



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Published for Labor Activists

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On These and Other Legislative Issues Important To Working People

The Illinois General Assembly will be on Spring recess until April 17.

HB 750 - Property Tax Swap/Increase in Education Funding

Sponsor: Rep. Miller (D - Chicago)
SUPPORT

Amends the State Finance Act, the Illinois Income Tax Act, and the Property Tax Code. Increases the income tax rates for individuals, trusts, and estates from 3% to 5% of the taxpayer's net income and increases the rate of income tax for corporations from 4.8% to 8% of the taxpayer's net income. Creates the School District Property Tax Relief Fund. Property tax relief shall be 20% of the total property taxes in individual school districts from the year 2005.

Passed the House Appropriations Elementary and Secondary Education Committee 12-3-6. Second Reading.

HB 1542 - Collective Bargaining

Sponsor: Rep. Dugan (D - Kankakee)
SUPPORT

Makes collective bargaining mandatory with respect to the removal or discharge of an officer or member of a fire or police department unless the parties mutually agree otherwise. Effective immediately.

Passed the House 76-39-0. First Reading in the Senate.

HB 1919 - Firefighter/General Assembly Member

Sponsor: Rep. Bost (D - Carbondale)
SUPPORT

Provides that a firefighter who is elected to the Illinois General Assembly shall be granted leave by the employer, without loss of pay or benefits and without being required to make up for lost time, for work hours devoted to performing the responsibilities as a legislator. *Passed the House 113-0-1. First Reading in the Senate*

SB 448 - Roofing Industry Licensing

Sponsor: Sen. Sandoval (D - Cicero)
SUPPORT

Amends the Illinois Roofing Industry Licensing Act. Provides that the expiration date and renewal period for each certificate of registration issued under the Act shall be set by the Department by rule (now, licenses shall expire biennially at midnight on June 30 of each odd-numbered year).

Passed the Senate 58-0-0.

SB 479 - Successor

Sponsor: Sen. Forby (D - Benton)
SUPPORT

Requires that service contracts include a

clause that a responsible bidder or offeror must certify (i) that it shall offer to assume the collective bargaining obligations of the prior employer and (ii) that it shall offer employment to any employees currently in any existing bargaining unit who perform substantially similar work.

Passed the Senate 38-19-0.

SB 500 - Smoking Ban

Sen. Cullerton (D - Chicago)
NEUTRAL

Prohibits smoking in public places, places of employment, and governmental vehicles.

Passed the Senate 34-23-1. Arrive in the House.

SB 1249 - Fringe Benefits

Sen. Sullivan (D - Rushville)
SUPPORT

Requires that the State of Illinois, its political subdivisions, and other public employers enter into written agreements with employee health plans and labor organizations that those employers shall remit the fringe benefit allowance of applicable wage packages directly to the employee benefit plan or plans as an employer contribution for temporary and short-term employees referred by a labor organization.

Passed the Senate 55-0-0.

NATIONAL

Employee Free Choice Act Introduced in Senate

Senator Kennedy introduced the Employee Free Choice Act in the Senate on Thursday. The U.S. House of Representatives paved the way, voting by a wide margin to give working people a real chance to unite with co-workers and bargain for better wages and benefits.

The legislation was introduced on the same day as the media reported a new economic analysis showing that per person, the top earners in America make 440 times more than the average person in the bottom half of earners. That's nearly double the gap from 1980 and a key reason why the American middle class is rapidly disappearing.

Introduction of the H-1B and L-1 Visa Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act

Also on Thursday, Senators Richard Durbin and Chuck Grassley introduced the H-1B and L-1 Visa Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act of 2007, important bipartisan legislation that will improve wages and workplace standards for workers in high skilled industries and elevate the issue of workers' rights within the immigration reform debate.

This measure makes important progress in combating fraud and abuse within the existing H-1B and L-1 temporary worker visa programs. These programs allow foreign guest workers to enter the country to fill spot labor shortages in high skilled areas. Unfortunately under current law, employers,

especially in the high tech industry, are abusing these temporary visa programs by exploiting workers, driving down standards and often facilitating the displacement of domestic workers and the outsourcing of jobs.

The H-1B and L-1 Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act will significantly enhance labor protections within these temporary visa programs by:

- Enhancing US worker recruitment and non-displacement requirements;
- Improving wage standards;
- Strengthening the Department of Labor's (DOL) ability to prevent obvious fraud and misrepresentation on employer applications;
- Preserving standards by enhancing the DOL's audit authority.