
Insight on Illinois

By John G. Fogarty Jr., Latasha R. Thomas / Nov 19, 2020

Now that the initial vote-counting has been completed here in Illinois, and most (but not all) jurisdictions have published at least their unofficial election results, we provide a rundown of the results in key races.

Races We Were Watching

Graduated Income Tax Ballot Initiative

In a stunning rebuke of the proposal to amend the Illinois Constitution to eliminate Illinois' flat tax, only 45% of voters voted for the initiative, far below the threshold to pass the Constitutional Amendment, which was either 60% of those voting on the measure, or a majority of all Illinoisans who voted in the election.

This puts an end to a contentious and well-funded fight over a measure that would have immediately resulted in a graduated income tax and would have permitted additional rate changes.

This referendum question was easily the most expensive in Illinois history. Governor J.B. Pritzker, the main proponent of the proposed change, poured \$58 million into the committee Vote Yes for Fairness. The main opposition to the question was the Coalition to Stop the Proposed Tax Hike Amendment, whose main funder was Illinois Billionaire Ken Griffin, with \$53.7 million in contributions.

Illinois Supreme Court

For the first time ever, a sitting Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court was not retained. Justice Thomas Kilbride lost his bid for retention in the Third District, netting only 56.4% yes votes out of 60% needed to maintain the pivotal seat. \$11.7 million was put into the race on both sides, with Republicans framing the retention battle as a referendum on longstanding Speaker Michael J. Madigan's leadership and his past and current support of Justice Kilbride. The Third Judicial District will now see an election to fill that seat in 2022.

Some state Republicans were optimistic that the failed retention bid would lead to an evenly split partisan deadlock until another justice was elected in the Third District in 2022. However, Justice Robert L. Carter was unanimously appointed by the remaining six Supreme Court Justices to fill the vacancy beginning December 8th.

U.S. House of Representatives

3rd District – Marie Newman (D) /Mike Fricolone (R)

Incumbent Congressman Daniel Lipinski lost the Democratic Primary in the 3rd District to Democrat Marie Newman in the Spring. Newman faced off in the General Election with Republican Mike Fricolone and was elected to the Democratic-leaning suburban district by more than 6 points.

6th District – Sean Casten (D) (I) /Jeanne Ives (R)

Incumbent Democrat Sean Casten is a freshman Democrat who unseated Republican Congressman Peter Roskam in 2018's blue wave election. This year, Republican Jeanne Ives challenged Casten in a bid to flip the seat back to Republican hands. Ives had previously served as a state Representative for 6 years and mounted an unsuccessful primary bid for Governor in 2018. Casten sailed to victory, garnering nearly 53% of the vote.

13th District - Rodney Davis (R) (I) / Betsy Londrigan (D)

This was a re-match between Republican incumbent Rodney Davis and Democratic challenger Betsy Dirksen Londrigan. In 2018, Davis edged out Londrigan on a margin of less than 1%, making Davis a top target for DC Democrats this cycle. However, Davis cruised to victory, beating Londrigan by a 9-point margin, 54.7% to 45.3%.

14th District – Lauren Underwood (D) (I) /Jim Oberweis (R)

Incumbent Democratic Representative Lauren Underwood flipped the previously Republican-held 14th District in 2018. The district in the Western Suburbs was a must-watch for people wondering whether the seat would be retaken by the Republican caucus in 2020. Underwood's opponent was State Senator and dairy magnate Jim Oberweis.

For almost a full week after Election Day, the race was considered too close to call. The media has now called the race for Underwood, who appears to have a lead of over 5,000 votes, Oberweis has not yet conceded.

17th District – Cheri Bustos (D) (I) /Esther Joy King (R)

In the relatively conservative 17th Congressional District, incumbent Democrat Cheri Bustos faced Republican newcomer Esther Joy King. Bustos had, until recently, served as the Chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in Washington. Both parties poured millions of dollars into

campaign ads as the race turned out to be unexpectedly close in the days leading up to the election. However, Bustos ultimately prevailed with 51.9% of the vote to Joy King's 48.1%. Shortly after the election, Bustos announced she will not be running again for chair of the DCCC.

In non-election news, COVID-19 cases are on the rise, triggering heightened public safety measures and providing cause for postponing legislative session in Springfield.

Rising Coronavirus Cases

- Due to rising Coronavirus cases, Gov. Pritzker is moving the entire state back to Tier 3 precautions, which includes 25% capacity at retail establishments beginning on November 20th
- The Governor has threatened to issue a new Stay-at-Home order if cases continue to increase

Illinois Legislature's Veto Session Cancelled

- Amid an increase in COVID cases around the state, the Illinois General Assembly and Senate made the decision to postpone their usual fall veto session until they can safely meet in person
- This move is viewed by many Republicans as a boon to House Speaker Michael Madigan, who has come under fire in recent weeks by Governor JB Pritzker and US Senator Dick Durbin, who have indicated their support for a change in Democratic Party Leadership. The change will allow the Speaker more time to attempt to consolidate support in his Caucus before legislators return to Springfield

Upcoming Meetings

- Tuesday, Nov. 17 – Thursday, Nov. 19 – POSTPONED – Illinois House and Senate Veto Session
- Monday, Nov. 23, 2 p.m. – Chicago City Council
- Tuesday, Nov. 24, 10 a.m. – Cook County Board of Commissioners – Special Meeting to Consider FY 2021 Budget as Amended

News of the Week

[Public Health Officials Announce Tier Three Resurgence Mitigations to Take Effect Statewide on Friday Following Sharp Increase in COVID-19 Cases](#) – Illinois Department of Public Health

With a new wave of COVID-19 surging across the state of Illinois, the Midwest, and the nation, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today announced additional COVID-19 resurgence mitigations will take effect in every region across the state in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus. Tier 3 mitigations build on the Resurgence Mitigation Plan released in July to suppress the spread of the virus and prevent hospitals from becoming overrun. This latest round of mitigations aims to limit gatherings and encourages residents to stay home as much as possible and follow proper safety measures when out in public.

[As COVID-19 cases continue surging, Gov. J.B. Pritzker warns another state stay-at-home order could be near: 'That seems like where we are heading'](#) – *Chicago Tribune*

If Illinois' coronavirus resurgence doesn't begin to subside, Gov. J.B. Pritzker warned Thursday that he may again put in place some form of a "mandatory" stay-at-home order, the farthest-reaching restriction to curb the spread of COVID-19 he's used to date.

[City of Chicago Launches "Protect Chicago" Strategy to Mitigate Further Spread Of COVID-19](#) – Office of the Mayor

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), and the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) today launched a new citywide strategy - "Protect Chicago" - an effort to help Chicago bend the COVID-19 curve for the second time. This strategy calls on all Chicagoans to change their behavior through targeted regulations, strong messaging, and a community-based outreach strategy. If changes are not made by Chicago residents, businesses, and visitors to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the city is on track to lose 1,000 more Chicagoans by the end of the year or even more.

[Editorial: Canceling veto session, canceling the work, canceling voters' best interests](#) – *Chicago Tribune*

With coronavirus positivity rates rising, the Illinois House and Senate canceled their upcoming veto session scheduled for three days next week and three days in December. COVID-19 cases in central Illinois have been worrying local health providers, and Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President Don Harmon decided to keep lawmakers in their districts as a precaution.

[Coronavirus Surge Forces Illinois Legislature to Postpone Veto Session](#) – *NBC Chicago*

Leaders of the Illinois General Assembly announced Tuesday the postponement of the Legislature's veto session due to the surge of COVID-19 in the state. Senate President Don Harmon said the surge of the pandemic is no time to bring together hundreds of people from around the state. The veto session was scheduled for Nov. 17 through 19 and Dec. 1 through 3.

[Pritzker Says Madigan Needs to Go as Head of Illinois Dems](#) – *WTTW*

Gov. J.B. Pritzker is calling for a change in leadership at the top of the Illinois Democratic Party, a day after U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin said the party “paid a heavy price” under embattled House Speaker Michael Madigan in Tuesday’s election. Durbin made news Wednesday in an interview on “Chicago Tonight” when he said Madigan’s continued presence as chairman of the party “has not helped” after Democratic candidates statewide had been “tarred as Madigan allies who are behind corruption and so forth and so on.”

[Mayor Lori Lightfoot, Chicago Federation of Labor announce agreement to avoid hundreds of city worker layoffs as part of 2021 budget – Chicago Tribune](#)

As Mayor Lori Lightfoot works to build support for her 2021 budget, she has withdrawn her plan to fire hundreds of city workers to close Chicago’s \$1.2 billion deficit. Lightfoot’s city spending plan, unveiled last month, called for hundreds of workers to lose their jobs as a cost-saving measure, but the move has been met with fierce resistance from aldermen and labor unions.