



Legislative Report

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Governor-elect Rauner's first priority: budget woes

IT WAS MUCH WORSE than he thought it was. That was Governor-elect Bruce Rauner's early observation after bringing his transition team to Springfield and getting a close-up look at the state's perilous budget situation.

But he pledged to roll up his sleeves and tackle the problem head on. Since his November 4 election, he has been examining numbers from the Quinn administration and General Assembly resources, assembling his top staff and agency directors, and even scoping out his future living quarters at the Executive Mansion. But he will have to hit the ground running come Inauguration time on January 12 if he plans to meet the scheduled date of February 18 for his first budget address to the General Assembly. Illinois' dreary financial forecast is only made worse by the roll back on January 1 of the state's higher income tax rates.

Speaking of the General Assembly, schedules released recently by the House and Senate indicate a very heavy spring session, with sparse time off once

lawmakers return to Springfield to be sworn in on January 14 through its adjournment on May 31. It will be flowers and congratulations and lofty speeches that first day. It will be pledges of bipartisanship and fellowship. But then the real work begins and that kinship will be sorely tested when lawmakers must take on the heavy tasks that await them.

The makeup of the legislature remains virtually the same; only one seat changed hands in the Senate and none in the House. Due to retirements or primary election challenges, there will be 20 members of the House sworn in on January 14 that were not in the chamber two years ago. But the partisan makeup will remain the same there, 71-47 Democrats. The Senate goes to 39-20 Democrats. Democrats, therefore, maintain a veto-proof margin in both chambers.

Here's some major dates and deadlines for the upcoming 99th Illinois General Assembly:

January 12 – Inauguration, Governor and statewide officers

January 14 – Inauguration, General Assembly

February 4 – Governor's State of the State

February 18 – Governor's Budget Address

February 20 – Deadline, Introduction of Senate Bills

February 27 – Deadline, Introduction of House Bills

March 27 – Committee Deadline, House and Senate Bills

March 30 – April 10 – Spring Recess

April 24 – Deadline, Passage of House and Senate Bills

May 8 – Deadline, Committee Passage in House of Senate Bills

May 15 – Deadline, Committee Passage in Senate of House Bills

May 22 – Deadline, Passage of House and Senate Bills

May 31 – Adjournment



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