



# SENATE IN REVIEW

A look at the 2020 accomplishments of  
the Illinois Senate Democratic Caucus

**Don Harmon, Senate President**  
Communications Department • [www.IllinoisSenateDemocrats.com](http://www.IllinoisSenateDemocrats.com)





# Table of contents

## Legislative accomplishments

Senate Democrats provide COVID-19 recovery resources .....	5
Senate Democrats help workers and schools through COVID-19 crisis .....	6
Senate Democrats expand health care access for low-income families .....	7
Senate Democrats pass expanded vote-by-mail program .....	7
Senate Democrats enable Chicago casino .....	8

## Spreading the news

By the numbers.....	11
Telephone town hall meetings.....	11
Illinois Senate Democrats: Social Media Report .....	12-15
Spreading the word among Latinos and Spanish-speaking audiences .....	16
Senate Women's Caucus promotes 100th anniversary of women's right to vote via e-learning ....	17
Senate Black Caucus fights for greater equity amid pandemic and broken criminal justice system ..	18-19
Latino Caucus fights for workers and the undocumented during pandemic .....	20-21
Illinois Asian American Legislative Caucus focuses on pandemic outreach efforts .....	22-23
Senate Democrats confront COVID-19.....	24-25
Working groups enable legislature to work through COVID-19.....	26-27
Senate Democrats fight to end systemic racism and injustice.....	28-29
New members bring diverse experience and viewpoints to Illinois Senate.....	30-31

## Featured stories

Illinois becomes the second state in the nation to cap the monthly cost of insulin at \$100 for diabetes patients ..	35
Senate Dems unveil public safety priorities .....	36
Morrison: Vote-by-mail simplifies people's right to vote.....	37
Unemployment and the CARES Act: What you need to know.....	38-39
What's new in 2020? New year, new laws.....	40-43

## Your accomplishments

Senate President Don Harmon .....	47
Majority Leader Kimberly A. Lightford.....	48
President Pro Tempore Bill Cunningham .....	49
Deputy Majority Leader Laura Murphy.....	50
Assistant Majority Leader Linda Holmes.....	51
Assistant Majority Leader Dave Koehler .....	52
Assistant Majority Leader Iris Y. Martinez.....	53
Assistant Majority Leader Antonio Munoz .....	54
Majority Caucus Chair Mattie Hunter .....	55
Deputy Majority Caucus Chair Jacqueline Y. Collins.....	56
Majority Caucus Whip Omar Aquino .....	57
Majority Caucus Whip Laura Fine .....	58
Majority Caucus Whip Napoleon Harris III.....	59
Majority Caucus Whip Michael E. Hastings .....	60
Senator Christopher Belt.....	61
Senator Scott Bennett.....	62
Senator Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant .....	63



Senator Melinda Bush.....	64
Senator Cristina Castro .....	65
Senator Rachelle Crowe .....	66
Senator Tom Cullerton .....	67
Senator Laura Ellman .....	68
Senator Sara Feigenholtz .....	69
Senator Ann Gillespie.....	70
Senator Suzy Glowiak Hilton .....	71
Senator Emil Jones III .....	72
Senator Patrick J. Joyce .....	73
Senator Steven Landek .....	74
Senator Terry Link .....	75
Senator Andy Manar .....	76
Senator Robert F. Martwick .....	77
Senator Pat McGuire.....	78
Senator Julie A. Morrison.....	79
Senator Robert Peters.....	80
Senator Elgie R. Sims Jr.....	81
Senator Steve Stadelman .....	82
Senator Heather Steans .....	83
Senator Patricia Van Pelt.....	84
Senator Celina Villanueva .....	85
Senator Ram Villivalam .....	86

## Legislative Issues

Agriculture .....	89
Budget.....	89
Business .....	90
Civil Rights.....	90
Criminal Law .....	91
Economic Development .....	91
Education .....	91
Elections.....	92
Energy .....	92
Ethics.....	92
Family.....	92
Gaming.....	93
Health .....	93
Higher Education.....	94
Housing .....	94
Human Services .....	94
Insurance .....	95
Labor .....	95
Local Government.....	95
Older People .....	96
Pensions.....	96
Public Safety.....	96
Revenue .....	96
State Government.....	97
Transportation .....	97
Veterans .....	97
ISDC Communications Staff .....	98





LEGISLATIVE  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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# SENATE IN REVIEW





# Legislative accomplishments

Senate Democrats entered 2020 unaware that the normal business of state government would soon be turned upside-down by the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated Stay at Home Order. Unable to safely meet in their normal committees, legislators turned to a series of virtual working groups to help guide their actions during a short week back at the Capitol.

While in Springfield, the General Assembly largely focused on addressing the pandemic and its associated economic downturn. Senate Democrats led the way in giving working families, schools, and small businesses additional tools to help them weather and recover from the crisis. They also took bold new steps to ensure people can vote safely in the fall election and to ensure Chicago can successfully open a casino in the near future, creating jobs, driving economic growth, and helping shore up the city's ailing pension funds.

## Senate Democrats provide COVID-19 recovery resources

When Senate Democrats returned to Springfield, their first priority was to pass a budget that safeguarded vital areas like funding for local school districts, while also distributing federal funding from the CARES Act in a way that provides the most benefit to the people of Illinois. Sponsored by **Senate President Don Harmon**, **Senator Andy Manar**, and **Senator Heather Steans**, the budget package prevented devastating cuts, while supplying new resources for small businesses and struggling families.

Dubbed the CURES Act, the economic relief package provides more than \$600 million for a new grant program for businesses hit hard by the pandemic, with special set-asides for downstate businesses, child





care providers, and businesses in underserved Black and Latino communities. This program is targeted at businesses that were forced to shut down or suffered major revenue losses during the pandemic – especially those that could not get assistance from federal programs. The goal is to help keep businesses from shutting their doors.

The CURES Act also provides nearly \$400 million for rent and mortgage assistance, again with set asides for underserved communities. The program is meant to help families stay in their homes until the economy recovers and they can safely return to work. It also provides funding to immigrant welcome centers, mental health and substance abuse treatment programs. The pandemic caused an uptick in mental health disorders, and immigrants were having a particularly difficult time navigating systems like health care and unemployment.

Finally, it provides additional funding for various health care providers and local governments for COVID-19 related expenses, helping prevent layoffs at a time the economy and working families could not easily afford them.

In a related measure, **Senator Sara Feigenholtz**

sponsored legislation to help bars and restaurants with liquor licenses cope with the Stay at Home Order. House Bill 2682 allows bars and restaurants with liquor licenses to sell cocktails to-go (with appropriate safety precautions), in addition to other measures to ease regulation and fees on liquor license holders.

## Senate Democrats help workers and schools through COVID-19 crisis

Recognizing that schools and essential workers face additional challenges during the pandemic, Senate Democrats passed legislation giving schools more flexibility and workers more protections.

Senate Bill 1569, sponsored by **Senator Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant**, made a number of changes to state law to support educators and students. It formally allowed e-learning during this – and similar – disasters, extended educator license renewals, and allowed tests like college entrance exams to be taken remotely. The measure also ensures that college and university students get credit for passing e-learning courses and creates more predictability for students in the state's AIM HIGH financial aid program.



Recognizing that many Illinois residents are out of work and others face new challenges in the workplace, **Senator Linda Holmes** passed House Bill 2455. It extends unemployment benefits and waives waiting times to start receiving them. It also creates a rebuttable presumption that workers who contract COVID-19





did so at work and should be eligible for workers' compensation. This measure will both encourage employers to follow health and safety guidelines and give workers more financial assurance if they don't.

A related measure, Senate Bill 471 sponsored by **Senator Kimberly A. Lightford**, increases the penalty for committing assault against a retail worker who is enforcing health and safety guidelines, such as maintaining social distancing or wearing a face covering. Senate Democrats recognize that retail workers suddenly found themselves declared essential and thrust into the spotlight and that they deserve additional protections.

## Senate Democrats expand health care access for low-income families

Recognizing that health care and related services are of paramount importance during a public health emergency, Senate Democrats took several steps to help more people and families obtain access to the care they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The budget expanded funding for Medicaid, the low-income insurance program. It also increased funding for programs that help keep seniors and people with disabilities in their own homes and out of hard-hit long-term care facilities. To ensure that low-income undocumented older people have access to health care, it allows them to qualify for Medicaid.

Senate Democrats also took steps while updating the state's

Hospital Assessment Program to ensure that low-income families have access to more physicians and that health care facilities that serve a large number of patients get more funding. Senate Bill 2541, sponsored by **Senator Heather Steans**, provides an additional \$50 million to increase physician reimbursement rates under the Medicaid program, helping encourage more doctors to accept Medicaid patients.

Senate Bill 1864, sponsored by **Senator Mattie Hunter**, made a number of changes to Illinois' health care system aimed at helping low-income families. It tweaked a state law to ensure that Medicaid patients can qualify for cancer clinical trials. It also guarantees that anyone can qualify to get COVID-19 care covered through Medicaid and creates a health care affordability study.

## Senate Democrats pass expanded vote-by-mail program

Recognizing that COVID-19 fears could keep Illinois voters away from the polls, Senate Democrats, led by **State Senator Julie Morrison**, passed Senate Bill 1863, an election reform package that, among other





things, expands Illinois' vote-by-mail program. Anyone who has voted in an election in the past two years – or registered to vote – will automatically receive an application for a vote-by-mail ballot. Others can request one through the State Board of Elections website. Allowing people to vote from the safety of their own homes should help them feel more comfortable about exercising their right to vote in the fall.

The measure also makes Election Day 2020 a state holiday, ensuring that schools and universities will be closed. This will allow them to be used as polling places and provide adequate time for thorough cleaning before students and staff return to class. It will also ensure that more people have the day off to vote at their leisure.

Finally, the measure allows curbside voting and expands early voting. With such a wide array of new opportunities to vote, the pandemic shouldn't prevent a robust election turnout.

## Senate Democrats enable Chicago casino

After it became clear that tweaks were needed to the law allowing a Chicago casino, **State Senator Bill Cunningham** took the lead in negotiating legislation on behalf of Senate Democrats that would allow it to become a reality. It should provide an economic boost for the city and surrounding region, as well as creating thousands of jobs both in construction and operation of the facility.

The legislation also requires the city's share of the casino revenue go into its police and fire pension funds, which have struggled for years. This change will help ensure that retirees get the benefits they've earned while also reducing the pressure to increase property taxes. The legislation also makes a number of other important small changes to Illinois gaming law, one of which will help ensure the Danville casino also becomes a reality.







# CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RESOURCES



GOVERNOR'S DAILY BRIEFING



SPREADING  
THE NEWS

# SENATE IN REVIEW









## By the numbers...

iConstituent, a constituent relationship management database, gives the caucus one centralized location to house constituent data and communicate with people in the districts.

Constituent communication became more essential than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic. With in-person events cancelled, the Senate Democrats have relied heavily on newsletter and email updates to keep constituents up to date on the latest news surrounding the public health crisis.

By tracking these constituent relationships and making records quickly and easily accessible, district and Capitol staff were able to utilize this tool to deliver support to constituents.

This year, staff used iConstituent to send out e-newsletters and targeted e-blasts to **6,025,397** constituents and an additional **39,065** emails and **835** letters. Currently there are **2,591** users from the Illinois Senate Democratic Caucus using iConstituent, managing 40 member offices.

### TOTAL INCOMING EMAILS/WEB FORMS

All year	<b>554,603</b>
During COVID-19	<b>122,910</b>

### TOTAL OUTGOING EMAILS

All year	<b>39,065</b>
During COVID-19	<b>15,249</b>

### TOTAL NUMBER OF E-NEWSLETTERS SENT

All year	<b>835</b>
During COVID-19	<b>466</b>

### TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO RECEIVED E-NEWSLETTERS

All year	<b>6,025,397</b>
During COVID-19	<b>2,856,683</b>

### TELEPHONE TOWN HALLS

Total called	<b>242,532</b>
Active participants	<b>22,941</b>
Live questions	<b>138</b>

## Telephone town hall meetings

Facing new challenges due to COVID-19, Senate Democrats participated in telephone town halls to keep constituents informed on the state's response and relief efforts. Experts from the Department of Public Health and Illinois State Medical Society joined senators to help answer questions on preventative health measures and new safety guidelines. This year, the meetings reached a total of **242,532** people. The average number of participants was **2,868**. Senator Harris had the most successful call this year, with a total of **3,758** people. The department looks forward to continuing to offer this service next year.



# TWITTER [twitter.com/ilsendems](https://twitter.com/ilsendems)

## UNDER THE DOME



@ILSenDems ..... 21,590



@ILHouseGOP ..... 16,639



@LtGovStratton ..... 14,541



@ILSenateGOP ..... 13,577



@ILAttyGeneral ..... 11,922



@ILComptroller ..... 5,776



@HouseDemsIL ..... 5,063



@ILTreasurer ..... 4,955

## TOP 3 TWEETS JANUARY – MAY

March 21

Please join us in sending some heartfelt thanks to those who are on the front lines for us. They go in for us, we stay home for them. #ThankYou [pic.twitter.com/hVnMrDwVW1](https://pic.twitter.com/hVnMrDwVW1)



12,735 👁 1,659 💬

April 30

From Illinois Senate President Don Harmon and members of our Democratic Caucus, this is a thank you to all who are serving our communities through this very difficult time. #AllInIllinois [pic.twitter.com/M27VLXpYbp](https://pic.twitter.com/M27VLXpYbp)



8,379 👁 1,632 💬

March 8

Please stay home for them. <https://twitter.com/idph/status/1243942944064909312>



18,150 👁 14,549 💬

## TOP 5 ACCOUNTS



@SenatorSara6 6,507 👤



@DonHarmonIL 5,148 👤



@ElgieSims 3,408 👤



@SenatorVanPelt 2,915 👤



@LLCoolK\_4 2,880 👤



# FACEBOOK [facebook.com/IllinoisSenateDemocraticCaucus](https://facebook.com/IllinoisSenateDemocraticCaucus)

## TOP 5 ACCOUNTS

	@StateSenatorAndyManar	10,797
	@SenatorSara6	5,902
	@SenatorBush	5,785
	@KimberlyALightford	5,072
	@SenatorDonHarmon	4,393

## TOP 3 POSTS

JANUARY – JUNE



**April 30 – May 1** 11,448

We are so grateful. From Illinois Senate President Don Harmon and members of our Democratic Caucus, this is a thank you to all who are serving our communities through this very difficult time. From hospitals to grocery stores, post offices to nursing homes, and restaurants to truck drivers, we have so much to be grateful for as Illinoisans.

And to everyone staying at home with families and friends, buying locally and connecting by phone and internet, please accept our humble thanks.



**June 1** 3,708

*In response to George Floyd's murder and subsequent actions.*



**April 16** 3,000

Illinois Senate Democratic Caucus: Senate Dems helping constituents, staying at home...

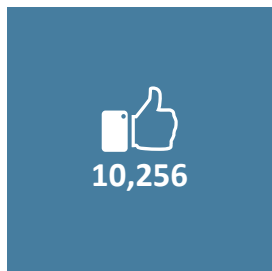
Some of our senators wanted to reach out and encourage you to keep following the governor's Stay at Home Order. They are busy responding to constituents' calls and questions, but fit in some family time, too.

## CAUCUS FACEBOOK LIKES

ILSenateDems



ILHouseGOP



ILSenateGOP



HouseDemsIL



## VIDEO



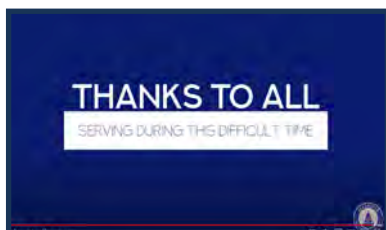
### FEATURED VIDEOS

#### LIGHTFORD FIGHTS FOR CHANGE



Leader Lightford on systemic racism in Black communities

#### THANK YOU ESSENTIAL WORKERS



Illinois Senate Democrats thank essential workers

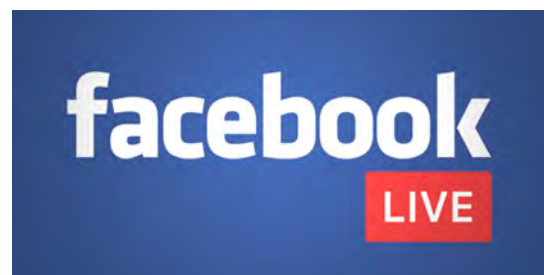
#### INSULIN COSTS



Senate Democrats Monthly Minute: Lawmakers push for a cap on Insulin costs

# 70

VIDEOS PRODUCED VIRTUALLY FROM STAFF'S HOMES DURING THE PANDEMIC, WORKING WITH SENATORS.



WITH THE TEAM'S ASSISTANCE, SENATORS WERE ABLE TO HOST AND STREAM MULTIPLE VIRTUAL TOWN HALLS.

100% ACCESSIBLE 

## AUDIO AND PODCASTS



The Senate Democratic Caucus continued to grow its audio distribution efforts, despite the limited Spring Session due to COVID-19.

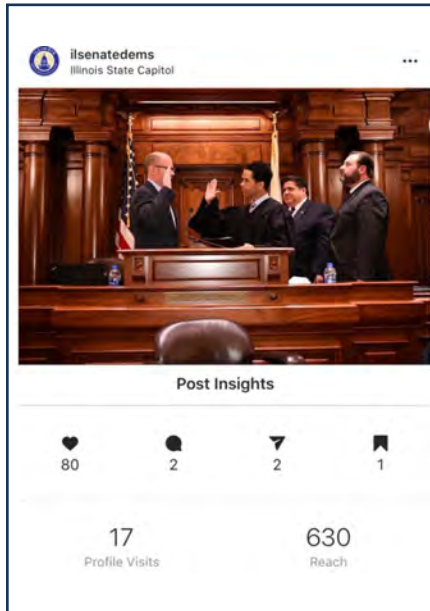
- 100+ individual audio cuts distributed to Illinois media markets pre-pandemic.
- Regular news update podcast published and distributed five days a week.
- Weekly podcast of the Majority Report.



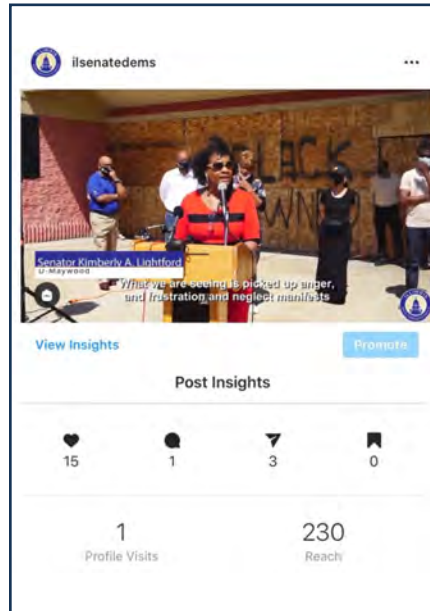


# INSTAGRAM @ilsenatedems

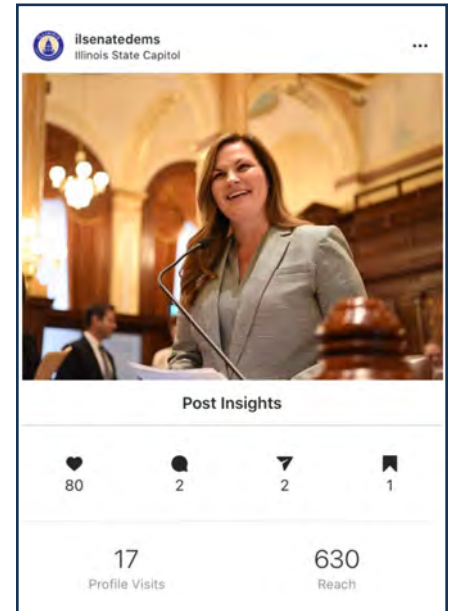
- INSTA STORY**
- **24-HOUR** viewability
  - Provides current and upcoming event updates
  - Increases engagement with followers



Please join us in congratulating Illinois Senate President Don Harmon. We look forward to your leadership. (80 likes)

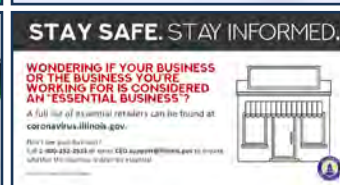
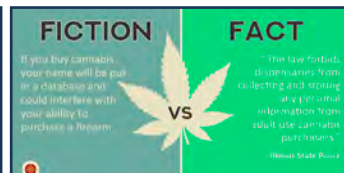
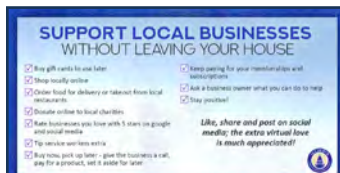


Senator Lightford calls on leaders to help Black communities in need. (158 views)



Sen. Rachelle Crowe has made history by being the first woman appointed Chair of the Senate's Judiciary Committee. She's bringing years of extensive courtroom experience with her, and she's excited to lead the chamber in this coveted role. (80 likes)

# SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS





# Spreading the word among Latinos and Spanish-speaking audiences

The Illinois Senate Democratic Caucus has had a comprehensive approach to reach out to Spanish-speaking communities across the state. Latinos who inform themselves primarily in Spanish represent close to a third of the total audience. To cater information for this demographic, the caucus provided a broad array of services to take advantage of media and communications opportunities for its members.

The caucus continuously seeks and identifies earned media opportunities that can feature members' legislative accomplishments and community-based work in their districts. Through translations services, talking points, speech writing, media engagement advice, management of major media events, and producing of original digital content for television networks and social media platforms, senators are the leading voice to inform Spanish-speaking audiences.

With the COVID-19 health emergency, the world changed, and the Spanish communications strategy adapted to the new reality. The caucus produced in-house content for members' social media platforms. Senators have been active and responsive to inform and interact with the people they represent through digital channels. For example, they presented life-saving information or reported on the responsible budget the Democratic Caucus passed in late May. Live streaming, FaceTime interviews, and Zoom meetings became standard tools to keep members in contact with the people they represent.

Even while obeying physical distancing requirements, the Illinois Senate Democrats honored their commitments to the people of Illinois and remained in contact with our states' communities en español.







# Senate Women's Caucus promotes 100th anniversary of women's right to vote via e-learning



ILLINOIS STATE SENATE  
WOMEN'S CAUCUS

Members of the Senate Women's Caucus experienced the same unprecedented year facing a global pandemic as the rest of the world. The initial efforts to address the immediate needs of patient care and prevent further spread of this novel virus was followed by a giant wave of unemployment and thousands of small businesses on the edge of collapse. Following science and the advice of top epidemiologists and public health experts, Illinois used data to flatten the curve and stem the number of infections and deaths.

With schools closed and students adapting to distance learning by computer, many people stepped forward to provide online presentations including music, arts, dance, and reading books for children.

The Women's Caucus played a role in that effort by reading, "A Lady Has the Floor: Belva Lockwood Speaks Out for Women's Rights" by Kate Hannigan

in a video featuring all 21 members of the caucus reading portions of the book. They not only wanted to provide more material for students, but also to mark the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing and protecting women's constitutional right to vote.

In May, events in cities across the nation brought long-overdue attention to the injustices Black and Brown people have experienced for hundreds of years at the hands of law enforcement and society in general. The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis led to widespread protests, including throughout Illinois. The women of the Illinois Senate came together to issue a united call for justice and peace. Lawmakers from both parties called on the state to address the issues that have led to the protests and to join together in healing.

Lawmakers denounced the racism

that has led to widespread protests, saying that the demonstrations, which have occurred in communities large and small throughout the country with the participation of people from all segments of society, show without a doubt that Illinoisans have joined their fellow Americans in demanding change.

In 2019 and early this year, the caucus was working with MK Pritzker, wife of Gov. JB Pritzker, on the many issues of justice and conditions for women in Illinois prisons. They plan to resume their information gathering and prepare a multi-faceted plan to address this issue, which intersects with the ongoing pandemic and racial injustice.



## Senate Black Caucus fights for greater equity amid pandemic and broken criminal justice system

The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus faced unique challenges during this legislative session as the Black community faced two major crises. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how thin Black communities were already stretched, leaving them far more vulnerable to contracting the virus.

Before the Black community could overcome one crisis, the world saw even more Black lives taken

senselessly by law enforcement, including that of George Floyd, who died face down in the street after an officer knelt on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds. Each member of the Black Caucus has answered the call to address both crises to help their communities get through this difficult time.

To address both issues, members joined the rest of the Joint Caucus of Black Elected Officials to host

four Days of Action. In Chicago, the events took place on the South Side, on the West Side, in the South Suburbs and in the West Suburbs. Senator Kimberly A. Lightford led the two events in the west, calling for solidarity to bring Black communities fair resources, including jobs, health care and education.

Members also stepped up to help those struggling as a result





of COVID-19 with donations. Senator Napoleon Harris sought to help those most affected with a giveaway. He provided people in need with food, sanitizer, and face masks.

When Senator Patricia Van Pelt first heard about the crisis, she purchased 10,000 pairs of gloves and masks, which were distributed to the older citizens on Chicago's West Side.

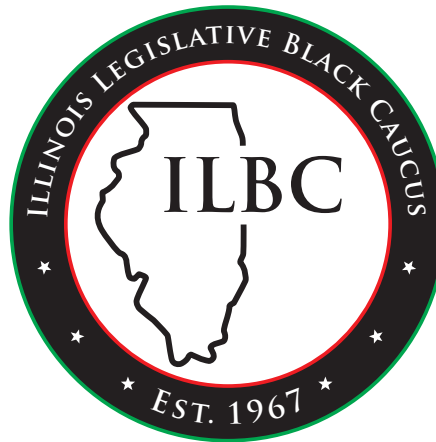
It became apparent to Black Caucus members that there were not enough COVID-19 testing sites to respond to the need in black communities. Many members fought to bring more sites to their districts, including Senator Jacqueline Collins. She helped bring a testing site to the Auburn Gresham/Chatham neighborhood.

Senator Mattie Hunter responded to the spike in coronavirus cases in the Black community by pushing for greater investments to finally end the enduring inequities in health care that make African Americans more susceptible to COVID-19.

During the truncated special session, Senator Elgie R. Sims Jr. led efforts as a budgeteer to pass a spending plan that preserved core services while providing funding to communities that desperately need it. This included nearly \$400 million to the Illinois Housing Development Authority for grants to help those who lost their income due to COVID-19 make rent and mortgage payments.

Senator Christopher Belt called on the governor to open a local recreational area, as other parks were given the green light to

reopen. He recognized the need for his constituents to be active and get outside their homes for their own mental and physical health.



Virtual town halls have been crucial to help members connect with their communities. Senator Robert Peters hosted various events on social media, including a Facebook Live in response to recent protests. Peters discussed ways to move toward ending systemic racism.

Senator Emil Jones III has provided individuals with action steps to help them appropriately respond to calls for change. This included highlighting cleanup efforts to help businesses that were hard hit by looting and vandalism in his district.

The Black Caucus continues to fight for criminal justice reform and greater investment in Black communities throughout the state. They are discussing a host of legislation to help fix the broken criminal justice system and end the disparity in resources available to African American Illinoisans compared to other segments of the population. The members of the caucus are determined to end the systemic racism that prevents African Americans from truly thriving in Illinois.





## Latino Caucus fights for workers and the undocumented during pandemic

The members of the Latino Caucus began the 2020 session with plans to continue fighting for many of their shared priorities: additional protections for undocumented immigrants, encouraging residents to participate in the census, and doing more to support working families. However, they quickly changed focus when the COVID-19 pandemic swept through Illinois, especially when it began to have a disproportionate impact on Latino communities.

Throughout the pandemic, all members of the Latino Caucus made a concerted effort to advocate for their community and to help spread information—especially to Spanish-speaking audiences that might have a harder time finding it than English-speaking and bilingual members of the Latino community. For example, Senators Iris Y. Martinez and Celina Villanueva helped promote new testing sites in Humboldt Park and Little Village. Villanueva also pressed the governor's office and

Illinois Department of Public Health to do more to confront an outbreak at a Cicero nursing home.

They also directly supported members of the community who needed help. In one case, Senator Tony Munoz partnered with JoAnn Fabrics to donate more than 5,000 masks to local businesses and organizations.

With assistance from Senator Omar Aquino, who led the Senate's budget working group, the caucus advocated for more support and





resources for members of the Latino community who need them most. They were able to expand Medicaid eligibility to undocumented older citizens – a national first. They also pushed hard to ensure more opportunities were available for underserved communities, successfully ensuring that a large percentage of Business Interruption Grants and rent and mortgage assistance are specifically set aside for disproportionately impacted areas, which include many Latino neighborhoods and communities. The grant program is meant to help businesses hit hard by the pandemic, and the rent and mortgage assistance are meant to help families who lost income during the pandemic stay in their homes. Both of these programs are available to individuals who were left out of federal aid programs due to their undocumented status.

Despite the pandemic, members of the caucus also worked hard to ensure everyone in the Latino community participates in the census, promoting participation via newsletters and social media. They reminded residents that getting counted helps bring home federal resources, ensures fair representation in Congress, and can't be used against them if they are undocumented.

Even as the pandemic's grip on Illinois began to loosen, two new events had a significant effect on the Latino community. George Floyd's death at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer sparked Black Lives

Matter protests throughout the nation, and members of the Latino Caucus were quick to show their



support for ending systemic racism, issuing statements and participating in unity events. Senator Munoz also spoke up about the fact that, as a former police officer, he believes the role of the police is to create a better future for young people.

The caucus also had cause to celebrate as the U.S. Supreme Court issued a historic ruling

protecting the rights of Dreamers – undocumented immigrants brought to the country as children. Like all of her colleagues, Villanueva praised the ruling, but she also issued a challenge to the nation to go further and give all undocumented immigrants a path to citizenship.

The caucus also remains committed to providing more opportunities to working families. Though it was put on hold due to the pandemic, Senator Cristina Castro has not given up hope of passing the Clean Energy Jobs Act, which would both protect the environment and create new opportunities for working class families to find long-lasting, good-paying jobs. Together, she and other members of the caucus will continue to push to create a better economy for all Latinos and everyone in Illinois.







## Illinois Asian American Legislative Caucus focuses on pandemic outreach efforts

A year after its inception, the Illinois Asian American Legislative Caucus (IAALC) continued working to address the political, social, and economic concerns of the fast-growing Asian Pacific American community in Illinois.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the IAALC's plans for this session were delayed, and pandemic outreach became the main focus. A robust resource, service, and information operation became

critical for IAALC in light of the precipitous rise in dangerous anti-Chinese and anti-Asian rhetoric caused by the geographical origin of the coronavirus.

IAALC's COVID-19 response has included working with state and local officials to help combat the increasing number of racist and discriminatory incidents and hate crimes against Asian Americans in Illinois. These efforts yielded the creation of an Asian American crime

hotline spearheaded by Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, a public service announcement on anti-Asian American violence from Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, and the publishing of an op-ed in the Chicago Sun-Times on Asian Americans and COVID-19.

The caucus has also held two webinars with the Asian American Executive Network (AAEN) addressing small business concerns, with Asian American non-profits,



and made significant progress on translating COVID-19 documents from the Illinois Departments of Economic Security, Human Services, and Commerce and Economic Opportunity. They also participated in Dim Sum Sunday, an event helping deliver over 200 dim sum orders from Chinatown to the North Suburbs of Chicago, bringing in \$2,500 for the Niles Township Food Pantry and \$6,500 for Chinatown.

The IAALC also released public statements in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and nationwide protests after the tragic death of George Floyd. The caucus encouraged participation in unity cleanup events, managing to

secure the help of 200 volunteers spread throughout the 16, 21, 24, and 28th Wards of Chicago, which



earned Chinese TV coverage. They followed up the successful event with an online conversation on racism and racial justice, drawing 150 participants.

During the special legislative session, IAALC was able to secure \$50 million in funding for Chinatown High School, \$1.5 million for Asian American and South Asian chambers, and \$300,000 toward the creation of a new Pan Asian Community and Culture Center. Moving forward, IAALC intends to continue fostering conversations confronting systemic racism and racial injustice toward the Asian American community and all communities of color, forming close partnerships with various Asian Pacific American organizations across Illinois, and focusing on helping the Illinois economy recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.







## Senate Democrats confront COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic slowdown swept across the world and into Illinois, Senate Democrats turned their attention away from their regular legislative business and focused on how best to help the people of Illinois, stay healthy, stay safe, and recover.

As a united caucus, they turned to the primary task of ensuring the people they represent had accurate, up-to-date information about the

state's efforts to slow the spread of the virus and prevent hospitals from becoming overwhelmed. As misinformation spread across social media and occasionally even through traditional news sources, getting Illinoisans the information they needed was the first vital step in starting Illinois' recovery.

Senate Democrats reached out to the people using every tool at their disposal. They sent out newsletters, posted articles on

their websites, and continually shared information from the Centers for Disease Control, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and other reliable experts on their social media pages. Many senators held Facebook Live and other video-conferencing events to help get people answers to their questions.

The caucus also created an in-depth resource page for Illinois residents, with health information,





information on closures, resources for small businesses, educational resources, and more. Updated almost daily, it became a one-stop-shop for COVID-19 information in Illinois. It also quickly became one of the most visited pages on the Senate Democratic Caucus website.

As the pandemic continued and it became clear that Illinois residents would not be able to return to their normal everyday lives in weeks or even months, Senate Democrats began to do more. They tracked down personal protective equipment like masks, gloves, and sanitizer for first responders, health care workers, and essential workers. They intervened to help businesses find the supplies they needed to stay open and maintain essential supply chains. They advocated to the governor on the behalf of the people and businesses they represent, often winning valuable concessions to help local residents, such as getting state parks opened earlier and giving businesses more opportunities to continue to serve local communities.

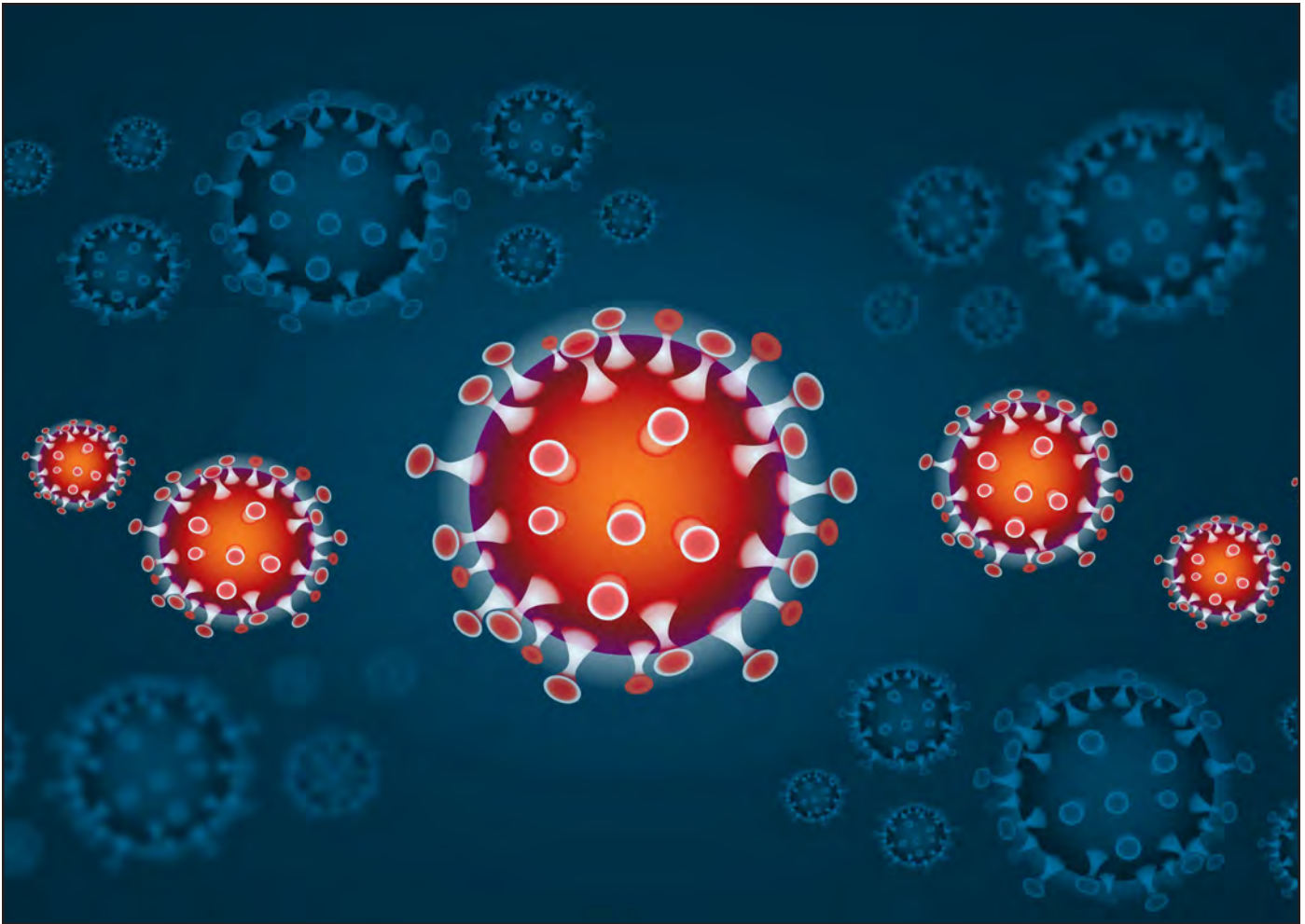
Even as they met in virtual working groups to start crafting a legislative response, they also helped the people they represent navigate the state's overwhelmed unemployment system and push IDPH to open testing sites and provide additional resources in the state's hardest-hit communities – particularly in Black and Latino neighborhoods.

As Illinois began its cautious reopening, legislators continued to urge the state's people to stay safe while beginning to patronize businesses. They also were proud to stand with community members who joined the Black Lives Matter movement and pushed for more state resources to help communities that experienced waves of looting and vandalism caused by people who took advantage of peaceful protests for their own selfish gain.

Illinois is still fighting its way through the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are strong signs of hope. It was the first state to achieve the federal government's recommendations for reopening. It has seen COVID-19 cases drop at a faster rate than in almost any other state, and hospitals have the capacity they need to handle outbreaks. With strong testing and a developing contact tracing program, Illinois still has a long

way to go to recover from the pandemic, but it appears that the sacrifices of its people have already saved thousands of lives and set the state on a course to return to normal.





## Working groups enable legislature to work through COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down work in the Capitol, the Illinois Senate moved quickly to adapt to working from home.

Within weeks, senators formed bipartisan working groups and began meeting via conference call to discuss the most pressing issues facing the state—often, but not exclusively, pandemic-related—and collaborate on solutions. Soon after, the groups moved to Zoom video conferencing to enable face-

to-face conversations with each other and outside experts.

Expecting a shortened session, senators worked together to identify key pieces of legislation to recommend to the full Senate. To ensure the General Assembly could make the most of their brief time together, groups vetted measures according to a vetted measures to determine if they were essential, urgent, and/or broadly supported.

Deputy Majority Leader Laura

Murphy introduced House Bill 2096 after thorough discussions with the Local Government Working Group and with input from the Illinois Municipal League and Township Officials of Illinois. The bill contained five critical provisions to give municipalities the means to address issues in their communities related to COVID-19, including guidance to help townships administer General Assistance benefits and a nonresident fee



waiver for low-income students seeking a library cards.

The Capital Working Group, led by President Don Harmon, worked together to identify construction projects that could provide jobs and/or keep Illinoisans safe during the pandemic. The group's ideas came together in House Bill 64, which reappropriated capital funding to support the Rebuild Illinois plan and invest in the state's infrastructure, including \$465 million to improve and expand facilities for the health care and human services providers delivering much-needed aid during the pandemic.

Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford and the Education Working Group compiled Senate Bill 1569, which includes relief measures for P-12 and higher education in the state. The legislation extends educator license expiration dates, allows students to take mandatory exams remotely, and gives schools the ability to make other necessary changes to protect kids from the spread of COVID-19.

Senator Pat McGuire, chair of the Labor Working Group, invited feedback from key stakeholders like the Illinois Retail Merchants Association and Illinois AFL-CIO to help shape House Bill 2455, a package of legislation designed to protect employees during the COVID-19 crisis. The bill establishes temporary rebuttable presumptions that first responders and essential workers who contract

the COVID-19 virus did so on the job and are therefore eligible for appropriate workers' compensation and death benefits. Senator Linda Holmes was also actively involved in negotiating unemployment provisions with business and labor groups that protect both workers and employers and sponsored the final legislation.

Other groups' recommendations found a place in larger bills. Senator Elgie R. Sims, Jr. and the Criminal Justice Reform Working Group pushed to extend important provisions that were set to expire, including the Cook County Fee Waiver Program, which waives a \$120 fee for criminal record expungement applications by individuals in Cook County whose charges were eventually dropped. Senate Bill 1857 extends the sunset date for this pilot program by one year, to Jan. 1, 2022, to give more Illinoisans an opportunity to clear

their names and obtain stable housing and employment without financial barriers.

Although senators are eager to return to the traditional committee process, working groups allowed members to collaborate on legislation to steady Illinois communities, economies and households during the pandemic despite social distancing obstacles. When the threat of COVID-19 has passed and the General Assembly can reconvene in Springfield, they'll be able to build on these foundational measures to ensure the state sees a full recovery.







## Senate Democrats fight to end systemic racism and injustice

In the midst of a worldwide health crisis, it felt like the world stood still after seeing a video of a police officer kneeling on the neck of George Floyd in Minneapolis for eight minutes and 46 seconds. This certainly was not the first time an unarmed Black man had been killed at the hands of a white police officer, but seeing what could be described as a modern-day lynching left many, especially within the Black community, feeling

heartbroken and hopeless. Many cried out in protests throughout the country and around the world. Mr. Floyd repeatedly said, “I can’t breathe,” yet the officer continued to kneel on Mr. Floyd’s neck until he lay lifeless in the street. It was this moment that reignited a revolution. Many around the world started to truly understand and join the Black Lives Matter movement.

People throughout the state took to the streets with signs to

call for an end to systemic racism and injustice. Unfortunately, some took advantage of this moment by causing destruction to property and businesses. After already suffering through the COVID-19 pandemic, many small businesses were once again devastated, particularly in Black communities. State leaders assessed the damage and worked with local leaders and community members to provide relief. Many of them, such as Senator Elgie R. Sims



Jr., joined in efforts to help clean up the mess left by looters.

Members of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus and the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus held a press conference to address divisions between Black and Latino communities. Officials condemned the rioting and emphasized the need for cooperation in their fight for justice. State Senators Celina Villanueva, Kimberly A. Lightford, Omar Aquino, Mattie Hunter, Cristina Castro, and Iris Y. Martinez were joined by elected officials from all levels of government. Members called for the General Assembly and executive branches to implement policies including community policing, demilitarizing law enforcement agencies, equitable investment in communities of color, and accountability for officers who abuse the use of force.

The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus also worked with other Black leaders on the local and federal levels to organize Days of Action to help clean up communities and demand justice and desperately needed investments in Black communities throughout the state. The series included four events, one each on the West Side, South Side, South Suburbs, and West Suburbs. Senators Kimberly A. Lightford, Mattie Hunter, Elgie Sims, Napoleon Harris, and Jacqueline Collins helped plan and participated in the events. Senate President Don Harmon stood in

solidarity with the Black Caucus by participating in all four events. Majority Leader Lightford, who led the West Side events, made it clear that the system has never worked for African Americans in Illinois and that state leaders on both sides of the aisle needed to come together in support of the Black agenda in order to create lasting change.

Demonstrations also sprouted in small towns that don't have large Black populations - one of them being Carlinville in the district represented by Senator Andy Manar. Manar marched in the event, organized by local young people. Many other members also participated in protests and rallies throughout the state, including Senators Julie Morrison, who participated in a rally in Lake Forest, and Ann Gillespie, who joined a rally in Arlington Heights.

A number of virtual events were held as well to connect

with communities and discuss paths toward equality and justice. Senators Robert Peters and Ram Villivalam hosted the Crosstown Conversation on Protests, Safety, and Systemic Racism, while Senator Sims discussed the mental toll of both racial acts of violence and the pandemic in Facebook Live discussions with the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Members throughout the state are acknowledging pervasive systemic racism and lack of investment in Black communities. A host of legislation is being discussed, including criminal justice reform and plans to ensure African-American Illinoisans have equal access to various resources, including quality health care, education and jobs. Leaders have shown their commitment to justice and equality with action, demonstrating that Black Lives Matter.







# New members bring diverse experience and viewpoints to Illinois Senate

A series of retirements led the Illinois Senate Majority Caucus to welcome four new members since the close of the 2019 session: Robert Martwick of Chicago, Patrick Joyce of Essex, Celina Villanueva of Chicago, and Sara Feigenholtz of Chicago. They bring a broad diversity of experience and perspective to the Senate.

**Robert Martwick** came to the Senate after six years in the Illinois House, where he focused much of his attention on addressing the state's fiscal issues – especially its pension deficit. Martwick was a key architect of the police and fire pension consolidation law passed last year, and he also has done substantial work pushing more retirees toward deferred compensation programs. He plans to continue his work to ensure that all working Illinoisans are able to save enough to spend their golden



years in comfort and dignity. He also is committed to providing a fair tax structure to all Illinois residents and businesses.

**Patrick Joyce** came to the Senate as a farmer and small business owner. Though he hails from the more rural part of the 40th District, he recognizes that the district is very diverse and also includes

suburban communities of Chicago. He has made it his top priority to reduce the overwhelming property tax burden imposed on some residents of the district. This year he successfully secured more funding to help conserve and restore the Kankakee River Valley – a resource that benefits everyone in the area.

**Celina Villanueva** joined the Senate after two short years in the Illinois House. A strong proponent of organized labor, Villanueva served as a union steward at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights before joining the General Assembly. Her top priorities include modernizing our democracy, uplifting marginalized voices, and developing young leaders. She was a major proponent of the legislation expanding vote by mail that passed the Senate, and she strongly supported measures that expanded protections for







Illinois workers as part of a labor package passed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Sara Feigenholtz** joined the Senate after the retirement of former Senate President John Cullerton, having served more than a decade in the Illinois House. As an adoptee, she is passionate about adoption issues and protecting Illinois' youth in general. She has authored several laws to improve the adoption system, and she continues to work to improve the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. She is also a founding member and vice president of the Kennedy Forum, which seeks to combat the stigma around mental illness and achieve mental health parity in the state and country.

Though the Illinois General Assembly faced an abbreviated session due to the COVID-19 pandemic, each of these new members of the Senate played a significant role in crafting policies to help Illinois residents. Martwick was a steadfast advocate for making

Illinois' full pension payment, helping protect state finances and the benefits state retirees have earned. Joyce served as a strong voice for providing additional funding for local governments, in order to ensure that their services did not go uninterrupted and to help prevent devastating property tax increases. Villanueva was an unwavering supporter for both immigrants and workers, helping expand labor protections in the package that passed the General Assembly in late May. Feigenholtz

was one of several strong voices working to ensure both DCFS and mental health treatment received additional funding, despite the challenges COVID-19 presented for the state budget.

As Illinois returns to its new normal, these members of the Senate will continue to fight for the people they represent. Martwick plans to continue his effort to win an elected school board for the residents of Chicago. Joyce intends to fight for health care reforms, inspired by the tragic loss of his daughter to cancer. Villanueva will never give up on her efforts to increase social equity and additional protections for undocumented immigrants, and Feigenholtz will continue her long effort to improve mental health parity and women's health care. Despite their differences, all four senators will work together to protect the working people of Illinois – an issue they all believe is of the utmost importance.











FEATURED  
STORIES

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# SENATE IN REVIEW







# Illinois becomes the second state in the nation to cap the monthly cost of insulin at \$100 for diabetes patients



Published: Fri., Jan. 24, 2020

SPRINGFIELD - The ability of pharmaceutical companies to line their pockets on the backs of Illinoisans with diabetes is coming to an end.

Surrounded by advocates and diabetes patients young and old, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker signed into law Senate Bill 667, sponsored by State Senator Andy Manar (D-Bunker Hill), making Illinois the second state in the nation to cap out-of-pocket insulin costs at \$100 per month for all patients, regardless of the supply they require. The cap applies to commercial insurance plans regulated by the state starting on Jan. 1, 2021.

"I'm deeply grateful for the brave individuals and families, some of whom are here today, who stepped up and challenged the status quo on behalf of millions of people who share their experience," Manar said.

"Their stories propelled Senate Bill 667 through the legislature with bipartisan support by evoking a shared belief that unites us all — the health and humanity of our neighbors isn't a tool to be leveraged for exorbitant profit."

Roughly 1.3 million Illinoisans are living with diabetes and rely on insulin to manage their blood sugar levels. Price increases have left many of them struggling to pay for the drug and at risk of deadly consequences.

"After being diagnosed almost four years ago as a type 1 diabetic, I quickly learned that I did nothing to cause this disease," said Josie Edlefsen, a 13-year old with diabetes whose family will be directly affected by the new law. "Because of this law, fewer Americans will have to make the choice to ration their insulin. No one should have to worry about

paying for a necessary drug to live."

Last fall, Manar worked closely with advocacy groups, including Insulin For All and AARP, to build a grassroots advocacy campaign to generate statewide support for the measure, which led to overwhelming bipartisan support in the House and Senate.

"We've all heard heartbreaking stories from Illinois residents struggling with the cost of prescription drugs," said Ryan Gruenenfelder, AARP Illinois Director of Advocacy and Outreach. "This law will undoubtedly help everyday Illinois residents who are being forced to decide whether to pay for insulin or other basic necessities with their fixed incomes."

The new law also requires the Department of Insurance, in conjunction with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, to issue an insulin pricing report to the public that details findings on insulin pricing practices and recommendations to control and prevent overpricing of prescription insulin drugs.

