



Legislative Update

June 02, 2009

[A disappointing end to a whirlwind week ...](#)

Have you ever seen Candid Camera or Punk'd? These shows would carry out practical jokes on unknowing participants while filming their reactions. I have to admit that this year's budget process and some of the tax and fee proposals suggested by Democrats had me thinking that a cameraman at any moment would pop out and say that this wasn't really happening. Unfortunately, this week wasn't a reality show, but was a real life drama that unfolded revealing the irresponsibility and lack of leadership of the Democratic Party in Illinois. This irresponsibility has brought with it many disappointments.

The legislature had months to pass meaningful campaign finance reform and instead the House passed a water downed version of it. We had months to go through the budget line by line to prioritize our spending, identify responsible budget cuts and hold public hearings - and yet a last minute, hastily crafted budget was dumped on our lap a day before the vote. With our state facing declining revenue streams, high unemployment and a deteriorating business climate, I would have preferred to see a little more cooperation to reform the budget process, cut spending and propose a realistic, responsible budget which doesn't push off the tough decisions.

Some details of legislation which passed the last day include:

In response to the call for campaign finance reform, Speaker Madigan, Governor Quinn and Senate President Cullerton proposed House Bill 7 which is essentially a weaker version of the recommendations set forth by the non-political, Illinois Reform Commission. I voted to reject this proposal. The problem with this legislation isn't necessarily what's in the legislation, which did include various contribution caps, but what was missing from it. There were several fatal flaws including: failure to cap in-kind contributions (leaving the door wide open for expenditures on behalf of candidates as opposed to direct donations), does not include year round "real time" contribution and expenditure reporting, and an effective date that does not begin until after the next gubernatorial election cycle. Instead of leveling the playing field, the legislation actually increases the powers of political leaders and incumbents in our State.

Despite these flaws, Governor Quinn actually supported this measure. This was an especially ironic move considering his own reform commission vehemently opposed the legislation citing the numerous loopholes.

Quinn was able to secure a provision in the legislation that the Democrat Party of Illinois would not endorse in next year's gubernatorial primary ... HIS primary for governor. Hmmm? Makes you wonder about the motivation, doesn't it?

As I have previously stated in past emails, I was hopeful that the House would allow for an up and down vote on the Illinois Reform Commission's proposals which were contained in House Bill 24. HB 24 is a campaign contribution limits bill similar to the federal system. It is far more comprehensive bill than HB 7 and takes more of the undue money influence out of politics. Even though we tried to get this bill released for a vote, it was rejected. Why? Because the bill that passed simply promotes the status quo.

Budget

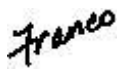
After no real movement on reform and a desire to meet the May 31st adjournment, the legislature was presented with numerous proposals to deal with the budget. Coming into this General Assembly, every legislator was acutely aware of the state's fiscal problems. With the state billions in the red, changes had to be made. However, even though the legislature has been in session since January, we never received any details from the Governor on his proposed budget.

Instead, days before adjournment, the legislature was given proposals which would have increased your income tax by 50-67%, added new taxes on services such as hair cuts and swept dedicated funds from a wide array of programs such as driver's education, mental health and assistance to the homeless. What was not included were options such as additional budget cuts and meaningful fiscal reforms, such as reforming Medicaid which could have saved billions. With residents facing an uncertain economy, high unemployment, and skyrocketing property tax bills, the last thing the legislature should be doing is passing its financial burden to the working class families of this state.

In the final analysis, the Session continues into overtime with no resolution that works for and is fair to all of the people of Illinois.

In the next couple weeks, I will continue to send updates and let you know how things are progressing.

Best,



Franco Coladipietro

State Representative

email: franco@il45.com

phone: 630-582-0045

web: