



Illinois Community College Trustees Association Action Alert May 10, 2004

Budget issues loom as lawmakers near end of session

Both houses of the Illinois General Assembly adjourned last Thursday afternoon and are scheduled to return to Springfield on Tuesday, May 11, for the push to the scheduled final adjournment date of May 21. The session is then scheduled to meet every day until May 21. Many observers are predicting that the scheduled adjournment date might not be met, and that the session could extend until May 31.

The Illinois Constitution provides that in order for a measure (like the budget) passed on or after June 1 to take effect immediately, an "extraordinary" three-fifths majority in both chambers must approve it before it can be sent to the Governor for action. Since neither political party enjoys an extraordinary majority in either house, the minority party (currently Republican) votes are often needed to pass legislation after June 1.

State budget issues for Fiscal Year 2005 continue to dominate the legislative agenda. The Governor's budget proposal calls for funding reductions in many state agencies and higher education. Under the Governor's budget plan, state funding for community colleges would be reduced by 3.3% below FY 2004, which is also about 15% below the high-water mark of FY 2002. If the Governor's recommended budget is approved, community college funding from state sources will be very near FY 1998 funding levels.

Please remind your legislators that the Governor wants to drop community college funding to FY 98 levels; that is unacceptable. Tell your lawmakers about programs your college has had to reduce or cut because state funding has faltered. ICCTA wants community colleges funded no lower than at FY04 levels. (Even that funding would fail to recognize our enrollment growth over the past few years.)

Other Legislation of Interest to Community Colleges

Even though nearly 11,000 pieces of legislation have been introduced to date in this two-year legislative session, very few non-budget are advancing through the process. Only a few bills of interest to community colleges show prospects for passage.

Senate Bill 2112 -- Property Tax / Homestead Exemption / 7% caps (DeLeo / Madigan)

ICCTA Position: OPPOSE (conditionally)

STATUS: Passed the Senate; on concurrence in the House

ICCTA opposes SB 2112 unless the state can make up the losses in revenue caused by all of the elements of this legislation. The bill increases the ceiling for household income eligibility for the Senior Citizen Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption from \$40,000 for taxable years 1999 through 2003 to \$45,000 for taxable years 2004 and thereafter. It also provides that, for taxable years 2004 and thereafter, the maximum reduction under the Senior Citizens Homestead Exemption shall be \$3,000 in all counties and the maximum reduction under the general homestead exemption shall be \$5,000 in all counties; creates an alternative general homestead exemption that applies to counties that choose to adopt the provision by ordinance; provides that the amount of the exemption is the equalized assessed value of the homestead property for the current tax year minus the adjusted homestead value; and defines "adjusted homestead value" as the lesser of (i) the property's base homestead value increased by 7% for each tax year after the base year (2002 or 2003) through and including the current tax year or (ii) the property's

equalized assessed value for the current tax year minus \$4,500 in Cook County and \$3,500 in all other counties in tax year 2003 or \$5,000 in all counties in tax year 2004 and thereafter.

HB 4224 -- Property Tax Caps / Employment Cost Index (Eddy)

ICCTA Position: SUPPORT

STATUS: Stalled on Third Reading in the House; has not yet gone to the Senate

This bill amends the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law in the Property Tax Code to provide that "extension limitation" means (a) the lesser of 5% or the percentage increase in the Employment Cost Index (now, Consumer Price Index) during the 12-month calendar year preceding the levy year or (b) the rate increase approved by the voters. It also defines "Employment Cost Index" as the Employment Cost Index for total compensation for civilian and state and local government workers published by the U. S. Department of Labor.

HB 4247 -- Open Meetings Act / Inspection of Verbatim Records (Black / Righter)

ICCTA Position: MONITOR

STATUS: Passed the House; on second reading in the Senate

HB 4247 would prohibit the inspection of the verbatim record of a closed meeting, including for discovery purposes, in a judicial proceeding other than in a judicial proceeding to determine whether the Act has been violated. It would require (now, permits) a court's examination of verbatim records in a civil proceeding to be conducted in camera and requires that the initial examination in a criminal proceeding must be in camera, but other examinations need not be in camera. Lastly, it removes the authority of an administrative hearing officer to redact information that may qualify under the attorney-client privilege.

HB 1959 -- State Property Sale to Illinois Central College (Slone / Shadid)

ICCTA Position: MONITOR

STATUS: Passed the House; on concurrence in the Senate

This bill amends the State Property Control Act to provide a method to sell the former Zeller Mental Health Facility to Illinois Central College.

For additional legislative updates, contact ICCTA at iccta@communitycolleges.org or 1-800-454-2282.