

It's going to be an interesting week ...

The May 31st adjournment is rapidly approaching and we are finally seeing some major pieces of policy moving through the legislature. To quickly recap, last week the legislature voted on a capital infrastructure bill, rejecting pay raises for members of the General Assembly and new ethics provisions. The following pieces of legislation were passed last week:

With unanimous consensus, members of the General Assembly and other state elected officials rejected pay raises for themselves, freeing up \$1 to \$2 million that could be spent on education or other budget priorities. Senate Bill 2090 also eliminates the State's Compensation Review Board and their back-door method of awarding automatic pay raises for legislators and other state elected officials. In addition, lawmakers will also be taking four unpaid furlough days over the course of the fiscal year.

In an effort to reform government, numerous proposals were passed which would change the procurement process (awarding of state contracts) and expand the investigative authorities of various government bodies.

To provide more accountability in the procurement process, Senate Bill 51 which unanimously passed the House, would require the independent appointment of professional procurement officials. This legislation also opens up the process of awarding state contracts by requiring a public hearing on sole source contracts. State agencies will also now be prohibited from entering into a contract to issue bonds or other securities with any entity that uses an independent consultant.

The Executive Ethics Commission, Attorney General and Inspector Generals will have greater investigative authority under Senate Bill 54 which also received bipartisan support. New reforms under this bill will allow the inspector generals to self-initiate investigations based on anonymous tips, stop patronage hiring in State agencies and ensure transparency of their work. These additional powers will allow the state to swiftly and effectively uncover and eradicate State employee wrongdoing. This legislation also gives substantial new authority to the Secretary of State Inspector General to investigate lobbyist disclosures and registration, ensuring greater lobbyist accountability. Lobbyists will also be required to submit and disclose weekly expenditure reports.

In an effort to cleanse government of political patronage hires, Senate Bill 1333 would terminate directors and board members who were hired under former Governors Ryan and Blagojevich. Included in this legislation is the formation of a task force to review the state's hiring practices and find ways to stop patronage abuses.

The above-mentioned pieces of legislation are the highlights from the previous week in the General Assembly. However, we've only picked off the low-hanging fruit and the toughest fights lay ahead in the final five days until adjournment. The budget and additional ethics reforms are the legislature's top priorities this week. With the Governor,

Speaker Madigan and Senate President Cullerton negotiating on the budget behind closed doors, I wish I could tell you definitively what to expect in the budget. The only budget tidbits the legislature has heard are the press releases from the Governor's office. One proposal that is still on the table is a 50% income tax increase.

In addition, I continue to call for the legislature to enact Pat Collins and the IL Reform Commission's recommendations including true campaign finance reform, making the redistricting process non-partisan, and opening up government to the people. I am hopeful that before any budget is passed these tough reform measures are enacted to finally rid government of "pay to play" politics. As my colleague Representative Reboletti mentioned, we need to stop rearranging the deck chairs of the Titanic that is Springfield government.

As we progress into this home stretch, and watch as the budget and ethics negotiations unfold, I will do my best to keep you updated on what's going on in Springfield and I welcome your opinions and suggestions.