

# ICCTA ACTION ALERT

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March 10, 2006

The Illinois General Assembly is now at the halfway point of the spring 2006 legislative session. March 3 marked the deadline for bills to pass their house of origin. House bills that have passed out of the House will now receive consideration by the Senate, and Senate bills that have passed out of the Senate will be considered by the House. Both the House and Senate will return to Springfield on March 14 to finish the remaining four weeks of the session.

This year's session -- the second year of the 94th Illinois General Assembly -- continues to be low key. Legislative leaders have set April 7 as their final adjournment date, which is about seven weeks earlier than the typical end-of-May adjournment time. This is due primarily to the fact that 2006 is a statewide election year. There may also be a desire to clear the Capitol Building early so that new heating and air conditioning systems can be installed in the General Assembly chambers prior to the fall veto session.

Much of this year's budget was determined a year ago, when a two-year partial "pension holiday" of public employee pension contributions was approved. Approximately \$1.2 billion in state funds that would have been directed to the state's public pension funds (including the State Universities Retirement System) will instead be used for the state's budget for ordinary and contingent expenses. According to the Taxpayer's Federation of Illinois, "Gov. Rod Blagojevich's budget plan for fiscal year 2007 increases spending above more than \$2 billion in additional available revenues and requires him to resort to calling for additional tax increases on businesses. Those issues provide the bulk of controversy for the remainder of the spring."

The March 7 Taxpayer's Federation of Illinois' Report from the Capitol notes that the Governor has proposed the following increases in business taxes:

- 1.1 cent tax on fuel stored in Illinois, but shipped out of state – \$45 million
- Expansion of the tax on computer software to licensed agreements – \$48 million
- Business loss audit periods – \$10 million
- Elimination of tax credit on landfills producing energy – \$25 million
- Expansion of taxation to companies with off shore operations – \$10 million
- Increase in the tax on cigars from 18 to 30 percent – \$10 million

No language has been forthcoming yet on any of these proposals, so it is difficult to gauge their direct impact. Formal proposals are expected to emerge any time.

## BILLS OF INTEREST TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES

**House Bill 4209**                      **Harper College Baccalaureate Degree Initiative (Bassi)**  
**ICCTA Position:**                      **MONITOR**  
**Status:**                                      **HELD in House Rules Committee (it had previously passed the House Higher Education Committee)**

Allows William Rainey Harper College to create a pilot baccalaureate program under which the district may establish and offer bachelor's degrees in 2 fields of study if certain conditions are met, including requiring (i) that the degree programs not compete with any nearby public university, (ii) that the district identify and document unmet workforce needs, (iii) that the degree programs not require any additional funding from local taxes or the State, (iv) that the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the offering of the degree programs, and (v) that the pilot program expire 4 years after the initial offering of the degree programs, unless otherwise extended by law. Effective immediately.



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**HB 4221 ISAC Student Loan Sales / Interest Fees (Jakobsson)**

**ICCTA Position: SUPPORT**

**Status: PASSED the House 113-0; assigned to Senate Rules Committee**

Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. Provides that if any of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission's student loans are sold or transferred to a private entity, then the private entity must offer an interest rate on the loan that is the same as or lower than the Commission offered at the time of sale or transfer and must offer the same fee reduction plan that was offered by the Commission at the time of sale or transfer. Effective immediately. *(ICCTA opposes the sale of ISAC's student loan portfolio and believes that passage of this legislation would remove incentives for potential buyers.)*

**HB 4339 Minority Transfer Centers for Chicago and Morton Colleges (Collins)**

**ICCTA Position: MONITOR**

**Status: PASSED the House 61-53; FIRST READING in the Senate**

Requires ICCB to establish a 3-year pilot program under which each community college in the City Colleges of Chicago district plus Morton College, Parkland College, Rock Valley Community College, and Kankakee Community College must employ one person as a coordinator and one person as a recruiter to assist inner-city students in transferring to public universities in Illinois. Provides that ICCB shall provide a grant to each of these districts to fund the positions. Sets forth responsibilities of the coordinator and recruiter. Requires ICCB to study the overall success of the pilot program and report its findings to the General Assembly. Provides that after the report is filed, the General Assembly may continue the program, increase funding for the program, or expand the program to all public community colleges in the State. Effective July 1, 2006. *(ICCTA has expressed concerns that if the legislation passes without an appropriation, then the affected colleges would be subject to an unfunded mandate.)*

**HB4406 Higher Education Grant for Child Raised by a Grandparent (Jones)**

**ICCTA Position: MONITOR**

**Status: PASSED the House 68-44-1; assigned to Senate Higher Education Committee**

Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. For his or her first year of full-time attendance at an institution of higher learning, provides that a person is entitled to a \$1,000 grant if he or she (i) is in the legal custody of his or her grandparent and receives public aid assistance under the Illinois Public Aid Code, (ii) has graduated from high school with a cumulative grade point average of at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, and (iii) has been recommended for the grant by the principal of his or her high school.

**HB 4442 Open Meetings Act - 48 Hours Notice (Hannig)**

**ICCTA Position: MONITOR**

**Status: PASSED the House 113-0; FIRST READING in the Senate**

Amends the Open Meetings Act. With respect to posting meeting notices at the public body's principal office and at the meeting's location at least 48 hours before the meeting, requires that the notices be placed in locations visible and accessible by the public at all times the notice is posted.

