***HCAA Legislative Report***

*January 22, 2024*

*Respectfully submitted by Linda Frank and Linda Kolbusz-Kosan*

Illinois legislators returned to Springfield on January 16, 2024. Both chambers have been adjourned since mid-November, 2023.

On a Federal level, is concern about a House bill, which hasn’t made it out of committee yet, that would reduce education funding by 28 percent overall. The biggest cuts are in programs for the students most in need, Title I funding, and eliminating 248,00 educator jobs. We will watch for updates during the spring session.

Key 2024 Session Dates for the 103rd Illinois General Assembly

* January 16: First Session Day for the 2nd year of the 103rd General Assembly
* January 19: Deadline – House & Senate Requests to the Legislative Reference Bureau
* February 9: Deadline – Introduction of House & Senate Bills
* February 21: Governor’s State of the State/Budget Address
* March 10: Deadline – Senate Bills out of Senate Committee
* **March 19: Primary Election**
* April 5: Deadline – House Bills out of House Committee
* April 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
* April 19: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
* May 3: Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Comm & Senate Bills out of House Comm
* May 17: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate & Senate Bills in House
* May 24: Adjournment
* May 25-31: *Contingent Session Days for the Budget*

**November 7, 2023**

State receives credit upgrade from Fitch Ratings:“All three major ratings agencies now rate Illinois in the “A” category after Fitch Ratings upgraded the state’s bond rating from ‘BBB+’ to ‘A-.’ The upgrade is the ninth that the state has received in just over two years. Credit upgrades generally make it cheaper for the state to borrow money, playing a major role in investors’ assessment of risk in buying state bonds. Fitch Ratings cited prudent use of revenue surpluses to the state’s Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund and Rainy-Day Fund as a reason for the upgrade. It also noted the state’s efforts to pay down outstanding debts and eliminate its bill backlog. In addition, Fitch said that the Fiscal Year 2024 state budget supports a continued stable fiscal path.”

**December 17, 2023**

In an opinion piece titled “Fixing ‘Tier II’ issue can be both costly and an opportunity” Ralph Martire, Executive Director of the Center for Tax and Budget, wrote: “In 2010, Illinois created a new, Tier II pension plan that not only provides a significantly lesser benefit than under the prior Tier I plan, it also requires that Tier II members pay the same portion of their wages for these lesser benefits as Tier I members pay for greater benefits. Besides being patently unfair, Tier II runs afoul of the rules that allow Illinois to avoid enrolling folks in Social Security.Since Illinois can’t afford to enroll all exempt state employees — and all public school teachers — in Social Security, it’ll have to increase Tier II benefits. Paying for that will be a challenge, because current tax policy doesn’t generate enough revenue to continue funding what the state does today, much less handle new costs.This conundrum actually creates an opportunity. After living for generations with flawed tax policies that force Illinois to underfund core services, lawmakers can use the need to solve the pending Tier II fiscal crisis as an impetus for reforming state tax policy to work in the modern economy, finally allowing Illinois to make adequate and sustainable investments in the core services that build better communities.”

***January 19, 2024***

The Illinois Supreme Court upheld a landmark law that consolidated hundreds of suburban and downstate police and firefighter pension funds stating that this new law does not violate the state of Illinois constitutional protection clause even though it dilutes the votes of pensioners. (In the past, pensioners voted for 5 of their peers for local boards. Now, votes by members will be on a statewide basis which dilutes their votes/influence.)

**Of Note:**

In an opinion piece titled “College enrollment could take a big hit in 2025” in *The Hill,* Alejandra O’Connell-Domenech wrote*:* “College enrollment numbers have been declining for years, taking a hit during the pandemic. Colleges saw the first bump in enrollment since the beginning of the pandemic in 2023, but experts worry those numbers will drop again soon. That’s because the number of traditional college-going age is expected to dramatically drop in 2025.” Additional factors in the decline, included: “the national birth rate which fell by almost 23 percent between 2007 and 2022 . . . fewer international students are studying in the U.S. . . . strong economics can inspire young people to enter the workforce early . . . and, young people are not sure if college is worth the cost.”