



Laborers' International Union of North America

Midwest Regional Office

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

Illinois Legislative Update

June 1, 2015

The Illinois legislature "finished" its legislative session on Sunday after passing a budget that they admit is out-of-balance, but Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) informed House members that they will be returning to Springfield every week (without travel pay) for a day or two. The House will return to Springfield this Thursday, June 4. Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) did not say whether the Senate would come back regularly, but he will be bringing senators back June 9th.

Rauner "Turnaround Agenda" Runs Aground

After four months of campaigning, encouraging local governments to show support for his so-called Turnaround Agenda – and, much more often than not, failing – **Gov. Bruce Rauner (R)** finally had his own legislation introduced last week, as previously reported. It was the Illinois Senate, this time, which resoundingly rejected it.

Senate Republican Leader Christine Radogno (R-Lemont) introduced **SB 1046** and presented it before the Senate Executive Committee on Thursday. The bill attempted to amend the Prevailing Wage Act to eliminate its community wage standards on all local government, school district and community college construction projects. LiUNA estimates that there were more than \$6 billion in local taxpayer-funded projects that would have been affected in 2015.

But, the bill didn't stop there. The legislation also sought to change the state's collective bargaining law to allow local officials to prohibit local government and school employees from bargaining over wages, benefits and working conditions.

Organized labor and union contractors opposed the legislation, while lawyers from the Governor's office and the non-union Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) spoke in favor of it. The LiUNA Midwest Region was one of four unions to testify against the measure, stating that eliminating Prevailing Wage protections would not save any money, but would result in massive pay cuts for construction workers, loss of Illinois jobs to out-of-state workers and more cost overruns. LiUNA also dispelled the notion that local government workers were guaranteed huge raises when they negotiate their contracts.

In an attempt to make the wildly unpopular and anti-worker bill more "acceptable," Rauner and Radogno tried to hide it with a property tax freeze. Radogno stated in committee that taking away wage protections for construction workers and bargaining rights for public employees would help local governments offset the revenue lost from the tax freeze. (She neglected to explain how the workers who lost pay and jobs would be able to pay their property taxes or how local governments could pay for any construction projects with flat revenues).

The bill was defeated with all Democrats on the committee, including **Sen. James Clayborne (D-Belleville) and Sen. Donne Trotter (D-Chicago, who represents part of Kankakee Co.)**, voting against the proposal and all Republicans voting for it. Downstate Republicans supporting the scheme included **Sen. Bill Brady (R-Bloomington), Sen. Sue Rezin (R-Morris) and Sen. Dave Syverson (R-Rockford)**, though Syverson stated he was uncomfortable with the Prevailing Wage changes.

AFSCME Pushes Bill Eliminating Right to Strike for State Workers

In an attempt to prevent Rauner from forcing state workers, whose contracts expire on June 30th, out on strike or locking them out, AFSCME, the largest state employee union pushed a bill to force contract negotiations to mediation and, if necessary, binding arbitration. Strikes and lockouts would be prohibited under the proposal.

The bill, **SB 1229**, is sponsored by **Rep. Mike Smiddy (D-Port Byron)**, an AFSCME member, and **Sen. Don Harmon (D-Oak Park)**. It affects only state employees and only those who work in state agencies under the governor, not other elected officials. Many state workers, like prison guards and state troopers, are already prevented by law from striking. The change in SB 1229 is effective for only four years, when Rauner will, hopefully be knocked out of office.

The bill passed the House 67-25-3 and the Senate 38-17. Only Democrats supported the bill, while traditional Republican supporters of public employee issues typically skipped the vote. Rauner will assuredly veto the bill, so supporters will need to pick up four votes in the House to override.

Laborers'
International
Union of
North America

LIUNA!

Feel the Power

1 N. Old State Capitol Plaza, Suite 525
Springfield, IL 62701
(217) 522-3381
www.midwestlaborers.org