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# Insight on Illinois

By John G. Fogarty Jr., Latasha R. Thomas / Jan 13, 2021

While one could reasonably have expected 2021 to be a more docile year for politics than 2020, these past two weeks have utterly shattered that expectation. Nationally, the events of January 6th will reverberate for some time to come. President-Elect Biden is steadily filling out his Cabinet, and following two Democratic victories in US Senate races in Georgia, control of Congress has swung to the Democrats, by the slimmest of margins. And in Illinois (as of this writing), for the first time in decades, it appears that the Illinois House will begin the 102nd General Assembly with a new Speaker whose last name is not Madigan. These changes are momentous and will have real legislative and administrative consequences – all of which we are tracking carefully.

Here is what we are watching:

## Speaker Madigan Suspends Bid for Speakership

- On Sunday, the House Democratic caucus had a preliminary vote on the Illinois House Speaker, garnering current Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan only 51 votes out of the necessary 60 required to gain the speakership. Out of 72 Democratic members, 51 voted for Speaker Madigan, 18 for state Representative Ann Williams (D-Chicago), and three for state Representative Stephanie Kifowit (D-Oswego). On Monday, Michael Madigan suspended his bid for the Speakership
- Speaker Candidates:
  - After Speaker Madigan announced the suspension of his candidacy, state Representative Emanuel Chris Welch (D-Hillside) was put forward as the Black Caucus' candidate. He stands as the current frontrunner after a Caucus vote on Tuesday night
  - State Representative Jay Hoffman (D-Swansea) was a late entry into the Speaker's race, and the state Representative, who has served for more than 25 years in the General Assembly since 1991, garnered 15 votes in Tuesday night's Caucus vote
  - State Representative Ann Williams (D-Chicago), state Representative Kathleen Willis (D-Addison), and state Representative Stephanie Kifowit (D-Oswego) have suspended their bids for the position

## Lawmakers Return to Springfield

- While Illinois Lawmakers traditionally meet in the late fall for the Veto session, this year, their return was delayed by COVID concerns until early January, when they returned to Springfield less than a week before the 102nd General Assembly is set to be inaugurated
- Major Legislation:
  - [HB 2170](#) – The bill was championed by the Legislative Black Caucus as a way to address racial inequality in Illinois schools. The bill passed both Houses and is awaiting the Governor's signature.
  - [HB 2267](#) - Would establish a 21-member elected Chicago school board. The bill has passed the House and is awaiting a third reading in the Senate.
  - [HB 2451](#) – The bill put forward by state Senator Robert Martwick (D-Chicago) would remove the restriction that prevents firefighters born after Jan. 1, 1966, from receiving a 3% cost of living increase. Despite strong opposition from Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, the bill passed both Houses and was sent to the Governor.
  - [HB 3653](#) – Criminal Justice Reform bill which would end cash bail and provide increased funding for racial bias, mental health, and substance abuse training for law enforcement officers, among other reforms. The bill, as amended, passed the Senate early Wednesday morning and was sent back to the House for a concurrence vote.

## Upcoming Meetings

- Wednesday, January 13th – General Assembly Inauguration
- Tuesday, January 27th, 10 a.m. – City Council Meeting
- Wednesday, January 28th, 10 a.m. – Cook County Board of Commissioners

## News of the Week

[In politically calculated move, Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan suspends bid for another term but doesn't bow out – Chicago Tribune](#)

Scandal-plagued Speaker Michael Madigan on Monday suspended his bid to keep running the Illinois House, even as he left open the possibility he could reemerge if Democrats can't agree on a replacement. The move was politically calculated, an aide privately acknowledged, as Madigan plays a waiting game.

[Madigan Suspends Campaign For Speaker After Falling Short On Votes, But Isn't Officially Out – NPR Illinois](#)

Embattled House Speaker Mike Madigan (D-Chicago) stunned Illinois' political sphere on Monday morning, announcing he would suspend his campaign for a historic 19th term as leader of the Illinois House after falling short on the support he needs in a first round vote Sunday night.

[Illinois House Democrats wrangle over Madigan's future behind closed doors as criminal justice overhaul dominates public debate – Chicago Tribune](#)

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With less than three days to shore up the votes needed to claim another term as House speaker, Michael Madigan on Sunday was confronted with the reality that he lacks support from nearly a third of his 73-member Democratic caucus. In the first closed-door ballot cast by divided House Democrats, Madigan received 51 votes, sources said, short of the 60 he needs to lengthen a tenure as speaker that stretches back to 1983, save two years of Republican control in the mid-1990s.

