

## **Legislative Report January 2021 Revised**

### **New IL Speaker of the House Named**

State Rep. Emanuel Chris Welch, the House Democrat who oversaw a stymied misconduct inquiry into House Speaker Michael Madigan, was crowned his successor Wednesday (January 13) marking an end to a legendary run of Springfield's most powerful politician (Note: Madigan is the longest serving leader for either state or federal office in the country at 38 years; Welch was mentored by Madigan).

Welch becomes the first Black speaker of the Illinois house in state history. He emerged from a closed-door voting session with House Democrats Wednesday with enough votes to replace Madigan, the sources said. The new class of lawmakers still must take an official vote on who will be speaker after they're sworn in Wednesday afternoon.

Welch's ascension will also mark the end to Madigan's historic reign. (WBEZ news release, January 13, 2021)

### **IL Begins New Year**

The 101<sup>st</sup> General Assembly returns to session on January 26, meeting virtually (although they had a one-day special session on January 14). Get ready for budget and redistricting to take center stage, along with police reform. (SUAA Mini-Briefing)

### **Financial Woes Ahead for Community Colleges**

*The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently published three stories about higher education finance, enrollment, and the reality of tomorrow for our profession. In a nutshell, these are the key points:

- Moody's and Fitch predict revenue declines of 5 to 10 percent across the sector next year, and a lengthy road back after that. (Dec. 8, 2020)
- Two-year public institutions nationwide suffered the largest fall undergraduate-enrollment decrease of any higher-education sector by far. (Nov. 12, 2020)
- "Colleges Grapple with Grim Financial Realities" (Nov. 30, 2020)

As for Illinois, those grim truths must be faced as they just won't disappear. For example, Illinois has just begun "first steps" toward filling a budget hole of an expected \$3.9 billion.

Community colleges expect cuts from the state, as the failure of the progressive income tax will force legislators to reduce expenses, most likely including higher education. Compounding those cuts will be loss of tuition from students who have decided or been forced not to pursue higher education, suggesting the precarious vulnerability (fiscal, social, etc.) of many of our students. (*Harrisburg Register*, January 8, 2021) (Note: Between drops in enrollment, cuts in state funding, and the impact of COVID-19, it'll be interesting to observe the impact on community colleges over the next year)

### **Pritzker Selects Andy Manar as his New Senior Advisor**

In what's perceived as a shrewd move, Governor J.B. Pritzker added state senator Andy Manar (D-Bunker Hill) to be his new senior advisor. Manar carries a portfolio that could cover a little bit of everything the governor needs right now as he goes into re-election mode. (*Crain's Chicago Business*, January 5, 2021) (Note: Manar is "a friend of education")

### **Can Free Community College Unite a Divided U.S.?**

The incoming Biden-Harris administration wants to launch a new era in higher education that will make it open to everyone

"The Biden Plan for Education beyond High School," a platform document circulated by Joe Biden's team during the 2020 presidential campaign, refers to community colleges as "America's best kept secret." While that may come as a surprise to the 8.2 million students enrolled in these institutions (who represent 37 percent of the country's year-round undergraduates, according to the U.S. Department of Education), it is a point worthy of consideration. Higher education in the U.S. has long meant four-year colleges—and it has become a societal dividing line. In the last two presidential elections, Donald Trump twice won more than 60 percent of non-college-educated white voters.

With President-elect Biden about to take office, the nation's 942 public two-year colleges are under a spotlight as part of the new administration's plans for addressing income inequalities that have fostered political divisions.

As it's well known, incoming first lady Jill Biden has spent years as a community college teacher and has said she might continue teaching after her husband assumes the presidency. (*Scientific America*, January 6, 2021)