



Laborers' International Union of North America

Midwest Regional Office

John F. Penn, LIUNA Vice President and Midwest Regional Manager

Legislative Update

March 11, 2019

Illinois House and Senate members were in session last week as they will be every week in March. Work on a badly-needed statewide construction program continues with weekly hearings. Last week, Southwestern Illinois Laborers' District Council Business Manager Glyn Ramage and LiUNA 773's Jerry Womick were asked to give their views during a Senate meeting in Edwardsville. A House panel conducted a hearing on the state's road and bridge construction needs.

Gov. Pritzker Releases Tax Cut Plan

Nearly every state taxes income. Most have (like the federal government) graduated tax rates where the percentage of tax paid increases as income grows, so the wealthy pay a larger portion of their income than working families. Illinois is one of only eight states with a "flat tax": everyone pays 4.95% on the first and last dollar they earn and every dollar in between. That means that a Laborer earning \$45,000 a year pays the same rate of tax as a lawyer who makes \$450,000.

Throughout the 2018 campaign, JB Pritzker indicated his support for restructuring Illinois' income tax system. **Gov. Pritzker (D)** last week unveiled his vision for a "Fair Tax" system. Under the Pritzker proposal:

- 97% of Illinois income tax payers (everyone earning less than \$250,000 per year) would get a tax break;
- Property tax credits would be increased 20%; and
- A new \$100/child tax credit would be created.

LiUNA strongly supports the Governor's plan to inject more fairness into Illinois' tax structure because it is good for Laborers and good for the State. **LiUNA Vice President and Midwest Region Manager John F. Penn** stated, "We are pleased that Gov. Pritzker is again following through on his commitment to stand with working families, including the hardworking men and women of the Laborers' Union, who help build our state's roads and schools and who serve the public at all levels of government... Illinoisans deserve a fair tax structure like the one proposed by the Governor today."

By shifting more of the State's tax burden from working families to the wealthy, Gov. Pritzker's Fair Tax plan would generate \$3.4 billion in badly needed additional revenue. This is necessary not only for meeting the State's obligations to education and other services, but to relieve the budgetary pressures that drain money from road construction and have mothballed building projects at universities, K-12 schools and state facilities.

IL Senate Passes Local Right-to-Work (for Less) Prohibition

Federal law allows states and "territories" to pass union weakening Right-to-Work (for Less) laws. Until recently, there was no question that a U.S. territory was considered to be, for example, Puerto Rico or Guam, not counties, cities or school districts. A 2016 federal court ruling, however, stated that local government Right-to-Work (for Less) laws were legal. Last year, ¼ of all New Mexico's counties passed local Right-to-Work (for Less) laws.

State Sen. Ram Villivalam (D-Chicago), himself a union member, introduced **SB 1474** to prohibit local government Right-to-Work (for Less) ordinances. The bill received bi-partisan support in passing the Illinois Senate last week 42-12. All Democrats present for the vote supported the measure along with five Republicans, including **Senators Neil Anderson (R-Moline), Dale Fowler (R-Harrisburg), Sue Rezin (R-Morris), and Paul Schimpf (R-Murphysboro)**. The bill had 24 cosponsors, including Anderson, Fowler and Schimpf and **Senators Chris Belt (D-E. St. Louis), Scott Bennett (D-Champaign), Rachelle Crowe (D-Wood River)**. The bill now moves to the Illinois House where it will be sponsored by another union member, **State Rep. Lance Yednock (D-Ottawa)**.

Democrats passed similar legislation in 2017. Then-**Gov. Bruce Rauner (R)**, however, vetoed that bill and an override effort fell one vote short.

Wind Farm Zoning Clarification Clears House Committee

An east-central Illinois wind project was put in jeopardy recently when a local judge ruled that townships – in addition to counties and municipalities – have zoning authority over wind farms. That ruling not only affected that project, but it created a precedent that would severely complicate, and in some cases prevent, the construction of wind projects all over the State.

LiUNA members have worked more than 2.3 million hours on wind projects over the last decade. We, therefore, are supporting **HB 2988** to prohibit duplicative zoning procedures on wind farms. The bill, sponsored by **State Rep. Ann Williams (D-Chicago)**, passed out of a House committee last week by a 14-3 vote and now moves to the full House.