Manar is expected to unveil an extensive package of legislation aimed at lowering the cost of prescription drugs during the upcoming legislative session.



# Senate Dems unveil public safety priorities



Published: Thurs., Feb. 6, 2020

CHICAGO – Several Democratic members of the newly formed Senate Special Committee on Public Safety met in Chicago today to unveil their public safety priorities for this year’s legislative session.

State Senator Robert Peters (D-Chicago), who will chair the committee, spoke of his past legislative accomplishments and how they motivate him to continue that fight.

“I’ve dedicated my adult life toward the fight to reimagine and to win real safety and justice, and last year I passed several laws with this goal in mind, including one to abolish private detention centers,” Peters said. “I’m thrilled to have the opportunity to personally head up the Special Committee on Public Safety, and I am confident that the committee will lead to a society that is fair, equitable, just and, most

importantly, safe.”

State Senator Celina Villanueva (D-Chicago), who was appointed to the Senate earlier this month, also spoke at the press conference and talked of the disproportionate targeting of communities of color and the school-to-prison pipeline.

“Right now we have a criminal justice system that lacks justice,” Villanueva said. “In our current system, working class people of color are subject to harsher sentencing, higher bail and increased surveillance by law enforcement. With these oppressive structures in place, true justice cannot exist. We must fundamentally change the way Illinois deals with criminal justice issues and ensure that these systemic inequities are corrected.”

Also present was State Senator Ram Villivalam (D-Chicago), who discussed inequity based on income

and class discrepancies and the prevalence of recidivism for former inmates.

“Too much of our system is focused on knocking people down rather than building them up,” Villivalam said. “Our current criminal justice isn’t equitable; it punishes people for being poor.”

State Senator Laura Fine (D-Glenview) focused on the need to treat inmates with dignity in order to guarantee safety and justice.

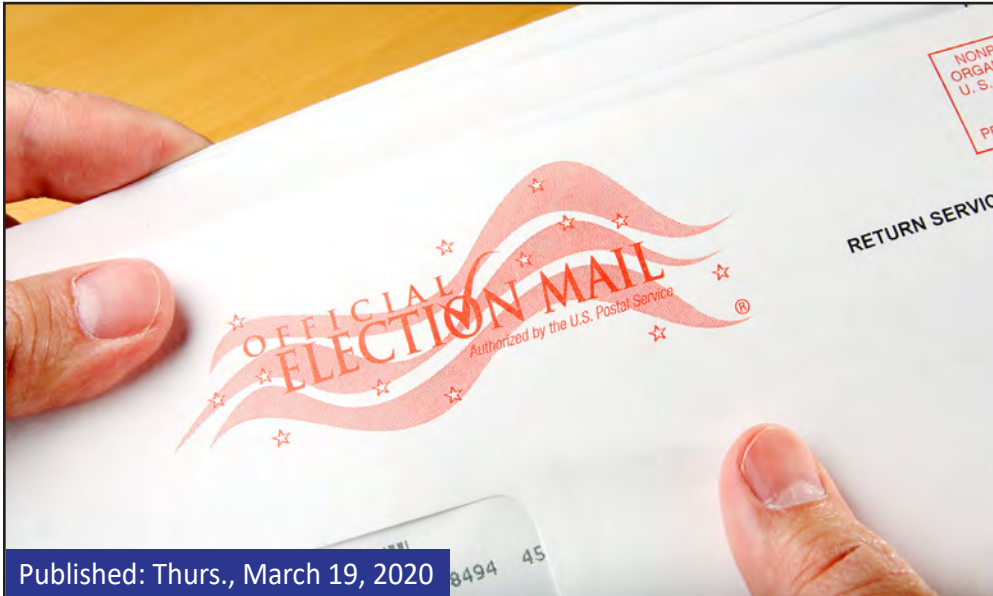
“The problems in our criminal justice system harm not only those who are incarcerated, but also their families and communities,” Fine said. “The first step toward fixing those problems is changing the way we work with incarcerated individuals—we must focus on reforms that protect fundamental human rights and dignity both during and after their time in prison so they can lead successful personal and family lives after incarceration.”

The Senate Special Committee on Public Safety will be tasked with hearing a number of measures, including one to put a stop to cash bail.





# Morrison: Vote-by-mail simplifies people's right to vote



SPRINGFIELD — As Illinois' date to choose the nominees for a new U.S. president at the ballot box was on the horizon, the worry of low voter turnout due to the coronavirus pandemic loomed in the background.

"Illinoisans had to choose between keeping themselves healthy or casting their vote," State Senator Julie Morrison (D-Lake Forest) said.

That worry turned into a reality Tuesday, after some counties throughout the state saw turnouts 20% lower than during previous presidential primaries. In Sangamon County, the turnout was 22.2% — before counting mail-in ballots — compared to the 43.4% turnout in 2016.

The case was similar in Chicago, where the turnout was only about 35%. Suburban Cook and the collar

counties saw the same truncated numbers.

"People simply didn't want to risk going out and catching the virus," Morrison said. "Others were willing to take the chance but didn't know where their polling place was due to last minute changes. We wouldn't have seen low turnouts if more people could vote from the comfort and safety of their own homes."

Senator Morrison (D-Lake Forest) will soon file a measure to further expand Illinois' vote-by-mail program. Illinoisans would have the option to forego traditional polling places and cast their ballot from the comfort of their home. Under the proposal, each registered voter would be mailed a ballot, which would then be returned to the county elections office and counted on Election Day.

However, this does not preclude in-person voting opportunities on and/or before Election Day.

Morrison's vote-by-mail measure will be based on similar protocols in Oregon, Colorado, and Washington state.

Washington — which is home of one of the largest coronavirus outbreaks in the country — held its primary a week before Illinois. Yet, because all its voting is done by mail, people were able to cast their ballot without putting their health and safety in jeopardy.

"The situation we are seeing throughout the country during one of the most important elections to date is further proof it is time for Illinois to expand its vote-by-mail program," Morrison said. "It adds simplicity to people's right to vote and will boost turnout numbers."

According to a 2016 study of Colorado, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and published by the National Conference of State Legislators, because of convenience, turnout increases. Statewide turnout in Colorado grew from 51.7% in 2010 to 54.7% in 2014 after implementing vote-by-mail.

The bill will be read into the record when legislators return to Springfield.



# How the **CARES Act** can help you

Published: Fri., April 17, 2020

## Unemployment and the CARES Act: What you need to know

The Illinois Dept. of Employment Security has released updates on unemployment insurance programs that have been put in place in response to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Illinoisans' jobs.

Employees who have become unemployed through no fault of their own are eligible for unemployment insurance. A new program covers those workers who are considered part of the "gig economy" or other independent contractors who were not eligible before.

There are three new federal programs under the CARES Act, the coronavirus stimulus package recently passed by Congress: The Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

### **Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)**

FPUC provides an additional \$600 per week for individuals receiving regular unemployment benefits, PUA, PEUC, or extended benefits if they are triggered under Illinois law, beginning March 29, 2020 and concluding the week ending July 25.

FPUC has been fully implemented and disbursement has begun.



## Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)

PEUC provides up to 13 additional weeks of federally funded unemployment benefits for individuals who have exhausted regular unemployment benefits.

IDES received USDOL guidelines on April 10 and expects the program can be implemented through the current IDES computer system the week of April 20, 2020.

## Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

PUA provides up to 39 weeks of federally funded unemployment benefits to individuals not typically eligible for unemployment benefits, including independent contractors and sole proprietors who have become unemployed as a direct result of COVID-19. This is also available for those who have exhausted their regular unemployment compensation and for those who have not been in the system long enough to qualify for unemployment compensation.

## Do I qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance?

In Illinois, every individual who is unemployed or underemployed should file a claim for

unemployment benefits, even if they believe they are not covered by the unemployment system. There are two reasons Illinoisans currently unemployed through no fault of their own should still file a claim for regular unemployment benefits with IDES, even if they have been told they're not covered by the state's regular unemployment insurance program - because they're an independent contractor, part of the "gig economy," or for some other reason.

First, it's possible that whoever told them they were not covered was wrong. Workers who are employees covered by the unemployment insurance system are sometimes told they're not by their employers or other unofficial sources. Even if an individual's employer does not consider the worker to be covered and doesn't pay unemployment taxes on the individual's wages, the individual

can qualify for benefits if IDES determines he or she is covered under state law. An employer's failure to contribute to the unemployment system will not impact a claimant's eligibility for benefits. Although eligibility for benefits cannot be guaranteed, nothing prohibits people from filing a claim for regular benefits, as long as they truthfully complete the application.

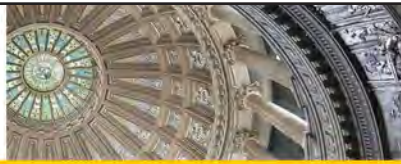
Second, the PUA program has been established for individuals who are unemployed for reasons attributable to COVID-19 and not covered by the state's regular unemployment insurance program. To establish eligibility under the new program, the claimant will have to demonstrate he/she is not eligible under the regular program. Applying for and being denied benefits under the regular program can help establish eligibility under the new temporary program.







## What's new in 2020?



New year, new laws.  
Will any of them affect you?



At the end of each calendar year, the communications department compiles and publishes a top laws list of new state laws that will go into effect Jan. 1.

This list of timely, unusual or otherwise noteworthy new laws has become one of the most popular annual features at [www.illinoisenatedemocrats.com](http://www.illinoisenatedemocrats.com) and on social media. Citizens from Illinois and beyond review the compilation to learn about new laws they hadn't heard about or that they may need to be aware of.

News reporters also have come to rely on our list for end-of-the-year story ideas and as a tip sheet for their own top law lists.



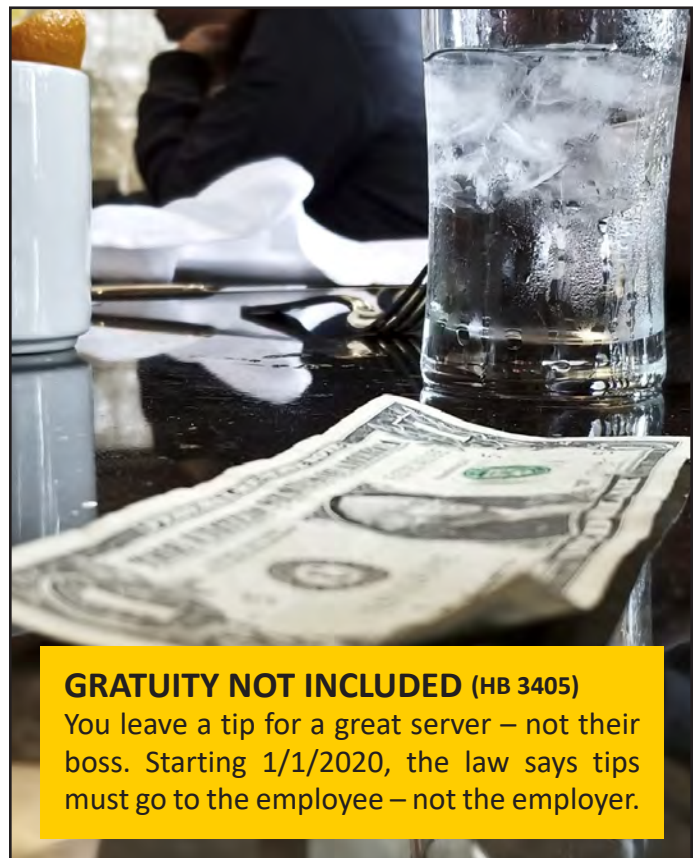
### THE FIGHT FOR \$15 (SB 1)

For the first time in nearly a decade, Illinois is raising its minimum wage. It increases from \$8.25 to \$9.25 on January 1, and to \$15 by 1/1/2025.



### KEEPING UP WITH CANNABIS (HB 1438)

Hundreds of thousands of Illinoisans already use cannabis; January 1, adults will be able to buy it legally from a well-regulated market.



### GRATUITY NOT INCLUDED (HB 3405)

You leave a tip for a great server – not their boss. Starting 1/1/2020, the law says tips must go to the employee – not the employer.





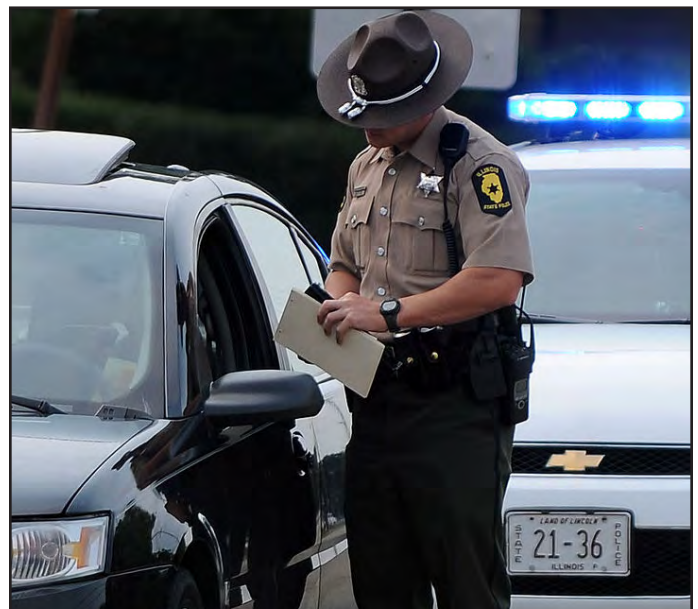

**DEFENDING DNA (HB 2189)**  
Your genes are your business. Companies like Ancestry.com and 23andMe won't be able to share your ancestry test results with health or life insurance companies without consent.



**ROAD WORK AHEAD (SB 1496)**  
Make sure to drive carefully in construction zones – the maximum penalty for hitting a construction worker increases to \$25,000.



**CHILDREN AT PLAY (HB 1873)**  
The fine for illegally passing a school bus doubles on January 1.



**SLOW DOWN. MOVE OVER. (SB 1862)**  
Slow down, change lanes and proceed with caution when approaching vehicles on the side of the highway. Drivers who violate Scott's Law may be fined up to \$10,000.





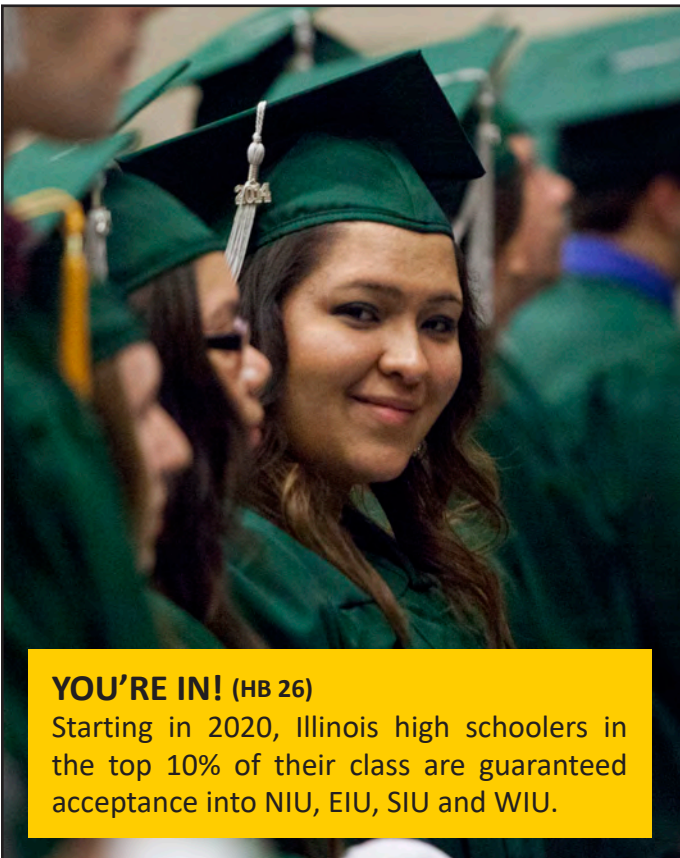
#### **DROP IT AND DRIVE (SB 86)**

The next episode can wait. Illinoisans will no longer be able to watch streaming video while driving.



#### **PET PROJECT (HB 3390)**

Rest easier when you board your pets. Dog and cat kennels must be equipped with a fire sprinkler or alarm system if the kennel is not staffed at all times.



#### **YOU'RE IN! (HB 26)**

Starting in 2020, Illinois high schoolers in the top 10% of their class are guaranteed acceptance into NIU, EIU, SIU and WIU.



#### **FAMILIES FIRST (HB 2028)**

Illinois police and firefighters risk their lives to keep us safe. That's why the burial benefit for a first responder killed in the line of duty doubles January 1.





