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# Insight on Illinois

By John G. Fogarty Jr., Latasha R. Thomas / Oct 14, 2020

Election Day is within sight and campaign activity is at a fever pitch. Here in Illinois, the campaign getting the most attention is the Pritzker-led effort to amend the Illinois Constitution to allow the General Assembly to impose a graduated income tax rather than the current, constitutionally-required flat tax. While Governor Pritzker has personally contributed over \$50 million to this effort, Ken Griffin has now contributed nearly that amount in opposition to the initiative. No matter where you stand on the merits of the referendum, the outcome has important implications for the state's fiscal health.

Here is what else we are watching now.

## Upcoming Election Developments

- Illinois billionaire Ken Griffin contributed an additional \$26.7 million to an ongoing campaign to oppose Illinois Governor JB Pritzker's proposed graduated tax constitutional amendment
- Proponents of the graduated tax amendment include the Illinois AARP, which has pushed back on opponent's claims that the amendment will open the door to taxation of retirement income
- The early voting period is beginning in many municipalities in Illinois

## Madigan Challenger Announced Candidacy for Speaker of the House

- Representative Stephanie Kifowit (D-Oswego), who has been in the General Assembly since 2013, announced that she will be challenging Speaker Madigan as a candidate for Illinois House Speaker
- Despite unrest among Democratic state Representatives over Madigan's alleged role in a ComEd bribery scheme, Kifowit is the first to announce a Democratic challenge to the sitting house Speaker, who has been the Speaker almost every year since 1983
- Fidel Marquez Jr., a former ComEd executive, pleaded guilty in connection with the ComEd bribery allegations and is cooperating with prosecutors on the case

## COVID Developments

- The northwestern Illinois region implemented new Coronavirus prevention measures because their 7-day average positivity rate exceeded 8%
  - Bars and restaurants in the region will no longer be allowed to offer dining indoors, and indoor gathering will not be able to exceed 25% of capacity or 25 people
- The metro east region was released from additional mitigation measures on October 9th after seeing a decline in Coronavirus cases
- Despite earlier speculation over whether Halloween activities would be discouraged in light of COVID restrictions, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced that trick or treating would be allowed in Chicago, although large gatherings and haunted houses will be prohibited

## Upcoming Meetings

Thursday, October 22nd, 10 a.m. – Cook County Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, November 4th, 10 a.m. – Chicago City Council

Tuesday, November 17th – Thursday, November 19th – Illinois House and Senate Veto Session

## News of the Week

[Billionaire Ken Griffin drops extra \\$26.7M against Pritzker's graduated-rate income tax amendment proposal. His total stands at more than \\$46.7M – Chicago Tribune](#)

Ken Griffin, the billionaire founder and CEO of the Chicago-based Citadel hedge fund and investment firm, put another \$26.7 million into the campaign against billionaire Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker's ballot proposal to shift the state from a flat-rate income tax to a graduated tax with rates that increase with income.

[Seniors push back on 'misinformation' about graduated tax – State Journal-Register](#)

Seniors from organizations representing the interests of older Illinoisans said Wednesday that ads suggesting retirement income will be taxed under a graduated state income tax are at best misleading and at worst lies. During a virtual news conference Wednesday, seniors from around the state were enlisted to urge fellow retirees to support the graduated income tax amendment and ignore claims that retirement income will be taxed.

[Under fire amid federal corruption probe, Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan faces a new challenge from a fellow Democrat – Chicago Tribune](#)

With a federal corruption investigation circling around longtime Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, four-term Democratic state Rep. Stephanie Kifowit of Oswego said Thursday she will challenge the powerful Southwest Side Democrat for leadership of the chamber when the new General Assembly is

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seated in January.

[Madigan challenger emerges – State Journal-Register](#)

A four-term Democratic representative from Oswego said Thursday she plans to challenge House Speaker Michael Madigan for leadership of the chamber. Rep. Stephanie Kifowit said Madigan's role in the unfolding Commonwealth Edison scandal prompted her to take the risky step of trying to unseat the longest-serving speaker in the history of the country.

[A Former ComEd Executive Has Pleaded Guilty In The Springfield Bribery Scheme – WBEZ](#)

The former top in-house lobbyist for Commonwealth Edison pleaded guilty Tuesday in a political bribery scheme that's threatening the biggest player in Springfield in the past 40 years. Fidel Marquez Jr. – ComEd's former senior vice president for governmental and external affairs – admitted his role in the power company's long-running, illicit effort to influence Illinois House Speaker and state Democratic Party boss Michael Madigan of Chicago.

[Berrios relative indicted in federal bribery case involving ex-Rep. Luis Arroyo – Chicago Sun-Times](#)

Luis Arroyo spent roughly a year as a bought-and-paid-for member of the Illinois House of Representatives for a businessman who wanted to push sweepstakes legislation, a new federal indictment alleges. And that businessman just happened to be James T. Weiss, son-in-law of former Cook County Democratic Party chairman and ex-county assessor Joseph Berrios, the feds say.

[Confidential COVID-19 outbreak data shows undisclosed incidents at prisons, workplaces, schools across Illinois – State Journal-Register](#)

Like many Midwestern states, Illinois has struggled with rising coronavirus cases and death counts recently, surpassing 300,000 confirmed cases this past weekend and recording its highest daily death count since late June on Friday. Public health officials issued a "warning list" for 28 Illinois counties at risk for coronavirus surges and blamed, in part, businesses who were "blatantly disregarding mitigation measures, people not social distancing, gathering in large groups and not using face coverings."

[Tougher restrictions return to northwest Illinois region that includes Rockford, NIU after surge in COVID-19 cases – Chicago Tribune](#)

A resurgence in coronavirus rates in a northwest Illinois region that includes Rockford and Northern Illinois University will result in a return to tighter restrictions aimed at curbing the disease's spread, officials announced Tuesday. The nine-county region bordering Wisconsin and Iowa will see increased mitigation efforts beginning Saturday because its seven-day average of positive cases was 8% or higher for three consecutive days — a 2 percentage point jump in two weeks, state officials announced.

[COVID-19 Restrictions Lifted in Metro East Region of Illinois, Pritzker Announces – WTTW](#)

Restrictions designed to stop the spread of the coronavirus in the Metro East area of Illinois near St. Louis will be lifted at 5 p.m. Friday after the number of confirmed cases has dropped significantly, state officials announced. These restrictions have been in place since Aug. 18, when Gov. J.B. Pritzker ordered bars and restaurants to close at 11 p.m., in consultation with Missouri officials who planned similar steps to stop the cross-border spike.

[Chicago won't cancel Halloween; Mayor Lori Lightfoot unveils pandemic rules for the holiday – Chicago Tribune](#)

Halloween in Chicago isn't canceled after all. Wearing a black and red outfit with a cape emblazoned with "Rona Destroyer," Mayor Lori Lightfoot on Thursday unveiled a series of COVID-19 rules for the upcoming holiday that she said will allow people to celebrate safely, including a requirement that everyone wears masks.

[Cook County launches \\$20 million mortgage assistance program: 'We will feel the effects of COVID-19 for years to come' – Chicago Sun-Times](#)

Right after the 2008 housing crash and economic downturn, Alma Anaya said her family lost their home. The Democratic Cook County commissioner drew on that experience Thursday as she and other County Board members announced a \$20 million mortgage assistance program designed to help keep roofs over the heads of cash-strapped suburban residents reeling from the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic.