



The Illinois General Assembly met last week, with both chambers in session. The primary focus is moving bills out of committee in anticipation of the committee deadline coming up in approximately one month. The House is in this upcoming week, and the Senate is in the next week, and both chambers are out for the next three weeks. The unusual three-week break is due to the mid-March primary and the timing of the traditional two week break on either side of the Easter holiday.

The main policy debate of last week was a group of legislation dealing with various aspects of gun control. This issue soared into the political spotlight after the recent school shooting in Florida and the loss of a law enforcement officer in Chicago. All the legislation dealing with this issue passed the House last week, all with at least some bi-partisan support. The other issue that does not seem to be diminishing in headline value is the issue of sexual harassment claims against various Madigan staffers. Madigan, who is ultimately responsible for hundreds of employees both as his job as the Speaker of the House and as his job as Chairman of the Democratic Party of Illinois, has had two top level campaign staff persons accused of harassment. This immediately sent the Speaker's operation into a defensive tail spin, and Madigan has not yet fully gained control of the situation. Madigan has tried to deal with the situation by increasing communication with both members of his caucus and with the press, a move that is somewhat unusual for the political veteran. Despite his best efforts, Madigan is coming across as, at best, out of touch. This is especially problematic for Speaker loyalists, some of whom are facing primary elections. The timing probably could not be worse, as early voting for the March 20 primary has already started.

The primary issues have not changed radically for either party over the past weeks. Ives is still intent on taking out Rauner and has continued to build steam in her campaign. She has made it into more and more media and picked up positive press along the way; however, she has too large of a gap to narrow to have much hope in victory. The Democratic gubernatorial primary has tightened up, but in every poll and in every scenario, Pritzker has remained on top since the beginning. This is due to the huge financial advantage Pritzker has over Kennedy and Biss, and the organization and professional staff that type of financial advantage can buy. The overcrowded 8-way Democratic race to replace Lisa Madigan, the long-standing Attorney General, seems to have tightened to the two leading challengers, Kwame Raoul and Pat Quinn.

Legislation of Interest:

- SB 2901 is coming up in Senate Committee. This legislation rolling back many of the negative changes that were imposed on unclaimed property under last year's budget. The legislation still has a long way to go before becoming law, but the assignment to and scheduling of the Judiciary committee is a positive step.
- There are several bills dealing with taxing investment services, including SB 3189, HB 4293, and HB 4798. We continue to oppose these bills and, as of now, none of the bills have shown movement. The backers of this legislation, including the House and Senate progressive caucuses, are expected to continue to push for these types of special taxes.

- *Andrew Bodewes*

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