



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Published for Labor Activists

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On These and Other Legislative Issues Important To Working People**

HB 374 – Paid Family Medical Leave

Sponsor: Rep. Franks (D – Woodstock)

SUPPORT

Creates the Illinois Family and Medical Leave Act. Contains provisions similar to those in the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, except that it applies to a son-in-law, daughter-in-law, father-in-law, or mother-in-law who has a serious health condition, and some of the provisions of the federal law pertaining to federal employees and federal matters have been deleted or changed.

Passed the House 62-50-1.

HB 985 – Prevailing Wage

Sponsor: Rep. Beiser (D – Alton)

SUPPORT

Amends the Prevailing Wage Act. Provides that the Act applies to any maintenance, repair, assembly, or disassembly work performed on equipment whether owned, leased, or rented. Effective immediately.

Passed the House 71-45-0.

HB 1105 – Prevailing Wage

Sponsor: Rep. Gordon (D – Coal City)

SUPPORT

Closes a loophole for those hauling materials to and from work sites. Prior, haulers were only paid prevailing wage for the trip to the work site. This bill will allow them to be paid for the round trip to and from work site.

Passed the House 64-48-1.

HB 1795 – Employee Misclassification

Sponsor: Rep. Osterman (D – Chicago)

SUPPORT

The Illinois AFL-CIO joined with a broad coalition of groups interested in ending the practice of misclassification of workers in Illinois as independent contractors. This legislation goes forward to end that process by creating a three part test for employees, and a twelve part test for legitimate contractors. This applies to construction related industries only.

Passed the House 64-51-3.

SB 1553 – Downstate Firefighters Disability Pension

Sponsor: Sen. Frerichs (D – Champaign)

SUPPORT

Amends the Downstate Firefighters Article of the Illinois Pension Code. Provides that the 3 physicians' opinions required for a determination of disability need not agree as to the existence of any disability or the nature and extent of a disability. Provides that, upon termination of a disability pension by the board, the marshal or chief of the fire department shall order immediate reinstatement of the firefighter into active service.

Passed the Senate 39-14-2.

AFSCME Report Shows State Agencies Suffering from Understaffing

AFSCME Council 31 this week released a 36-page report that outlines the continuing understaffing problems in eight of the state's largest governmental departments.

The report, *Beyond the Breaking Point, Illinois State Services in Crisis*, updates a similar report issued last year by the union that reported a loss of 6,000 essential employees in departments like the Illinois State Police, Department of Corrections, Department of Child and Family Service, and Veterans' Affairs.

Some key points of the 2007 study are:

- An inspector general's findings show that the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) has too few employees to function effectively. Caseloads for DCFS workers remain higher in most offices than court-mandated standards.
- Staffing levels in state mental health centers are some 30% lower than in 2001, with injuries to staff and residents on the rise in many facilities.
- State Police staffing has declined by 14 percent since 2001 - a loss of 243 employees.
- At the Department of Corrections over the past year, frontline staff was cut at 24 of 28 state prisons despite an increase in the inmate population. The staff-to-inmate ratio in Illinois' prisons is the worst in the Midwest. IDOC is short 3,400 employees of achieving the national mean of 2.76 inmates to staff.
- More than 800 Illinois veterans are on waiting lists for beds in Illinois facilities, yet 200 beds in homes across the state sit empty and can not be filled because the facilities don't have the required frontline staff to meet federal mandates.

A copy of AFSCME's report is available at www.afscme31.org.

NATIONAL

U.S. House Passes "Shareholder Vote on Executive Compensation" Act

By a vote of 269 - 134, the U.S. House voted today to give shareholders a voice in executive compensation packages of public held companies.

"Income inequality in America is at troubling levels, and the gap between the rich and the poor has only accelerated on the Bush Administration's watch," said Congressman Phil Hare (D-IL).

"Average workers are achieving record productivity, yet many have seen their health care and pension benefits put on the chopping block. To add insult to injury, executives at many of these very same companies have benefited from increasingly lavish compensation packages."

The bill (H.R. 1257) now goes to the Senate.

U.S. Senate Fails to Pass "Medicare Fair Prescription Drug Price" Act

A minority of Senators blocked legislation this week that could have allowed Medicare to negotiate for lower drug prices to achieve substantial savings for seniors and for the working families whose taxes support this vital program. The policy of barring such negotiations - a policy requested by drug makers when the Medicare prescription drug bill was enacted - remains the law of the land.

The Department of Veterans Affairs and state Medicaid programs use their buying power to negotiate more affordable drugs than those available to many Medicare beneficiaries. If the Department of Health and Human Services were allowed to put the purchasing power of tens of millions of Medicare beneficiaries behind negotiations with drug makers, it would undoubtedly result in lower prices for their products.

The U.S. House passed legislation in January mandating Medicare negotiations.