#### **HELPING HEROES (HB 2767)**

Police will have access to better mental health resources in 2020 with training focused on wellness and suicide prevention.



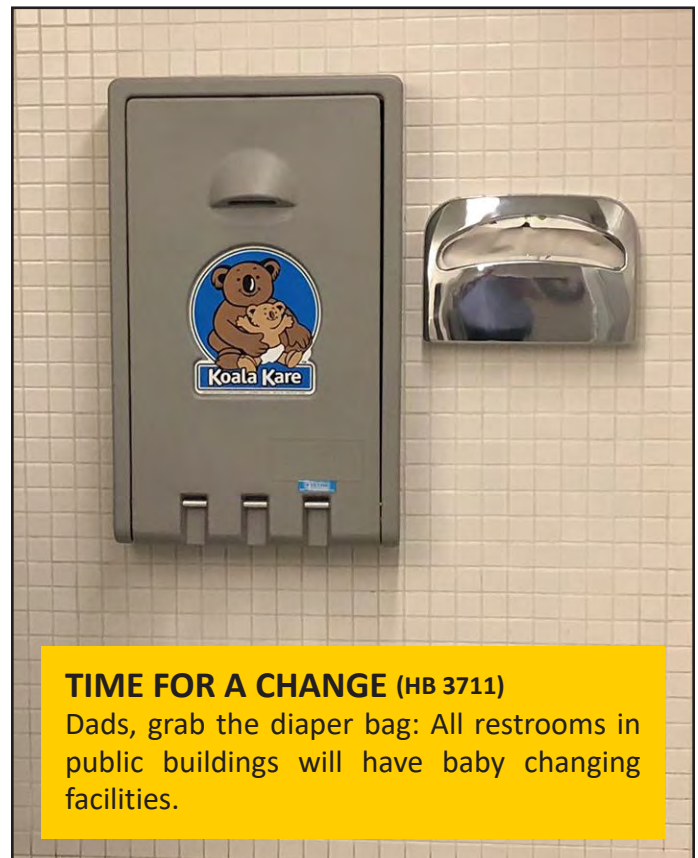
#### **WE HAVE YOU COVERED**

Your next doctor's visit won't break the bank. In 2020, insurers must cover EpiPens (**HB 3435**), skin cancer screenings (**HB 3113**) and diagnostic mammograms (**SB 162**).



#### **ANY LOO WILL DO (SB 556)**

Expect a shorter line to the ladies' room on January 1. All single-occupancy restrooms must be open to everyone.



#### **TIME FOR A CHANGE (HB 3711)**

Dads, grab the diaper bag: All restrooms in public buildings will have baby changing facilities.









YOUR  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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**SENATE  
IN REVIEW**







# Don Harmon

## Illinois Senate President | 39<sup>th</sup> Senate District

After representing the people of Oak Park and the state of Illinois for more than 17 years, Senator Don Harmon (D-Oak Park) was sworn in as the 39th president of the Illinois State Senate in January 2020.

“The Senate is a collection of diverse views and diverse experiences but consistent purpose—to best represent the citizens who send us to the Capitol, to collaborate, to compromise, and to create better opportunities, better outcomes, and greater faith in the honor and integrity of our state,” President Harmon said.

Senate President Harmon was first elected to the Senate in the fall of 2002, and has since promoted a progressive agenda based on his commitment to social justice and public service. In 2011, former Senate President John Cullerton appointed him president pro tempore, offering Harmon a key role in shaping policy and moving legislation through the Senate.

Two months into his new role as Senate President, Harmon faced an unprecedented situation when COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. He canceled in-person session days to prioritize the safety of employees and lawmakers, but worked quickly to assemble virtual working groups so that the vital work of the Senate could continue.

Senate President Harmon also continued to support the 39th District, staying in touch with constituents, sharing information about testing sites and delivering hand sanitizer and sanitizing supplies to senior citizen

homes, city halls, and first responders.

When the time came to return to Springfield, Senate President Harmon led the Senate in passing a budget that stabilizes Illinois while leaders here and across the country await federal action on economic aid and hope for medical science to find a treatment or vaccine for the coronavirus.

To make sure everyone in Illinois can exercise their right to vote without compromising their health, Senate President Harmon backed legislation to expand the state’s vote-by-mail program for the 2020 election.

The Senate also approved the final language for the Fair Tax Amendment that will appear on the ballot in November. The amendment, sponsored by Harmon in the Senate, would overhaul the state’s current flat-tax system and allow higher incomes to be taxed at a higher rate and middle income and lower wage households to pay a lower rate.

Days after the Senate’s abbreviated session adjourned, the country was rocked again by George Floyd’s murder. The disturbing video of his death triggered massive protests around the country.

Senate President Harmon stood in strong support of the Black Lives Matter movement and with protestors demanding meaningful reforms. He attended multiple protests, marches, and clean-up events on the West Side of Chicago. He also initiated ongoing meetings with members of the Black and Latino Caucuses to help set the Senate’s legislative action agenda going forward.

It has been a year of unprecedented crisis during which the Illinois Senate Democrats have repeatedly risen to the challenge, and Senate President Harmon is encouraged by the shared enthusiasm among senators to tackle historic wrongs and move Illinois into a brighter future.





# Kimberly A. Lightford

## Majority Leader | Assignments chair | 4<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Majority Leader Kimberly A. Lightford began 2020 with plans to continue her long efforts to provide better educational outcomes for all Illinois students, more resources and dignity for working families, and more opportunities for justice-involved individuals. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic began to take a disproportionate toll on minority communities, she quickly turned her attention to relief efforts. She refocused her advocacy for the Black community after more of its members senselessly lost their lives to police violence.

As the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the effects of decades of disinvestment in health care and infrastructure in Black neighborhoods and towns, Lightford worked to provide vital supplies to local first responders. She delivered masks and disinfectant to

health centers, fire stations, police stations, and nursing homes, and community centers.

As the Stay at Home Order wore on, Lightford also continued her years-long fight for a higher minimum wage. The first increase scheduled by the law she passed last year took effect in January, but big business saw an opportunity in the pandemic and tried to convince the governor and legislators to repeal or delay further increases. Lightford remained adamant that working families – already hit hard by the pandemic – deserve to make a better wage for their hard work.

She continued her advocacy for working men and women during the legislature's brief meeting to pass a budget and address challenges presented by the pandemic. Lightford sponsored Senate Bill 471, which enhanced

criminal penalties for assaulting retail workers who are enforcing public health guidelines. In many ways, the working people who kept grocery stores and pharmacies running were the least recognized heroes of the pandemic – the everyday employees who suddenly found themselves essential.

Even as the pandemic began to slow, Lightford and other Black members of the General Assembly faced another emergency: More members of the Black community lost their lives at the hands of police, leading to protests sometimes accompanied by damage to property and looting. Lightford urged the protesters to continue bringing to light the real problem of systemic racism but to do more to protect their own communities.

She helped organize Days of Action and other events to repair communities damaged by protests and urged the governor to provide more assistance from the state. She also challenged legislators of every creed and color to join with their Black colleagues to support meaningful changes to the law that will help undo the damage caused by centuries of slavery, segregation, and disinvestment.







# Bill Cunningham

## President Pro Tempore | 18<sup>th</sup> Senate District

In spite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Senate President Pro Tempore Bill Cunningham continued to advocate for area residents and Illinois' first responders during the truncated spring legislative session.

When Cunningham first joined the Illinois Senate in 2013, he introduced legislation that would have required Chicago to dedicate future revenue from a proposed casino to the city's financially strapped police and fire pension funds. At the time, the idea of a casino in Chicago was purely hypothetical, and some thought it would never happen.

This year, in his new role as chair of the Subcommittee on Gaming, Cunningham was able to help make that vision a reality, sponsoring and passing a measure that made various changes to the state's gaming laws to help bring a casino to Chicago.

Chicago's portion of the tax revenue generated by the new casino will be dedicated entirely to the city's police and fire pension funds. In total, the casino is expected to invest more than \$200 million each year into those pension systems.

Cunningham also co-sponsored legislation to expand protections for first responders and other essential employees. The measure included a provision that would create a rebuttable presumption that Chicago first responders who

die from COVID-19 contracted it in the line of duty, ensuring that their survivors would be able to access associated death benefits.

Due to the nature of their work, first responders are among those with the greatest risk of contracting COVID-19.

Cunningham has also remained active in the district he represents during the pandemic. He has provided helpful services to those impacted by COVID-19, including delivering meals to health care workers and assisting individuals who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19.

Cunningham also introduced legislation this spring that would allow special education students who turn 22 during the school year to finish out the term in which they are enrolled. Under current law, a special education student

is no longer eligible to attend public school on his or her 22nd birthday, regardless of when it falls in the school year. Because session was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the measure has yet to be heard in committee.

With Illinois beginning to reopen, Cunningham is continuing to work with his fellow elected officials to provide events with free resources for area residents while observing public health and safety guidelines.





# Laura M. Murphy

Deputy Majority Leader | Local Government chair | 28<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Deputy Majority Leader Laura Murphy has served her Des Plaines community for over 20 years as an alderman, state senator and all-around active citizen, but no amount of experience could have prepared her for the COVID-19 outbreak. Despite the uncertain situation, Murphy wasted no time in stepping up to support communities in need.

When COVID-19 disrupted Senate operations, Murphy led a bipartisan group of senators to find solutions to the problems facing local governments as a result of the outbreak. To address these issues, Murphy spearheaded House Bill 2096, a package of legislation providing relief to local governments during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

The measure gives municipalities guidance where requested and

flexibility where needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislation also offers help to Illinoisans in need by ensuring low-income individuals have access to financial assistance, educational resources and safe, stable housing.

One provision of House Bill 2096, the Cards 4 Kids Act, waives library card fees for low-income students in unincorporated areas. Three Elk Grove High School students approached Murphy with the idea for the Cards 4 Kids Act after discovering some of their classmates were unable to access resources from their local libraries without paying hundreds of dollars in fees.

Murphy recognizes that public libraries provide so many important services—not just books, but also job and college application tools. After speaking to the students, she

decided that needed to change.

Off the Senate floor, Murphy supported recovery efforts by hosting multiple webinars designed to help small business owners navigate state and federal assistance programs. She also fielded hundreds of calls from out-of-work Illinoisans struggling to access unemployment insurance and worked with the Illinois Department of Employment Security to ensure they received the benefits they deserved.

In the coming months, Murphy will serve as co-chair of the bipartisan, bicameral Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission, the group charged with navigating the public health and economic concerns of the state's reopening plan. The commission will work closely with the Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity on plans to revive the various sectors of the Illinois economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the legislature reconvenes in the fall, Murphy plans to continue her mission to enact policies that lend a hand to middle class families, promote higher education in the state and keep Illinoisans in Illinois.







# Linda Holmes

## Assistant Majority Leader | 42<sup>nd</sup> Senate District

This year was unlike any other for the Illinois State Senate, and Assistant Majority Leader Linda Holmes entered the new world of legislating under the governor's Stay at Home Order without being face to face with her colleagues. Aside from dealing with the public health ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the largest issues for the state to tackle was a staggering unemployment rate. More than 1.25 million Illinoisans were out of work, and the state's unemployment system for filing claims was overwhelmed. Holmes and her staff took many calls from area residents who had trouble getting into the system, getting through to the Illinois Department of Employment Security by phone, and getting payments.

While IDES continuously added capacity and staff to help people who were out of work, legislative steps had to be taken. One of the working groups of legislators focused on addressing the unemployment crisis. Holmes worked with the bipartisan group to provide relief to those unemployed through no fault of their own. The measure passed during special session in May on an almost unanimous vote.

Signed into law June 5, House Bill 2455 will provide worker compensation benefits for frontline and essential workers who contract COVID-19 on the job under certain conditions. It

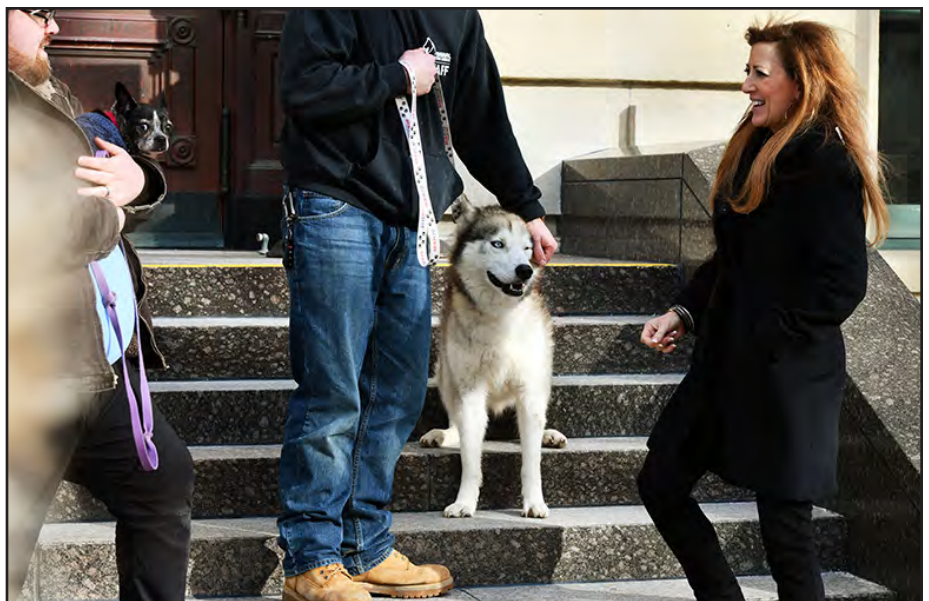
will provide death benefits for Chicago first responders who were presumably infected with COVID-19 on duty, and it revises state code to expand unemployment benefits and enhance sick pay and leave for workers who contract the virus.

In January, Holmes was not alone in working on several important non-pandemic pieces of legislation. A measure to allow notary publics to provide electronic services would have provided the kind of no-contact services businesses and individuals need during a public health crisis, and she plans to make it a high priority next January.

Another priority item for January is Holmes' Prior Authorization Reform Act to take down obstacles, get patients the care they need more quickly, and save them money by removing the "prior approval" process used by insurers

to deny and delay treatment. This is a bipartisan effort supported by the Illinois State Medical Society.

She also plans to continue work on an animal welfare bill that would end the practice of denying renters dogs of a certain size or number and an agricultural pesticide bill that would address products used to tackle weeds but are, in some cases, killing neighboring crops. Both will be addressed next year.





# Dave Koehler

## Assistant Majority Leader | 46<sup>th</sup> Senate District

While the 2020 legislative session was marred by unforeseen challenges, the COVID-19 crisis presented an opportunity for State Senator Dave Koehler to serve his community directly. In collaboration with the East Peoria Fire Department, Koehler made certain that local businesses and organizations were able to acquire an ample supply of sanitization supplies to ensure a safe reopening process when the time came.

In the early days of the pandemic, masks were difficult to come by, especially for greater Peoria's homeless population. For this reason, Koehler partnered with Jo-Ann Fabrics and UnityPoint Health to join the community effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The result of this partnership was a donation of 2,500 masks to dozens of local organizations.

As weather conditions improved and the need for safe ways to get out of the house increased, Koehler led an initiative to reopen two local wildlife areas that had been left out of the governor's initial park reopening plan. Banner Marsh and Spring Lake have long served as an outdoor refuge for residents of the 46th District, and the pandemic only emphasized their importance. Thanks to Koehler's efforts, residents can continue to use these spaces to safely relax and enjoy nature.

When lawmakers returned to Springfield at the end of May to pass a series of packages pertaining to COVID-19 relief, Koehler felt one of the most effective actions to take would be some sort of property tax relief. Koehler led the Senate's economic revitalization working group with this goal in

mind, and was able to deliver real, tangible solutions to one of the enormous challenges brought on by the pandemic. As a result of Senate Bill 685, residents will have more time to sort out their financial affairs before worrying about property taxes. This was accomplished through deferring property tax sales and empowering county governments to approve 2020 homestead exemptions for those with disabilities, veterans with disabilities and senior citizens, as long as the property had been granted this exemption for 2019. Additionally, counties with less than 3 million residents are allowed to waive interest penalties and fees for late property tax payments due in 2020.

Implementing property tax relief measures and extending payment deadlines is simply a starting point as the work toward the recovery of local economies continues.

While tremendous challenges await the legislature going forward, Senator Koehler looks forward to continuing his work providing a voice for downstate Illinoisans in Springfield.







# Iris Y. Martinez

## Assistant Majority Leader | 20<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Over the course of the pandemic, Assistant Majority Leader Iris Y. Martinez prioritized health and safety. In response to data indicating COVID-19 disproportionately affected communities of color and exposed further health disparities, Martinez worked to secure testing sites and other resources for residents of the 20th District. She began by directing state efforts to open sites in Humboldt Park and Belmont Cragin in an effort to make it easier for working families and older adults to be tested quickly and efficiently.

