB 5812, the bill to facilitate implementation of the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) policy that zipped through the House last week has been sent to the Governor. The bill was requested by the State Board of Education, which continues to express an expectation that funding long awaited by the schools will be distributed during April, and that all state support to school districts will be delivered to them by the end of the fiscal year. HB 5812 may be key to that goal.

Actions by LWVIL:

TFA in March asking the Representatives to override the Governor’s veto of HB0768, which prevents the State Charter School Commission from overriding School District decisions.

Health Care Issues

Janet S. Craft, Margaret O’Hara, Issues Specialists

ACA 2018 Enrollment

Enrollment in Insurance Exchanges was down a “modest 3.7%” (Kaiser Family Foundation) despite uncertainty generated by the President’s executive order to eliminate cost-sharing payments, decreased marketing for a shortened enrollment period, and weekend shutdowns of healthcare.gov.

State-based exchanges saw a slight increase, federal healthcare.gov states decreased 5.3%. Illinois Partnership exchange had 6% fewer enrollees.

LWVIL Action

- 1/9 CHIP TFA to Members of Congress: oppose any government funding bill that does not include complete funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program unfunded since September 30th. Healthcare coverage for 326,000 Illinois children at risk.

- Congress passed 6-year extension for CHIP funding January 22
- 2/8 LWVIL joined over 70 advocacy groups, sent letter to Governor Rauner opposing Medicare Work Requirement.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) announced they will allow states to apply for waivers allowing work requirements for “able bodied” Medicaid recipients. Most Medicaid recipients who are able to work already do so. The majority of those not working have health conditions, care for children or other family who are ill or have a disability, or are in school. Administration of work requirements have proved time consuming, and burdensome to states rather than connecting people to jobs. Governor Rauner reportedly supports the idea that is under review.
- 2/5 LWVIL witness slips in support SB2332, HB4297 No Tobacco Products under 21. Bills prohibit sale and distribution of tobacco products including electronic cigarettes and alternative nicotine products to anyone less than 21 years. Bills at 2nd and 3rd Readings.
- 3/1 Monitoring: HR798 calls on Congress to create a paid parental leave program that allows parents to defer Social Security payments in order to pay for time off when becoming new parents. Plan would disproportionately hurt women. Witness slips: 323 oppose, 15 supports. Bill: lost in Labor and Commerce Committee; Remains in Committee.

LWVIL Supports HB4165 HA1 Do No Harm Healthcare Act

US Congress and the Trump Administration are proposing actions that could threaten the health and wellbeing of Illinoisans. These actions include rolling back consumer protections, cutting benefits, increasing consumer costs, and restricting access to healthcare coverage. The Do No Harm Healthcare Act would require the General Assembly to approve any proposed waivers, ensuring any attempt to restrict access to healthcare is open to public debate, oversight and scrutiny.

Redistricting Report

Paula Lawson and Jane Ballengee, Issues Specialists

Senators Julie Morrison and Heather Steans have filed the **Fair Maps Amendment** in the Senate as SJRCA26, which mirrors the House amendment Rep. Spain filed (HJRCA43).

A survey similar to the survey sent to the gubernatorial survey will be sent out to all Representatives and Senators currently in the house. The cover letter will be adjusted to reflect those Representatives who were in the house in 2016 and voted on the Franks amendment; the Representatives who are new to the house since the Franks Amendments and for the Senate. This will go out March 23rd.

All Leagues and members have received the first phase of information via the Leaders Update and a TFA.

It is critical that a push to get both Representatives and Senators committed to voting for the SJRCA26 and HJRCA43. The drop dead date for having the Amendment on the November ballot is May 6, 2018 -- six months before the Fall General Election.