



Legislative Report

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General Assembly lays out ambitious spring schedule

IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN if anything of significance is going to be resolved this spring, but Illinois legislative leaders have laid out a comprehensive schedule for lawmakers to be in Springfield over the next five months.

More pressure is mounting from all corners in Illinois for the state's leaders to resolve their differences and come to terms on a state budget and other major pressing issues facing the state. Still no progress can be reported, however. Illinois enters 2017 and the second half of the current fiscal year with a temporary budget plan expired and no spending plan in place. We are more than \$10 billion in debt and more people are out-migrating from Illinois than any state in the union. And these are income-generating citizens taking their tax dollars to other places.

Despite the lack of progress with negotiations, the rank-and-file legislators face a spring schedule that finds them in Springfield often. The 2017 session kicks off with the

General Assembly Inauguration on Wednesday, January 11. That follows a two-day wrap-up of the old legislature that will conclude any outstanding business before it adjourns *sine die* the previous day. While the legislature is set to be in session for four days that week, most of the activity will consist of ceremonial functions, parties, and perfunctory things like office space designations and the like. More important decisions, like committee assignments, are also yet to be made. TOI is anxiously awaiting those, especially the position of House Revenue Committee chair, which is now empty due to the loss of Democrat Representative John Bradley of Marion, who lost in a fierce re-election bid.

This year marks a noteworthy milestone in Illinois history. The new legislature will be designated as the 100th Illinois General Assembly, marking 200 years of state history that will culminate in a bicentennial celebration in 2018. It will kick it off by welcoming **Gov. Bruce Rauner** for the annual State of the State address, which will be delivered on Wednesday, January 25. This will be a must-hear address for anyone with any interest in our state's future.

Back to the day-to-day schedule and the agenda that awaits TOI. Even with the loss of every anti-township bill that was put forth a year ago, our opposition will be back at it as aggressive as ever with another litany of legislative proposals to eviscerate the most efficient level of government in Illinois. We'll fight back as we always have—with the facts. And we will feature our good people and our good deeds and the fact that they are being provided at the lowest cost to taxpayers of all governments. And we are also being kicked around, along with other local governments, in talks among legislative leaders for a grand budget deal. We are monitoring those talks and we have friends making our case there, in what are highly secretive meetings. But it just goes to show that there is no rest for the weary.

So, as stated earlier, the legislative schedule is busy. In the Senate, two full weeks in January, three more full weeks in February (including the Governor's budget address on February 15), four full weeks in March, only two in April due to a two-week hiatus for Passover and Easter, and nearly every day of five weeks in May, including Memorial Day weekend. Will they be fulfilled? We shall see.

In any case, 2017 will prove to be a monumental year on all accounts.

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