After hearing that hand sanitizer was in short supply, even in health care facilities, she partnered with El Rincon to make and distribute sanitizer for local hospitals. Reacting to news that older adults in Black and Brown communities were more susceptible to contracting COVID-19, Martinez encouraged state lawmakers to expand Medicaid benefits to undocumented, low-income older adults. Her activism secured Medicaid access for undocumented older adults who meet the program's income requirements through Senate Bill 1864. While residents were struggling to find personal protective equipment, she partnered with city officials to sponsor drive-thru mask giveaways. Across Chicago, she collected donations for food banks and hosted other events to support students while out of school, as

well as residents who were unable to provide food and items for their families.

Over the years, Martinez has advanced legislation supporting disinvested, disproportionately affected communities in Illinois. As a strong voice for children who prioritizes a quality public education system, she led the charge behind the state's Grow Your Own Teachers initiative. This effort helped place qualified teachers in low-income, hard-to-staff schools by offering forgivable student loans. In a similar effort to increase classroom safety, Martinez passed a law empowering the Illinois State Board of Education to immediately suspend the license of any educator charged with a sex crime or Class X felony, instead of waiting for a conviction. Additionally, to ensure students were healthy and had

access to school supplies, she has hosted an annual Family Wellness and Back to School Fair for the last several years.

Martinez has also strongly advocated for immigrants. Because of her efforts, non-citizens are eligible for professional licenses. Martinez spoke out against requiring a question based on citizenship status being included in the 2020 Census.

Martinez's priorities for the next legislative session include enacting meaningful reform to work against racial injustices, in memory of the Black and Brown lives tragically lost and affected by discriminatory violence. She remains a strong advocate for change in broken economic, health care and criminal justice systems.





# Antonio Munoz

**Assistant Majority Leader | Executive Appointments chair | 1<sup>st</sup> Senate District**

As the COVID-19 pandemic upended the lives of Illinoisans, Assistant Majority Leader Antonio “Tony” Munoz was ready and willing to respond. Early on, when masks and other personal protective equipment were hard to come by, he partnered with Jo-Ann Fabrics to donate 5,000 masks to local business and organizations in the district he represents, as well as nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Recognizing that undocumented seniors are at high risk of hospitalization from COVID-19, Munoz supported expanding Medicaid to cover low-income undocumented seniors. A priority of the Illinois Latino Legislative Caucus, under House Bill 357, Illinois became the first state to offer Medicaid benefits to seniors regardless of immigration status.

The legislation makes seniors over 65 whose income is at or below the federal poverty level eligible for Medicaid.

Even as Illinois began to recover from the pandemic, the nation was rocked by the deaths of several Black people at the hands of police officers, most notably George Floyd. As a former Chicago police officer, Munoz issued a strong statement denouncing George Floyd’s murder, saying that the purpose of the police is to create a better future for young people. When he saw violence and destruction mar largely peaceful protests, he issued a call to unite and start to heal from decades of mistreatment and neglect. Senator Munoz further committed to working with his colleagues to bring changes the communities they represent desire to see.

Munoz also remains committed to serving his community and looks forward to a time he can again provide more direct opportunities and services to the people he represents. In the short months before the pandemic began, he hosted an event raising awareness of breast cancer and domestic violence, a health fair, a job fair, a fall festival, and his third annual fishing derby. During the Pandemic, Munoz participated in calls with local leaders to discuss ways to help the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. He also was instrumental in helping ensure COVID-19 related information was translated into the many languages spoken by Illinois residents. He believes direct service is one of the most important parts of being a legislator.

Munoz has dedicated his career to the safety and well-being of communities in his district and throughout Illinois as both an officer and a state senator. His track record shows he is willing to stand up for those who are most in need.







# Mattie Hunter

## Majority Caucus Chair | Executive chair | 3<sup>rd</sup> Senate District

Inspired by a brief time as chair of the Senate Transportation Committee in late 2019, Senate Majority Caucus Chair Hunter placed a renewed focus on improving fairness in the state's procurement processes heading into the 2020 spring legislative session. However, she had to redirect her efforts following the outbreak of COVID-19.

Continuing her efforts to improve health care and addiction treatment, Hunter was proud to receive the Legislative Champion Award from the non-profit advocacy group TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities) in January for her efforts to improve opportunities for substance use disorder treatment and recovery, especially for individuals who have had contact with the criminal legal system.

In April, as reports began to reveal shockingly high and disproportionate rates of COVID-19 related deaths for African-American communities in Chicago and Cook County, Hunter stepped up as a leading voice for investments to end the long-standing racial health care inequities that put Black Illinoisans in the center of the storm.

To support families impacted by the health and economic impact of the virus, Hunter took to the streets weekly to help provide immediate assistance to people in need by distributing food, water, and face masks, as well as connecting

residents to testing and treatment centers.

As a member of the Senate Democrats' leadership team and chair of the Executive Committee, Hunter was a key advocate for a fiscal year 2021 state budget that focused on addressing the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Hunter believes the state has a duty to support those who are seeing the livelihoods and the health of their loved ones diminish in the midst of the pandemic.

Despite the shortened legislative session, Hunter also passed legislation in late May establishing the Kidney Disease Prevention and Education Task Force to increase awareness of and examine chronic kidney disease, transplants and kidney donations, and the greater rates of diagnosis in minority groups.

In late May, as unrest and frustration gripped the nation following a number of African-American deaths at the hands of police officers throughout the country, Hunter took the lead in uniting her community, organizing a South Side Day of Action with other Black elected officials in Chicago to call for solutions to address police violence and systemic racism in all forms.

South Side residents and leaders rallied around Hunter's inspiring call for Black and Brown Chicagoans to harness their collective anger to build a movement toward ending police violence and eradicating all systemic inequalities, including disparities in economic opportunity, health, and education. She says Black families can't wait any longer.





# Jacqueline Y. Collins

Deputy Majority Caucus Chair | Financial Institutions chair | 16<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Deputy Majority Caucus Chair Jacqueline Collins spent much of 2020 out in the community responding to the disproportionate harm COVID-19 has had on the Chicago Black community and joining the rising chorus of voices throughout the city in support of Black Lives Matter protests in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by police.

In light of the pandemic, Collins was active in her community, handing out sanitizer and masks to first responders and residents. She also campaigned tirelessly for the addition of a community-based testing site in the Auburn Gresham/Chatham area of the city and was instrumental in the creation of the National Guard-operated site at Studio Movie Grill.

Always in search of legislation and reform to address structural

racism, Collins spoke out alongside members of the community in the wake of the George Floyd protests to call for police reform and justice for Black Americans who have died as a result of police action. In addition to participating in the Black Caucus' Days of Action, she also joined members of the community and Black lawmakers to call for businesses to hire Black contractors as they look to rebuild in the wake of damage that occurred on nights of protest.

Collins invited the business community to fight the racism at the root of the economic inequities Black communities continue to experience in Chicago and the rest of the nation, calling on the large companies with franchises in Chicago to uplift Black lives, Black communities, Black businesses and Black opportunities, and inviting

them to work together to fight inequity.

Collins also called for legislation to address reports of widespread, systemic inequality in home lending in Chicago. According to one report, just one predominantly-white neighborhood in Chicago has received more dollars in home loans than all predominantly-Black communities in the city combined. She believes there is no justice until the last red line is erased.

Though she was forced to turn away from her legislative agenda to address the pandemic, Collins remains committed to protecting victims of crime. For example, she sponsored Senate Bill 3623, which would require every large company doing business in Illinois to disclose its efforts to eradicate slavery, human trafficking, and child labor.

Senator Collins is looking forward to a legislative agenda that will fight the underlying causes of systemic racism Black Americans face in their everyday lives. For example, she will seek to reform unfair bank lending practices, in light of reports Chicago banks have lent white communities more than majority-Black communities to the tune of billions of dollars over recent decades.







# Omar Aquino

## Majority Caucus Whip | Labor chair | 2<sup>nd</sup> Senate District

At the start of 2020, State Senator Omar Aquino became part of the Democratic Caucus' leadership team - a remarkable achievement, given that he is only 32 years old. Aquino serves as Majority Caucus Whip.

As a member of the Senate's Medicaid working group, Aquino pursued his passion for providing health care coverage to as many residents of Illinois as possible. Thanks to his efforts, the Hospital Assessment Program legislation that passed the General Assembly includes more funding for safety-net hospitals that serve Medicaid patients and for community hospital improvements.

This legislation also offers additional funding to encourage doctors to take Medicaid patients, providing better access to health care for those who need it the most.

Aquino also led the Senate working group on the budget. Crafting the state's fiscal plan for 2021 was very challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the significant impact of the health emergency on the state's finances, Aquino and his peers produced a budget that prioritizes funding for COVID-19 testing and assistance, preserves dollars for P-12 education and higher education, and makes Illinois the first state in the nation to offer Medicaid benefits to undocumented senior citizens. Providing coverage for

undocumented seniors is a major step forward, helping provide compassionate health care to all people who need it.

Because of the pandemic, Aquino was forced to put some of his legislative agenda aside, but he intends to pick back up where he left off when regular session of the General Assembly resumes. One measure he remains passionate about would help teachers pursue additional education. Under Senate Bill 3009, teachers would qualify for an income tax credit for their tuition costs at a public university. This change would help encourage teachers to pursue further education.

Beyond his legislative work, Senator Aquino keeps strong ties with the people he represents. He distributed face masks to residents of the 2nd District, partnered with

local community organizations and other stakeholders in charitable efforts to distribute free food, a turkey giveaway, free flu shots, and scarves during the wintertime. Senator Aquino also sponsors one of the largest health care community fairs in the state of Illinois.

State Senator Omar Aquino is Chairman of the Senate's Labor Committee and is the Co-Chair of the Illinois Latino Legislative Caucus.





# Laura Fine

## Majority Caucus Whip | 9<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in Illinois and across the world, State Senator Laura Fine (D-Glenview) fought hard to make health care more accessible and affordable for all Illinoisans.

She believes outrageous medical costs place life-saving prescriptions, vital procedures and even routine checkups out of reach for many Illinoisans and their families, and that for too long, patients have been unable to afford the care they desperately need.

She also supports providing expanded access to medical care for mental health. This year, she introduced Senate Bill 2740, which would require insurers to cover mental health treatment within a reasonable distance of the patient's home.

As more and more Illinoisans

fell ill with COVID-19, medical bills started piling up for households across the state. Fine knew Illinois' health care system needed to change—fast.

During the shortened legislative session, Fine lent her voice to Senate Bill 1864, a package of legislation supporting health care equity for low-income Illinoisans. The legislation employed language from a number of bills Fine had proposed earlier in the year, including measures to streamline the verification process for Medicaid eligibility and expand Medicaid coverage of psychiatric care services.

Fine has also been a strong advocate for expanded access to telehealth services. In March, she applauded Gov. J.B. Pritzker for issuing an executive order to reduce restrictions on telehealth services

and expand insurance coverage for care delivered remotely during the COVID-19 crisis, a change she hopes to make permanent in the future.

For Fine, ensuring quality health care means increasing access to mental health services, too. In April, she hosted a Q&A with mental health experts from the North Suburban Cook County chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Over the course of the discussion, Fine took questions from area residents on topics like finding resources for support, managing mental health at home and dealing with pandemic-related stressors.

Over the summer, Fine looks forward to working on legislation to ensure all Illinoisans have access to affordable, quality health care, even after the threat of COVID-19 has passed. She also plans to resume her efforts to ensure that the caregivers of people with disabilities who create savings accounts for them have a way to pass them on to a new beneficiary if they pass away.







# Napoleon Harris III

## Majority Caucus Whip | Insurance chair | 15<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Senate Majority Caucus Whip Napoleon Harris III spent 2020 advocating for the people he represents and making sure small businesses were aware of recovery resources. The year also saw multiple pieces of legislation stalled by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. That didn't stop Harris from focusing on legislation to help those affected by the public health crisis.

Since becoming a state senator, Harris has been a steadfast supporter of increasing minority contracts with the state. He attended local meetings and minority business summits to speak with individuals about legislation that would allow their businesses to thrive. His goal was easing the burden on these business owners and giving them an equal chance of winning state contracts.

Harris advocated to expand COVID-19 testing in Black communities. He partnered with the city of Markham and the Illinois Department of Public Health to offer free COVID-19 drive-thru testing and worked with a local CVS to offer a self-swab test that returns results in two to three days.

Gov. JB Pritzker required all citizens to wear a face covering in public to slow the spread of COVID-19. However, many residents in underserved communities like Harvey did not have access to a mask or know where to obtain them. In response, Senator Harris

passed out more than 1,000 masks in Harvey.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many have been cautious about making regular health care visits. To further protect people's health, Harris introduced legislation to expand the use of telehealth services when the General Assembly returned to Springfield during its abbreviated session.

To answer questions and help residents through their concerns, Harris hosted a Telephone Town Hall in May. More than 3,700 people joined the call, and many were able to ask a doctor questions about COVID-19. Harris worked to make sure everyone was aware of two local COVID-19 testing facilities and provided information on a local food bank, where people could donate food and supplies for

their neighbors who were greatly impacted by the pandemic.

Harris is an ex-NFL player, so he has always been passionate about promoting athletes' rights. He was working on passing legislation that would allow student athletes at higher education institutions to earn compensation from the use of their names, images, or likenesses and to obtain professional legal representation. He believes it's unfair that universities and private companies can profit from using the students' images, but the students themselves can't. When the General Assembly returns for regular session, he plans to continue working on this legislation.





# Michael E. Hastings

Majority Caucus Whip | Energy and Public Utilities chair | 19<sup>th</sup> Senate District

For Senator Michael E. Hastings, the beginning of the 2020 legislative session brought a major milestone. Following the election of Senate President Don Harmon, Hastings was named to the president's leadership team in the role of Majority Caucus Whip. Additionally, Hastings was named chair of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, giving him the opportunity to lead the way on the reshaping of Illinois' clean energy policies.

The beginning of the year also brought a positive development for one of the 19th District's most long-standing problems. After years of negotiating, Senator Hastings announced the state would move forward with a new future for the currently dormant Tinley Park Mental Health Center. By allowing the Village of Tinley Park, rather

than the state, to sell the facility and its campus, the community will be able to control its own destiny in the repurposing of the property.

As the COVID-19 crisis worsened and lawmakers were unable to return to Springfield, Hastings focused heavily on assisting area residents wherever possible. He spent hours per day on the phone with people helping them navigate the grueling administrative process that comes with filing for grants, unemployment insurance, and other government funded assistance programs. Additionally, he hosted a series of public Zoom calls with local health experts to ensure the people of the 19th District were receiving timely, accurate information on best practices to protect their families.

Amid the worsening crisis, plans for clean energy reform were put

on hold, and Hastings' attention shifted toward aiding residents with rising utility bills. Leading the Senate Energy and Public Utilities working group, Hastings and his colleagues hosted dozens of stakeholders via Zoom in an effort to seek a common-sense solution. After a few months of deliberating, Hastings led the way by urging the Illinois Commerce Commission to implement consumer protection measures delaying shutoffs for at least 60 days after the Stay at Home Order is lifted, delaying payments with standardized deferred payment arrangements, and requiring stronger communication by setting out standards of how utility companies must communicate with their customers.

Upon returning to Springfield at the end of May, Hastings supported several COVID-19 relief packages including vote by mail provisions and the state's budget for the upcoming year. Though the legislature has ended its session until November, Hastings will continue working within his community to help residents cope with the new reality COVID-19 has wrought.







# Christopher Belt

## *57<sup>th</sup> Senate District*

As State Senator Christopher Belt took on his second session in the Illinois Senate, he was forced to reconsider his original plans for 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This, however, did not stop him from serving his communities and ensuring his residents received all the assistance they needed.

Before the public health crisis, Belt worked on legislation to help hungry children and to increase diversity at state agencies. He introduced a bill that requires schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to any students who ask for it, without any income checks. He also authored a bill that endorses diverse interview panels to ensure equal employment opportunity. He wanted to make sure the number of women, minorities, and people with disabilities have increased employment opportunities at state agencies.

Understanding that many people were laid off from their jobs because of the closing of businesses across the state, Belt supported an initiative that allowed all SNAP recipients to receive additional benefits and allowed them to buy groceries online, arguing that it reduces the spread of COVID-19, keeps families safe and gives low-income families greater food security in a more resourceful way.

To increase testing capacity for downstate residents, Belt worked with the Illinois Department of Public Health to set up a COVID-19

testing facility in East St. Louis. He understood that it is vital for every community to have direct access to a testing facility to help treat, isolate, and when needed, hospitalize people who are infected. Belt understands that it is important to have easier access to testing to ensure a strong recovery of the downstate communities.

