

Legislative Update 3/6/2023

Both House and Senate are scheduled to reconvene this week March 7th – March 10th. The House passed a grand total of 98 substantive, non-shell bills out of all committees last week.

The March 10th committee deadline for substantive bills in both Chambers is quickly approaching. Given the slower start to the committee process and the thousands of bills in committee awaiting action, we anticipate there will be many deadline extensions and a very busy week for the General Assembly.

2023 Key Session Deadlines:

February 28:	Consolidated Primary Election
March 10:	Deadline – Senate Bills out of Senate Committee & House Bills out of House Committee
March 24:	Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
March 31:	Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
April 4:	Consolidated Election
April 28:	Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee
May 11:	Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate
May 12:	Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in House
May 19:	Adjournment

Pritzker details Teacher Recruitment, Retention Change:

The state will invest more than \$200 million over the next three years as part of a proposed Teacher Pipeline Grant Program aimed at supporting school districts struggling the most in the ongoing educator and support staff shortage, Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced Friday.

Speaking at Streamwood High School, Pritzker said the proposed program would send \$70 million per year over the next three years to the 170 school districts facing the most significant teacher shortages.

"We've come a long way when it comes to K-12 education, but any parent will tell you that it's not enough. All across the nation school districts are fighting the impact of teacher shortages, as education professionals struggle to weigh their passion for their classrooms with their own mental, financial, and personal well-being. As part of my plan to make us the best in the nation, I'm proposing that we address teacher shortages head-on and dedicate an additional \$70 million annually specifically targeted at attracting new teachers into the profession, and retaining the quality educators that we already have," Pritzker said.

To promote local flexibility, school districts receiving funds as part of the program would be free to use the funds in whatever ways they see fit, including signing bonuses, housing stipends, down payment assistance, tuition payment, and loan repayment support. They could also use the funds to support the educators they already employ with supplies, professional development, and other school culture supports.

The Illinois State Board of Education will also be using \$6 million in federal funds to contract a marketing firm to develop a statewide recruitment advertising campaign.

WEP/GPO:

Federal lawmakers seeking to repeal Social Security's Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) are giving it another try this year.

U.S. Representatives Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and Garrett Graves (R-LA) reintroduced the Social Security Fairness Act of 2023 (H.R. 82) in January. A similar bill received widespread bipartisan support in 2022 but never made it to a floor vote. Bills that don't pass expire at the conclusion of each Congress.

The WEP and GPO, which are part of federal law, can reduce Social Security benefits for recipients of public pensions that serve as a substitute for Social Security.

While some bills in recent years have aimed to modify one or both the WEP and GPO, H.R. 82 seeks to fully repeal both provisions. As of early March, the bill had nearly 180 cosponsors, twelve of whom are from Illinois: Rep. Sean Casten [D-IL-6], Rep. Robin Kelly [D-IL-2], Rep. Mike Bost [R-IL-12], Rep. Lauren Underwood [D-IL-14], Rep. Janice Schakowsky [D-IL-9], Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi [D-IL-8], Rep. Nikki Budzinski [D-IL-13], Rep. Bill Foster [D-IL-11], Rep. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia [D-IL-4], Rep. Eric Sorensen [D-IL-17], Rep. Delia Ramirez [D-IL-3], and Rep. Bradley Schneider [D-IL-10].

What's IRTA doing about it? Since this is a federal issue to be determined by Congress, we encourage members and retirees to contact their members of Congress to share their opinion about these provisions and how they affect them. We will continue to update members of any movement of this legislation.

TAX COUNSELING FOR THE ELDERLY

The Tax Counseling for the Elderly program offers free help to those 60 years and older, and volunteers specialize in pension questions and retirement-related topics, the IRS says. The IRS online locator provides a list of sites offering Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly options. You can also call 800-906-9887 for help finding a site near you.