



Laborers' International Union of North America Midwest Regional Office

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Legislative Update

January 14, 2021

Welch Becomes Speaker After Madigan Suspends Campaign, Hoffman Effort Comes Up Short

The 101st General Assembly ended with a 6-day “lame duck” session dominated by issues put forth by the Legislative Black Caucus and the drama of electing the next House Speaker.

The efforts of **Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago)** to win another two year-term were complicated by 19 Democrats who publicly announced they would not support him. In the Democrats' internal caucuses discussing the Speaker election those 19 members held firm, thus denying Madigan of the 60 votes he needed for reelection. In the first round of closed-door voting, Madigan received 51 votes, **Rep. Ann Williams (D-Chicago)** received 18, **Rep. Stephanie Kifowit (D-Aurora)** got three and one member abstained.

On Monday, Madigan announced that he was suspending his campaign for speaker, but not withdrawing from the race. That opened the door for Madigan supporters to line up votes. Downstater and longtime labor ally **Rep. Jay Hoffman (D-Belleville)** started to do so, as did **Rep. Chris Welch (D-Westchester)**. Members of the House Black Caucus rallied around Welch and were soon joined by Latino Caucus members. Kifowit and Williams dropped out of the race and most of their supporters also backed Welch. A later round of voting gave Welch 50 votes, Hoffman 15 and eight who voted present. On Wednesday, the first day of the 102nd General Assembly, Hoffman yielded and Welch became Speaker.

Speaker Welch's election is historic as he is the first Black Speaker of the Illinois House. He was first elected in 2013 and served several years on the House Labor Committee. Welch has a 92% lifetime Illinois AFL-CIO voting record and is a past winner of its Giorgi Award honoring him as the labor legislator of the year. Welch has sponsored numerous pro-labor bills, including legislation requiring use of union contracts in the setting of Prevailing Wage rates, prohibiting local “Right to Work (for Less)” laws and increasing the minimum wage to \$15.

LiUNA Supports Energy Bill Requiring Prevailing Wage

Solar projects have not produced many jobs for LiUNA members in Illinois to date. In fact, they haven't produced many jobs for Illinois workers; the corn and bean fields around the state that become home to solar farms are parking lots filled by trucks with out-of-state license plates.

So, when **Rep. Will Davis (D-E. Hazel Crest)** introduced **SB 3096**, a stopgap funding bill for renewable energy projects that included Prevailing Wage protections, LiUNA supported the proposal. Other unions criticized the move because they wanted to include Prevailing Wage on residential projects (despite supporting a similar proposal several years ago that would have exempted many more projects than this year's bill).

SB 3096 would have funded – with prevailing wage protections – the following:

- One utility-scale wind farm;
- One utility-scale solar project;
- One brownfield solar project;
- Up to 20 community-scale solar projects; and
- An unknown number of commercial/industrial rooftop solar projects.

The bill passed out of a House committee, but did not receive a vote on the House floor due to the extensive list of other bills on the legislative agenda and the time spent meeting over the Speaker's election.

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Feel the Power

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