**HB 4453 Illinois Workforce Investment Board (McKeon)**

**ICCTA Position: SUPPORT**

**STATUS: PASSED the House 113-0; FIRST READING in the Senate**

Amends the Illinois Workforce Investment Board Act. Provides that the Illinois Workforce Investment Board shall develop a method for measuring Illinois' progress in transitioning to a high-skill, high-wage, and high-productivity economy at the State, regional, and local levels. Sets forth that the Board shall develop a set of benchmarks that measure whether Illinois is developing a globally competitive workforce that is aligned with the needs of the current and emerging economy. Requires the Board to report annually on Illinois' progress on each of the benchmarks and that the Board make changes to these benchmarks as necessary to improve measurement and reporting while, at the same time, maintaining consistency across annual reports to the General Assembly. Deletes specific benchmarks set forth in the Act.

**HB 4652                      Baccalaureate Completion Matching Grants Act (McCarthy)**

**ICCTA Position:            MONITOR**

**Status:                      HELD in House Rules Committee**

Amends the Illinois Financial Assistance Act for Nonpublic Institutions of Higher Learning. Changes the short title to the Baccalaureate Completion Matching Grant Act (and makes conforming changes in the School Code). Makes changes concerning the calculation of the grant formulae and the conditions of institutional eligibility. Effective July 1, 2006. Provides that (i) the participating institution shall determine student eligibility using the federal definition for need-based student aid, defined as the estimated family contribution subtracted from the institutional cost of attendance and (ii) a student shall be eligible for assistance if the institution determines that the student has remaining need, according to information provided by the student's completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid, as applied to the federal definition for need-based student aid.

**HB 4995                      Community College Student Housing (Schock / Black)**

**ICCTA Position:            SUPPORT**

**Status:                      HELD in House Rules Committee**

Amends the Public Community College Act. Allows a board of trustees to provide or contract for residential housing for students and employees. In the Article concerning building programs, removes dormitories from the definition of "facilities". Effective immediately.

**HB 5269                      Community College Learn English Initiative (Coulson)**

**ICCTA Position:            MONITOR**

**Status:                      PASSED the House 113-0; referred to Senate Rules Committee**

Amends the Public Community College Act. Requires ICCB to establish and administer a "We Want to Learn English Initiative" to provide resources for immigrants and refugees in Illinois to learn English in order to move towards becoming full members of American society. Provides that each fiscal year, the Board shall include in its budget proposal \$25,000,000 in funding for the Initiative. Provides that no less than half of the funds appropriated for the Initiative each fiscal year shall be disbursed to community-based, not-for-profit organizations, immigrant social service organizations, faith-based organizations, and on-site job training programs. (*Similar legislation – SB 2376, sponsored by Sandoval – PASSED the Senate 38-16 and has been referred to the House Rules Committee.*)

**HB 5767                      Sale of ISAC Loans Prohibited (Myers)**

**ICCTA Position:            SUPPORT**

**Status:                      HELD in House Rules Committee**

Amends the Governor's Office of Management and Budget Act and the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. Provides that the Illinois Student Assistance Commission may not sell its loans or the attendant loan origination and servicing rights nor may any other State agency, including the Governor's Office of Management and Budget, or a State official sell the loans or the attendant loan origination and servicing rights. Provides that all student loans of the Commission and the attendant loan origination and servicing rights are inalienable and must remain as assets of the Commission. Effective immediately.

**SB 2225                      University Remediation (Maloney)**

**ICCTA Position:            MONITOR**

**Status:                      PASSED the Senate 52-0; FIRST READING in the House**

Amends the Board of Higher Education Act. Provides that if a public university admits a student who needs remedial coursework, then the university must require that the student complete the remedial coursework.

**SB 2376                      Community College Learn English Initiative (Sandoval)**

**ICCTA Position:            MONITOR**

**Status:                      PASSED the Senate 38-16; referred to House Rules Committee**

Amends the Public Community College Act. Requires ICCB to establish and administer a "We Want to Learn English Initiative" to provide resources for immigrants and refugees in Illinois to learn English in order to move towards becoming full members of American society. Provides that each fiscal year, the Board shall include in its budget proposal \$25,000,000 in funding for the Initiative. Provides that no less than half of the funds appropriated for the Initiative each fiscal year shall be disbursed to community-based, not-for-profit organizations, immigrant social service organizations, faith-based organizations, and on-site job training programs. The legislation is subject to appropriations by the General Assembly. (*Similar legislation – HB5269, sponsored by Coulson – PASSED the House 113-0 and has been referred to the Senate Rules Committee.*)

**SB 2778                      Higher Education Emergency Worker Attendance (Sieben)**

**ICCTA Position:            MONITOR**

**Status:                      PASSED the Senate 57-0; assigned to the House Higher Education Committee**

Amends the Volunteer Emergency Worker Job Protection Act and various Acts relating to the governance of public universities in Illinois. Provides that no public university or community college attendance policy or attendance policy of a faculty member thereof may in any way penalize a student who is a volunteer emergency worker for absence from class caused by the performance of his or her duties as a volunteer emergency worker. Amends the Volunteer Fire Protection Association Act. Provides that no public university or community college attendance policy or attendance policy of a faculty member thereof may in any way penalize a student who is a volunteer fire protection association member for absence from class caused by the performance of his or her duties as a volunteer fire protection association member. Effective immediately.

**House Joint Resolution 24      Joint Task Force on Community Colleges (McCarthy)**

**ICCTA Position:            SUPPORT**

**Status:                      Passed House 113-0; HELD in Senate Rules Committee**

Creates a Joint Task Force on Community Colleges to review the present community college system and its future.

**☞ Register for Community College Lobby Day on March 29 --  
call ICCTA at 1-800-454-2282 ☞**