



# Legislative Report

By Taylor Anderson

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AS THE SPRING SESSION WINDS DOWN to the end of May and adjournment, things are heating up in Springfield around the budget. The “Grand Bargain”, which has been on life support for most of the spring, has been receiving triage as President Cullerton and the Senate Democrats continue to meet and negotiate with the Governor and Senate Republicans over a package of budget and reform bills.

This week the Senate attempted to call this package of bills for a vote for a third time, with Republicans refusing to vote for any of the bills, saying they aren’t ready and with Democrats claiming action must be taken before time runs out. Due to that disconnect, the Senate was able to pass many but not all of their budget package along party lines. This patchwork approach to budgeting makes it nearly impossible to predict what a finalized budget would look like if the General Assem-

bly and the Governor should ever come to terms. For instance, the Senate was able to pass an appropriations bill but not the bill authorizing those expenditures and not a revenue bill to raise the funds for the appropriation plan. Leaving much doubt in the air regarding what line items are actually ‘real’ and which will face significant changes or eliminations.

Included in this package of bills is SB 3, which directly impacts townships, and SB 478, which sought to freeze property taxes, both of which the Township Officials of Illinois have weighed in on.

SB 3, discussed in the April magazine, passed the Senate and contains language to consolidate units of local governments, including townships. While some of these provisions make sense, there are a few that would negatively impact townships resulting in TOI opposing SB 3. We have tried to work with the Senate to address

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our concerns and will continue to work to protect townships as the bill moves forward in the House. We have already reached out to House staff to explain our concerns and hope to have the opportunity to recommend changes to alleviate our issues.

SB 478, which failed to pass the senate, freezes property tax levy rates for all units of local government for two years and provides exemptions for only debt services and pensions. This bill received 32 yeas votes but due to its home-rule preemption, it required 36 yeas votes (a super majority). At this time, the fate of this proposal is unknown. The possibility that it is revived or that the home-rule preemption is removed to lower the votes needed for passage are both on the table.

**House Bill 496** (Rep. Tom Demmer, R-Dixon; Sen. Tom Cullerton, D-Villa Park) allows a vote by a city council or by referendum to abolish a township that is coterminous with that city. Applies the specific provisions in a law that applied to abolition of Evanston Township statewide. This bill will simply not work in that there is no "one size fits all" solution to absorption of coterminous townships since all are structured differently. Passed the House; in Senate.

**House Bill 607** (Rep. Sam Yingling, D-Round Lake) allows a township board to put a question on the ballot to abolish that township's highway commissioner. Passed House 75-34-3; sent to Senate.

**Senate Bill 3** (Sen. Tom Cullerton) among other things, addresses combination, absorption, abolition of

certain townships, including coterminous townships, in an orderly and thoughtful manner. It does however, allow township boards where there are 15 or fewer miles to put a question on the ballot to abolish its highway commissioner. TOI's suggested threshold is 10 miles or less, therefore, we oppose the bill. Passed the Senate 37-6-13; sent to House.

**Senate Bill 85** (Sen. Michael Connelley, R-Lisle) creates the Local Government Inspector General Act. Senate floor.

**Senate Bill 909** (Sen. Melinda Bush, D-Grayslake) allows for the abolition of township assessors in Lake County by vote of the county board. Senate floor.

**Senate Bill 923** (Sen. Bush) prohibits the same person from holding specific offices simultaneously that are part of the county board and township. Senate floor.

With all the uncertainty floating around the budget and the Senate's "Grand Bargain," and with the May 31st adjournment growing ever closer, the outlook for getting a balanced, full-year budget is equally unclear. At this point negotiations continue, but also being discussed are various stop-gap proposals to fund education and social services while kicking the can on the other issues. And if there is no resolution on the budget come May 31st, you can bet that our spring session will turn into a summer one as well.

By the time you read this article, the General Assembly will have (hopefully) adjourned by the May 31 deadline.



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