Belt also passed out masks and other essential goods to residents and local leaders. Many of the people he represents may not have had access to protective gear, and Belt wanted to make sure they all got the help they deserved. He even posted information on how to create a DIY mask on his website and social media platforms.

Knowing that many of the people he represents were experiencing the stresses of the Stay at Home Order, he worked on getting the

Frank Holten State Recreation Area reopened. The Frank Holten State Recreation Area features the 18-hole Grand Marais Golf Course, two lakes for outstanding fishing, and plenty of open space for picnicking and other outdoor fun. He knew this would help families host small gatherings while practicing social distancing.

In the future, Belt plans to continue his work to ensure that unused food in schools does not go to waste. His proposed program would require the State Board of Education to implement a plan to allow public schools to provide disadvantaged students with leftover food from the cafeteria to take home. Belt understands many families struggle to put food on their table, so he wants to ensure excess food that would have otherwise gone to waste goes to children in need.





# Scott Bennett

## Agriculture chair | 52<sup>nd</sup> Senate District

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, State Senator Scott Bennett devoted much of his attention this spring to helping those who are struggling to find stability. But even before the crisis, Bennett was committed to helping those in need.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Bennett held a monthly office hour with State Representative Mike Marron in Rantoul. Each month, Bennett and Marron met with community members and assisted them with state and local services. Due to the Stay at Home Order, the legislators' office hours were cut short, but Bennett continued to keep residents informed and updated with accurate information online.

To do that, Bennett co-hosted a virtual town hall with State Representative Carol Ammons and experts from the Champaign-

Urbana Public Health District. Community members had the opportunity to get their questions and concerns related to COVID-19 answered from the comfort of their homes.

The outbreak of COVID-19 led to school closures in Illinois, leaving parents responsible for overseeing their children's education for the remainder of the academic year. Bennett responded to this transition by launching an educational art contest centered on the theme of Earth Day 2020 to help students in Champaign and Vermilion Counties productively fill their time at home. Bennett awarded the winners of his art competition with new art kits.

As the Stay at Home Order continued, Bennett participated in a virtual bedtime story event to keep people connected while they were home. Bennett and his two children joined families online and

read "Pigs Aplenty, Pigs Galore!" This gave kids the chance to listen to a new person read them a story.

To contend with a potentially dire shortage of personal protective equipment, Bennett teamed up with John Deere and the Illinois Manufacturers Association to provide thousands of free face shields to frontline workers at three Champaign area hospitals, including Christie Clinic, Carle and OSF Heart of Mary. Bennett encouraged community members, groups and businesses to donate unused personal protective equipment to their local health departments, hospitals and first responders during the crisis.

When the General Assembly returned to Springfield to pass a state budget, Bennett did not forget the needs of the people he represents. He advocated for funding for the University of Illinois and for higher education in general. His efforts helped ensure that the U of I and the Monetary Awards Program – the state's premiere need-based financial aid program – did not experience budget cuts.







# Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant

## Education chair | 49<sup>th</sup> Senate District

As the lives of students and teachers were unexpectedly uprooted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, State Senator Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, chair of the Senate Education Committee, worked diligently to ensure they have continuous support and assistance to face this unprecedented situation.

Bertino-Tarrant spearheaded Senate Bill 1569 — the General Assembly’s education package. The legislation does a number of things to help students and teachers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes extending educator license renewals for one year, so teachers don’t have to go through the renewal process while working remotely. It also allows for mandatory tests to be taken remotely, so students don’t have to risk getting sick in order to take an exam they need to apply for college.

On the higher education front, any grade of “pass,” “credit,” or “satisfactory” during the public health emergency is transferable and will fulfill prerequisite requirements for more advanced courses.

Senator Bertino-Tarrant led conversations with the Will County Public Health Department to address the needs of local communities during the public health crisis —specifically to address safety guidelines, hospital and ventilator

capacities, and PPE availability. She hosted Zoom calls with multiple stakeholders to ensure the county was doing what was right to best serve the community during these unprecedented times.

Bertino-Tarrant also championed a measure that would allow employers that offer payroll deductions to help save for children’s college education to receive double the current annual tax credit. Senate Bill 2800 would increase the maximum annual tax credit provided to employers that match an employee’s contributions to qualified college savings and prepaid tuition accounts from \$500 to \$1,000 per employee. While stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s a measure Bertino-Tarrant would like to see succeed in the future.

To ensure saving for the future starts early, Bertino-Tarrant also introduced Senate Bill 2474 to allow students to take a financial literacy class as a math requirement for high school graduation.

As Illinois begins to reopen following the pandemic, Bertino-Tarrant continues her commitment to serving the people she represents via outreach events, providing superior service to the people of the 49th State Senate District. She will strive to help as many people as possible.





# Melinda Bush

## Environment and Conservation chair | 31<sup>st</sup> Senate District

Although COVID-19 dramatically shortened this year's legislative session, Senator Melinda Bush continued to work on multiple priorities, with a special focus on sweeping ethics reforms and public safety protections.

She hit the ground running in January and quickly introduced Senate Bill 2488, a measure removing any member of the General Assembly from a leadership or committee chair position if indicted for a crime, and Senate Bill 3659 to expand access to the life-saving opioid antidote Naloxone to combat the ongoing opioid crisis. Before leaving Springfield, Bush introduced Senate Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 18, which would outlaw gerrymandering and create a fair map drawing process. She also introduced Senate Bill 3580, which

gives law enforcement more tools to prosecute sexual assault and violence committed by domestic partners and dating partners.

After returning to the district due to COVID-19, Bush shifted her focus to running a dedicated operation serving area residents. Her office fielded over 1,150 calls, responded to over 2,200 emails, handled approximately 375 cases with a 95% successful resolution rate, successfully closed over 275 unemployment insurance cases, distributed over 400 yard signs thanking essential workers for their efforts during the pandemic, and raised over \$2,500 for COVID-19 relief.

During the pandemic Bush assisted the people she represents with a variety of services, including flood mitigation, SNAP benefits, Medicaid, unemployment

insurance, driver's license and plate renewal, FOID card renewal, conceal carry registration and renewal, utility bill management, immigration status assistance, and other COVID-19 pandemic related issues.

Bush's office took an active role in providing pandemic resources and information – providing over 156 COVID-19 updates since the beginning of the pandemic. Her office has also worked with local food banks to facilitate donations, built and maintained a mental health resource list for area residents, and worked with local economic development partners and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to recruit and retain businesses in Lake County.

Senator Bush returned to Springfield for a special session to vote on a COVID-19 budget and pass other emergency legislation, including sponsoring Senate Bill 557, allowing federally qualified health centers to administer medical treatment and rape kits for survivors of sexual assault who are uncomfortable risking their health to go to a hospital during the pandemic. This summer she will continue attending virtual meetings with various organizations in Lake County and continue to provide pandemic updates.







# Cristina Castro

## Revenue chair | 22<sup>nd</sup> Senate District

One of State Senator Cristina Castro's priorities for 2020 was addressing the rampant and widespread corruption that occurs in Illinois state politics. With several members of the General Assembly placed under investigation for or forced to resign due to ethics violations, Castro eagerly agreed to join the Joint Commission on Ethics and Lobbying Reform to investigate first-hand the cause of these problems and determine the best ways to tackle them head on.

Her passion for fighting against corruption did not waver when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, but like so many others, Castro was forced to shift her priorities. She began to figure out the ways in which she could be most beneficial to the people she represents, and in particular, the minority communities within her district that are often underserved and disproportionately affected by crises.

The Latino community was hit especially hard by COVID-19, experiencing much higher positivity rates than average. To assist Latinos and other, Castro helped distribute cleaning supplies to lower-income older adults, helped get the word out about available resources to Spanish-speaking audiences, and more. Castro also proudly supported the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, which focused on providing resources to people struggling due to COVID-19. It included funding

for immigrant welcome centers, expanded health coverage for low-income communities, and made Illinois the first state in the nation to offer Medicaid to undocumented residents over the age of 65.

When normal legislative business can resume, Castro intends to turn her attention back to ethics reform. Castro also intends to refocus on other priorities, including protecting the privacy of consumers' electronic data, taking on the "gig economy" with a tax on short-term rental properties, and ensuring the passage of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, a landmark legislative package that will create jobs in Illinois and put the state on a track to 100% renewable energy by 2050.

Some of the legislation Castro intends to keep working on includes Senate Bill 2273, which prohibits

companies that sell "smart" products that record video or audio from sharing that information with a third party without the product owner's permission, and Senate Bill 2287, which requires universities to create "financial aid shopping sheets" and set stronger policies for mandatory fees.

As Illinois continues to recover from COVID-19, Castro remains committed to ethics reform, holding big companies accountable to consumers and workers alike, and protecting the environment.





# Rachelle Crowe

## Judiciary chair | 56<sup>th</sup> Senate District

In order to do her part in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, State Senator Rachelle Crowe looked for ways to best help the communities she represents. She planned socially distanced events for students, residents and law enforcement.

When in-person classes were cancelled for students across the 56th District, Crowe planned an art contest in honor of 2020 being the centennial of women receiving the right to vote through the ratification of the 19th Amendment. To educate students on this historic milestone, Crowe encouraged students from elementary through high school to enter submissions based on this topic to be judged via public vote. Though Crowe was impressed by every entry, the three winners received a certificate and a gift card to the

small business of their choice. The art is now hanging in the senator's district office. In addition to the art contest, under the leadership of Crowe, members of the Illinois Senate's Women's Caucus recorded videos of themselves reading books on women's suffrage to be shared with schools and libraries throughout the state. Under the recommendation of Caseyville Public Library, Crowe provided all 21 members a copy of "A Lady Has the Floor: Belva Lockwood Speaks Out for Women's Rights" by Kate Hannigan to share a compelling story on gender equality with students.

As part of a coordinated effort to replenish the stock at multiple Metro East food banks, Crowe partnered with local officials to promote a multi-community food drive. Held at the end of May, when

concerns with unemployment for single-parents was high, organizers collected over 10,000 pounds of food and other items, prioritizing baby formula, diapers and meals for children. Recognizing the shortage of certain necessities during the pandemic, she donated personal care packages to the police stations throughout her district, which included hand sanitizer, tissues and other personal hygiene items for officers to use when on the job.

Although the pandemic shook up our state's operations, Crowe remained steadfast in her mission to provide opportunities and resources for students and residents needing help.

When the General Assembly convened for a brief session in May, Crowe continued her support for local businesses and the men and women of organized labor. She was also proud to vote to give employees of racinos more protections if they choose to join a union, and she urged the governor to allow local businesses to open under the same guidelines as big box retailers.

As she moves into next year, Sen. Crowe will continue to fight for the needs of the Metro East and women's rights.







# Tom Cullerton

## Veterans Affairs chair | 23<sup>rd</sup> Senate District

State Senator Tom Cullerton spent the year providing excellent service to the residents of DuPage County. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cullerton spent his time in district delivering meals to students, providing sanitizer and disinfectant to fire departments and police departments across communities, and advocating for residents who have lost their jobs during the crisis as they navigated the state's unemployment service.

Cullerton worked with a local manufacturer in the district he represents to help facilitate the distribution of up to 5,000 gallons per day of disinfectant and sanitizer, which will allow the state to clean vehicles, work surfaces, and facilities to keep government personnel and citizens safer during the coronavirus crisis.

He is incredibly proud to see a business within his community join the fight to battle this awful pandemic. Cullerton believes that first responders are working day and night to keep communities safe. Making this disinfectant readily available will help them stop the spread of COVID-19.

Cullerton has continued his strong tradition of public service and transparency in Springfield by promoting resources and services to increase efficiency and effectiveness in state government.

To battle increasing suicide rates, he advanced a measure to ensure suicide prevention information

is readily available to college students.

The measure would require state public universities and community colleges to publish numbers for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line on the back of each student identification card.

Cullerton believes that improving access to mental health resources is a simple step state universities and community colleges can take to save lives. Students are constantly required to use their student ID cards to access sporting events, enter dorm rooms or use their meal plans. Ensuring these lifesaving helplines are easily accessible can be the difference between life and death.

This year, Cullerton, a former U.S. infantryman, was charged to lead the Senate's Veterans Affairs Committee, to serve and protect

veterans across the state. He introduced legislation to waive all application fees and examination fees for active military personnel and their spouses to help make their transition to Illinois as seamless as possible. Cullerton pledges to continue to advocate and fight for services and resources for military personnel and veterans to help illustrate the state's commitment to our heroes.





# Laura Ellman

## *21<sup>st</sup> Senate District*

After a successful first year in office, State Senator Laura Ellman planned to continue her work on important legislation to protect our environment and expand access to education in 2020.

Ellman was excited to see the governor propose a new community college apprentice program during his budget address, following a year in which she worked to increase access to community colleges.

One of Ellman's first pieces of legislation for the 2020 spring session was Senate Bill 2961, repealing the Railroad Intoxicating Liquor Act of 1911, which prohibits drinking alcohol on trains, around train stations and gives conductors the ability to arrest violators and charge them with a Class C misdemeanor. This law hasn't been enforced since the 1920s, during Prohibition. A few weeks into the

spring session, this bill and others stalled as everyone joined the fight against COVID-19.

After the governor's Stay at Home Order was put in place, Ellman began to stress the importance of mental health and other issues, such as drug addiction, that can be exacerbated by home confinement or isolation. Ellman also drew residents' attention to another epidemic that Illinois has already been fighting: opioid abuse. Opioid overdoses in DuPage County saw a substantial spike during the Stay at Home Order. She encouraged anyone battling addiction to seek help, and she reminded friends and family members of people with substance abuse issues that support is available for them, too.

Additionally, Ellman and her staff worked on individual residents' unemployment cases, helping them

track when payments would come in and sorting out miscellaneous issues.

As spring began to draw to a close, Ellman joined her fellow lawmakers at the Capitol in Springfield to pass the state's Fiscal Year 2021 budget. With Ellman's support, the state committed to maintaining and making full pension payments, as well as holding the line for K-12 and higher education funding.

Ellman was disappointed that the General Assembly was unable to do more to protect the environment during the compressed session, and she plans to continue advocating for several of the environmental protection measures she introduced this year, such as plans to protect water quality and to limit the use of toxic firefighting foam.

Although Ellman remains proud of the work she and colleagues have accomplished in a limited amount of time, she understands that there is a lot of work that still needs to be done for the residents of Illinois. She and her staff continue their hard work to ensure residents in the 21st District have access to the information and resources they need to help guide them through these uncertain times.







# Sara Feigenholtz

## *6<sup>th</sup> Senate District*

State Senator Sara Feigenholtz's first session in the Illinois Senate had some unusual twists and turns thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, but she continued the work she began in the House of Representatives of serving people and small businesses in her community.

To help local bars and restaurants that had been forced to shut down or limit operations during the governor's Stay at Home Order, Feigenholtz passed a measure that enabled them to serve cocktails or mixed drinks for delivery and curbside pickup. The legislation also provides them with relief from some fees associated with liquor licenses. Illinois joins 34 other states in enacting this policy.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis in Illinois, Feigenholtz also successfully passed legislation through the Senate that would clarify and streamline the adoption process.

Though the measure passed the Senate without opposition, it has yet to be taken up in the House due to the pandemic.

Concerned with an uptick in reported hate crimes in the city of Chicago, Feigenholtz also introduced a measure that would help the state study the way subject matter related to diversity and inclusion is taught in schools. Research shows education is key to promoting understanding and inclusion, and Feigenholtz hopes

that by ensuring schools properly teach students about diversity, hate crime rates will begin to drop.

Due to COVID-19, that measure has not yet been heard in committee, but she vows to continue working for its passage.

Feigenholtz has also remained active in her district, providing critical support for constituents impacted by COVID-19.

She hand-delivered hundreds of masks to residents and businesses throughout the district, ensuring they have the protective equipment they need to keep themselves and others safe. She also organized an online fundraiser for the Lakeview Pantry to help the facility keep up with increasing demand caused by people being displaced by COVID-19.

To stay engaged with area residents, Feigenholtz hosted

several events via Zoom. Through these events, she was able to keep them informed about important topics like mental health resources and the importance of participating in the 2020 census.

Though her first session as a state senator came at a difficult time, Feigenholtz is proud of the work she did for the people of the 6th District, and she plans to continue her efforts to support and promote Illinois' diversity, as well as to improve access to mental health, next year.





# Ann Gillespie

## *27<sup>th</sup> Senate District*

State Senator Ann Gillespie continued her mission to find practical solutions to the problems facing working families in 2020. She led efforts to get personal protective equipment to first-responders, make health care more affordable and to protect working people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, first-responders and medical staff faced a massive shortage of personal protective equipment. While the state was working to secure supply chains, Senator Gillespie found a sensible solution by acquiring more 3D printers for local career and technical education programs. Using these printers, Harper College and School District 214 were able to produce face shields for front-line workers at local hospitals.