[House Black Caucus selects speaker candidate, after Madigan suspends his bid so Democrats can 'find someone, other than me' – Chicago Sun-Times](#)

For the second day in a row, the race to hold the gavel that House Speaker Mike Madigan has gripped for nearly four decades lost a candidate. But it also gained a new one. The candidate who opted out was a crucial one — Madigan himself. The legislator newly joining the race is a Madigan ally who has the support of the Black Caucus... Late Monday, the Chicago Sun-Times learned that the Black Caucus had chosen state Rep. Emanuel “Chris” Welch, D-Hillside, as its candidate for speaker. A source within the caucus said Welch would have Madigan’s backing. But Madigan’s spokesman denied that.

[Another rep throws hat in the ring, will challenge Madigan for Illinois House speaker – Chicago Sun-Times](#)

A North Side Democrat joined the race against Speaker Michael Madigan for the House’s top leadership position Wednesday, saying the state needs a leader who “puts the people of Illinois first.” Rep. Ann Williams, D-Chicago, announced her decision to challenge Madigan for the job Wednesday, hours before a House Women’s Caucus candidate forum on the speaker’s position. Williams on Monday said she was making calls to colleagues about the post.

[State legislators pass sweeping education measure that is one pillar of Black Caucus’ agenda – Chicago Tribune](#)

Both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly on Monday passed the Legislative Black Caucus’ broad education proposal that makes changes to statewide education laws from early to higher education. The [sic] first piece of the caucus’s wide-ranging social justice agenda is now just a signature from Gov. J.B. Pritzker away from becoming law.

[Proposed criminal-justice reforms debated during General Assembly's 'lame-duck' session – State Journal-Register](#)

Supporters of a far-reaching bill that would eliminate cash bail in Illinois and make it easier to fire and sue police officers began to make their case in the Illinois General Assembly in committee testimony Saturday. Opponents said many of the proposed reforms would hamstring law enforcement, make it harder to recruit people to become police officers, and carry an unknown price tag. They called for the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus to seek consensus rather than use Democrats’ super-majorities in the Senate and House to muscle the provisions through the legislature in the next few days.

[CPS families of color call for elected school board – Chicago Sun-Times](#)

In 2012, Brenda Delgado spoke at her first Chicago Board of Education meeting. A parent of a child who attended Salazar Elementary, which was at risk of being closed, Delgado was “passionately crying,” urging board members to keep her child’s school open. Board members were doodling in their notebooks, said Delgado, of Washington Park. She is one of many Black and Brown families with children in CPS advocating for a fully elected school board, which is now appointed by Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

[Illinois Senate passes firefighter pension bill over mayor’s strenuous objections – Chicago Sun-Times](#)

With the spotlight focused elsewhere, such as the Mike Madigan saga and the Black Caucus push for criminal justice reform, the Illinois Senate voted Monday to raise retirement benefits for 2,200 Chicago firefighters in a way that would saddle beleaguered city taxpayers with \$850 million in added costs by 2055. The bill already had passed the Illinois House and now awaits Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s signature or veto.

[City officials defend Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s school reopening plan at City Council hearing – Chicago Tribune](#)

Aldermen pressed city officials to justify their plan to start reopening Chicago public schools Monday as some students began returning to classrooms. The City Council Education Committee heard from Health Department and Chicago Public Schools officials on the same day preschoolers and some special education students were welcomed back into school buildings across the city for the first time since classes were suspended last spring because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Which Illinois Regions Are Currently Meeting the Metrics to Lift Tier 3 Mitigations? – NBC Chicago](#)

Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced last week that regions may be allowed to move forward from Tier 3 COVID-19 restrictions beginning this week if they meet the required metrics. The governor did not give a specific day in which a decision on lifting mitigations would be announced, but he said last week that the earliest regions could leave Tier 3 would be Jan. 15. He is expected to deliver a coronavirus update Monday afternoon.

[Pritzker announces Phase 1B, with an emphasis on racial equity, age range lowered – Capitol Fax](#)

Building on guidance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Governor JB Pritzker announced guidelines for the next stage of COVID-19 vaccine distribution across Illinois – Phase 1B. “ACIP’s guidance serves as the foundational blueprint for Illinois’ Phase 1B plan, with one key adjustment: here in Illinois we are more strongly

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pursuing equity in the distribution of our vaccinations,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “For people of color, multi-generational institutional racism in the provision of healthcare has reduced access to care, caused higher rates of environmental and social risk, and increased co-morbidities. I believe our exit plan for this pandemic must, on balance, overcome structural inequalities that has allowed COVID-19 to rage through our most vulnerable communities.”

[Pritzker and beleaguered state Veterans' Affairs chief agree it's time for her to leave](#) – *Chicago Sun-Times*

The director of the state's Veterans' Affairs Department is stepping down, Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced Monday, capping a tenure that saw the coronavirus claim the lives of 72 veterans living in state homes. A former Democratic state representative, Linda Chapa LaVia was tapped by Pritzker to lead the department in 2019.