The pandemic also once

again demonstrated that health care coverage remains far too unaffordable for working families. In this year's health care package, Senator Gillespie was successful in negotiating a study to see how Illinois can make health care more affordable. Her study will examine the best practices used in other states, including the public option, and use Illinois-specific actuarial data to determine our path forward. Once results are submitted to the General Assembly, Senator Gillespie is eager to begin implementing the study's recommendations.

Working people have become increasingly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic, so Senator Gillespie sponsored measures to keep them safe while on the job. After many hours of tough negotiations between business and labor, her proposal to incentivize

employers to adhere to health guidelines was included in this year's labor package. The legislation creates a "rebuttable presumption" for cases of COVID-19 contracted on the job. In other words, employers will need to prove that their employee didn't contract it on the job, providing them with the motivation to implement IDPH guidelines.

In her second session, Senator Gillespie proved that she will take on the tough fights to deliver results for working people in the 27th District. She also celebrated the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote by authorizing and announcing a commemorative coin, distributed by the state treasurer's office.

In the coming year, she also plans to resume her efforts to end the use of seclusion and restraint as a punishment in schools, believing students of all ages should be treated with dignity while still ensuring their safety.







# Suzy Glowiak Hilton

## Commerce and Economic Development chair | 24<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Whether helping small businesses recover, opening lines of dialogue between the governor and municipalities, or helping first-responders stay healthy, State Senator Suzy Glowiak Hilton showed up for her community to help them navigate the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Livelihoods were devastated when small businesses were forced to close during the Stay at Home Order. Senator Glowiak Hilton worked with her local business community to ensure they were connected to recovery resources. On the Senate's Economic Revitalization and Regulatory Relief working groups and as chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, she brought their concerns to the attention of her colleagues, so they could be addressed at the Capitol. To further the recovery process, she joined other lawmakers in writing the governor about the regulations that were crushing small businesses. In their letter, Senator Glowiak Hilton detailed how smaller outlets could implement similar health guidelines to the big box stores that were allowed to remain open.

As local governments became frustrated with the regulations in the Stay at Home Order, Senator Glowiak Hilton eased tensions and helped them communicate with the governor. Rather than openly defying the order, municipalities in the 24th District had productive

and civil lines of dialogue with the governor's office facilitated by Senator Glowiak Hilton. In the end, the governor amended the rules for Phase 3, allowing small business owners to safely reopen.

With first-responders facing unique challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, Senator Glowiak Hilton fought for their health by securing a donation of equipment sanitizer from a local business. She coordinated with PathoSans Technologies, a cleaning products supplier in Glendale Heights, and Stevenson Crane Services of Bolingbrook to source and deliver over 400 gallons of equipment sanitizer to police and fire departments across the 24th District.

She plans to resume her efforts to curb food waste by allowing state agencies with food service

contracts to donate their leftovers to the hungry and to try to create a three-digit suicide prevention hotline, much like 911.

Senator Glowiak Hilton is dedicated to getting results for the district she represents. As lawmakers begin planning for next session, she is ready to hit the ground running to provide relief to small businesses and working families.





# Emil Jones III

## Licensed Activities chair | 14<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Senator Emil Jones III has always made it his priority to fight for solutions to the issues facing African Americans, both in his Senate district and throughout the state of Illinois. The COVID-19 pandemic has not slowed down his efforts, and he continues to push to ensure African Americans are represented in every industry.

Before the start of the pandemic, Jones advocated with other lawmakers representing districts with large numbers of minorities to urge state leaders to take into account minority business goals when discussing sports betting and gaming legislation.

He passed Senate Bill 534, which increases access to apprenticeship programs in the construction industry for African Americans. He authored the law because he wanted to ensure African Americans

have equal access to apprenticeship programs and a path toward earning a more suitable living wage. He also wants to provide a better foundation for minorities to obtain exceptional careers in the construction industry.

Recognizing that minority communities are often undercounted, Jones advocated tirelessly to get African Americans and other minorities in his district to fill out their census forms.

Jones continued his commitment to make sure Illinois residents have access to all types of health care and was very pleased that dental providers were able to resume routine oral and dental care during the COVID-19 pandemic. He is a strong advocate for his constituents' health, and oral hygiene is at the top of the list. He also started a fundraiser on his social media for

people who have suffered from stress and mental illness due to COVID-19.

Jones also advocated for an underfunded safety net hospital in his district. At the beginning of the pandemic, Roseland was the only health care facility providing walk-up and drive-in testing for COVID-19 on the South Side of Chicago. Many other facilities were receiving funding, and Roseland Hospital was left behind until Jones made the governor's office aware of the issue.

To provide additional assistance to low-income workers during this health crisis, Jones supported an initiative that allowed nearly 450,000 Illinois SNAP recipients to receive additional benefits. Many people were laid off from their jobs, so he wanted them all to be aware of the additional funds they will receive to feed their families during the pandemic.

When the General Assembly resumes its normal meetings, Jones also intends to continue his work making sure that red light cameras are not misused. For years, he has taken steps to try to require a study on the often-criticized technology's use and misuse.

Jones will also continue his advocacy for better minority representation in industries across the state and for better services in Black and Brown communities, believing that generations of systemic racism can and must be overcome.







# Patrick J. Joyce

## *40<sup>th</sup> Senate District*

State Senator Patrick Joyce tackled many issues in 2020. From advocating to ensure everyone in the community has access to drinking water to proposing legislation that would give much-needed tax breaks to communities that pay up to three times the national average, Joyce worked to ensure he was listening and helping his community.

During his short time in office, Joyce has met and spoken to every mayor in the district he represents about issues that can't be ignored.

One of the top items on Joyce's agenda is to facilitate the construction of a natural gas pipeline that extends to Pembroke, Illinois. For decades, residents of Pembroke Township have been using stoves and electric space heaters in order to warm up their homes during the brutal winters of Northern Illinois. Joyce believes it's shameful that residents of the township haven't had access to this basic utility that most communities have enjoyed since the 1920s.

To confront this problem, Joyce introduced Senate Bill 3985, which would create an investment pilot program. The program would make it easier for Pembroke Township to receive grants for infrastructure, such as the gas pipeline.

Another issue Joyce learned about during his time visiting towns in the 40th District was the closure of a young girl's lemonade stand by Kankakee Health Department

officials. To prevent other kids from losing their lemonade stands, Senator Joyce introduced Hayli's Law, named after the girl whose lemonade stand had been shut down. It would allow children to operate lemonade stands without business licenses or fear of liability lawsuits.

As the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic led to challenges across Illinois, Joyce connected with local leaders to find solutions for their communities. For example, motivated by the high demand for disinfectants, a local cosmetics business took the initiative to make hand sanitizer. However, Essations Inc. found itself with a dwindling supply of alcohol – the most important ingredient in hand sanitizer. When they contacted Joyce, he helped them find an Illinois-based source of

alcohol to allow them to continue manufacturing hand sanitizer. Joyce was able to connect with key resource figures from across Illinois in order to give his community this much-needed resource.

Joyce also successfully fought for and won \$7 million for local flood prevention and other improvements to the Kankakee River.

Next year, Joyce plans to continue working to bring a gas utility to Pembroke, protect the environment for hunters and other nature enthusiasts, and help the people of the 40th District.





# Steven Landek

## State Government chair | 12<sup>th</sup> Senate District

State Senator Steven M. Landek's top priority this session was again to focus on solutions to the funding crisis many cities, towns and villages face all over Illinois. Then, the novel coronavirus intervened.

While recent legislation to consolidate more than 650 downstate pension funds is a step in the right direction, it still leaves municipalities staring at unsustainable funding ramps for their police and fire pension systems in the years and decades ahead.

Under current state law, fire and police pension systems across the state are still required to reach at least a 90% funding ratio by 2040. Landek points out that this is an unrealistic target for many municipalities.

He believes the current crisis has

highlighted that it's essential to give towns and cities every opportunity to respond to the needs of their residents while keeping pension promises to brave police and firefighters.

As the recent economic shock that the pandemic and government mandated shutdowns have shown, big cities and small towns alike already operate on tight margins. If they aren't given more options to meet their pension obligations, cuts to government services and property tax increases are the only options they have left.

Landek wants to provide opportunities for municipalities across Illinois to adequately fund their police and fire pensions in more manageable and sustainable ways than are currently allowed.

In the handful of meetings during Landek's eighth year as Chairman

of the Senate's State Government Committee before coronavirus intervened, he remained committed to collaborating with members from both sides of the aisle to form consensus on legislation whenever possible.

He also continued to keep an eye out for legislation that would place additional costly unfunded mandates on local governments. As the mayor of Bridgeview, he sees the unintended consequences of these otherwise well-intended ideas. He brings his perspective as a mayor to how a law or mandate will actually need to be enforced and the costs of doing so.

Before COVID-19 struck Illinois, Landek met with local leaders and area residents from the 12th District who visited Springfield. Leaders from Arab American Family Services, Clean Energy Jobs advocates from Brookfield and residents from Cicero all visited to advocate for a variety of causes.

Next year, Landek will continue to serve as the voice of small governments across Illinois. When small governments work for the people, state government is working for the people.







# Terry Link

## Pensions chair | 30<sup>th</sup> Senate District

During this spring legislative session, State Senator Terry Link continued to support legislation to enhance local economies and protect the public health.

A longtime advocate for the expansion of gaming in Illinois, Link supported a measure that would make various changes to Illinois' gaming laws, fostering the expansion of casinos throughout the state.

Included in the legislation was a provision to ease requirements on payments that new casinos must make to the state, allowing them to instead invest in creating high-quality facilities and enhancing local economies. The change will help make the communities like Waukegan, in the district Link represents, become destinations for tourism.

Link has also long been a supporter of legislation to help protect voting rights. This spring, he voted for legislation that would ensure voters can participate safely in the November 2020 election. In response to public safety concerns brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the measure expands Illinois' vote-by-mail program by automatically sending a vote-by-mail application to anyone who has voted within the last two years.

The measure also expands early voting hours at polling locations and allows election authorities to establish a curbside voting program. To help provide safe

polling sites, it makes Election Day a state holiday, allowing schools to be used for voting while leaving adequate time for cleaning before students return.

A longtime advocate of legislation to reduce tobacco use and improve lung health, Link passed a measure through the Senate during the fall veto session that would ban the use of e-cigarettes and other alternative nicotine products in public places.

The measure passed the Senate with bipartisan support, though was subject to further debate in the House of Representatives.

During the fall veto session, Link also voted for legislation that would consolidate the state's nearly 650 downstate police and fire pension funds. The measure was signed into law by the governor and is expected to save taxpayers

an estimated \$160 million every year without affecting individual pension amounts.

In addition to his legislative work, Link has worked to ensure residents of the 30th district stay informed during the COVID-19 pandemic. To limit the spread of rumors and misinformation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and the state's response during this uncertain time, he has communicated with area residents frequently to ensure they have the most accurate and up-to-date information about critical resources, like testing availability and eligibility.





# Andy Manar

## Appropriations II chair | 48<sup>th</sup> Senate District

State Senator Andy Manar's 2020 legislative session began with Senate Bill 667, which caps the out-of-pocket cost of insulin at \$100 per month during the 2019 veto session, being signed into law by Governor JB Pritzker in January.

Building on the success of SB 667, Manar organized a statewide grassroots advocacy campaign aimed at amplifying the stories of residents and families who are suffering as a result of price-gouging and profiteering by the pharmaceutical industry. He believes the health and humanity of the people of Illinois isn't a tool to be leveraged for exorbitant profit. Despite the campaign getting cut short by the novel coronavirus outbreak, Manar gained widespread support in communities across the state for future legislation to lower drug

prices and put checks on the pricing power of the pharmacy benefit manager industry.

As the COVID-19 pandemic quickly began to devastate communities throughout the state, Manar shifted his focus to ensuring that rural and downstate independent pharmacies, community health centers, and local health departments had the resources necessary to continue providing high-quality care and services amid growing economic uncertainty and increasingly volatile supply chains.

Recognizing the unique threat to rural pharmacies posed by the virus, Manar took action early on by penning a letter to Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Director Theresa Eagleson, urging her office to expedite payments under the

Critical Access Pharmacy Program as a way to help rural pharmacies brace for the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic into their communities.

To help local health departments sustain their COVID-19 response efforts in addition to their basic functions, Manar successfully led a united effort by Downstate Senate Democrats to boost funding for all 97 of the state's certified local health departments. As a result, state funding for local health protection grants increased from \$23.1 million to \$29.1 million in the new fiscal year.

Despite the drastically abbreviated 2020 legislative session, Manar championed legislation that passed out of the General Assembly in late May that would make Medicaid recipients eligible for clinical trials to treat cancer and other serious diseases. He believes the type of insurance you have shouldn't disqualify you from accessing treatment that could save your life.

As a lead budgeteer for the Illinois Senate Majority Caucus, Manar helped shape the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, which was largely focused on protecting the health and safety of all Illinoisans in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating the recovery of families and small businesses devastated by its economic fallout.







# Robert F. Martwick

## *10<sup>th</sup> Senate District*

When State Senator Robert Martwick returned to the Capitol this year, he had three major goals in mind: securing an elected school board for Chicago Public Schools, continuing his efforts to improve the health of the state's pension systems, and increasing retirement security for all Illinois residents.

For four years, Martwick has worked to create an elected school board for Chicago Public Schools, and one of his first acts as senator was to secure a commitment that legislation to do so would receive a fair hearing. Martwick previously sponsored similar legislation in the Illinois House. Like many worthy ideas, that effort was temporarily delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but he plans to resume his efforts as soon as possible.

Martwick also continues working to strengthen the state's pension systems, one of his primary efforts since he was first elected to the General Assembly. He believes that providing financial balance – both through pension and tax reform – will create fiscal stability and allow for full funding for education, adequate funding for critical services, and ultimately lower and more stable taxes for almost everyone. He was instrumental in passing the Downstate Police and Fire Pension consolidation law last year, and he will continue to work for more pension reform.

Because of his concerns about a lack of retirement savings among

many Americans, Martwick worked closely with Treasurer Frerichs on Illinois' Secure Choice Savings program, and he has also passed laws to require automatic enrollment in deferred compensation savings programs. However, he knows that more must be done and will continue to look for new and innovative solutions to ensure working Illinoisans can retire comfortably and live out their golden years in dignity.

Martwick also understood the challenges facing many Illinoisans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Though in excellent health, he has three underlying conditions that put him at high risk for severe outcomes if he contracts COVID-19. When forced to choose between staying safe and doing what is best for the people he represents, Martwick traveled to Springfield to

be available to vote on legislation. His experience reinforced for him how both the General Assembly and employers need to take advantage of technology to allow remote work for people with health concerns. He also hosted a Facebook Live to help answer residents' questions about COVID-19.

Martwick remains committed to keeping an open mind and open heart in working toward and supporting measures that will lead to a more just society for everyone. He plans to continue advocating for an elected Chicago school board, pension reform, and to provide K-12 students more access to mental health resources.





# Pat McGuire

## Higher Education chair | 43<sup>rd</sup> Senate District

State Senator Pat McGuire spent much of the last session of his final term in office working remotely with an intensive working group dedicated to finding practical worker protections in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for many essential workers to return to work while the infection continues.

Working closely with other members of the Senate Democratic Caucus, other members of the General Assembly, and leaders in labor and business, Senator McGuire helped to craft major parts of House Bill 2455. Passed by the General Assembly during the shortened special session at the Capitol in May, HB 2455 will ensure first responders and essential workers have recourse if they contract COVID-19 at work and their employers failed to implement

proper health and safety guidelines. It also encourages employers to take these requirements seriously.

The legislation was aimed at providing employers clear and consistent guidelines for protecting their workers from infection and providing employees clear means of speaking out when they believe those health and safety guidelines are not being followed.

HB 2455 also extends unemployment benefits and waives the waiting times associated with receiving benefits, something McGuire argued in favor of, in light of the need to ensure the unemployment system meets the needs of the moment and the fact the effect the pandemic has had on all sectors of the economy will be felt for years to come.

The achievement caps off a career during which McGuire, long

time chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, helped navigate the state through some of the most challenging times for collegiate institutions. That culminated in his leadership of the Higher Education Working Group, a bipartisan, bicameral group that tackled major needs among students and institutions of higher learning. Out of that cooperative effort, McGuire was able to launch the AIM HIGH scholarship, secure easier access to MAP Grant funding for returning students, and ensure the state took concrete steps to invest in higher education following the two-year budget impasse that began in 2016.

Throughout his career, McGuire has also fought for greater accessibility to child care and early intervention programs for families involved with the Department of Children and Family Services, campaigned on behalf of workplace safety, and fought for human services funding when residents of Will County needed it most.







# Julie Morrison

## Human Services chair | 29<sup>th</sup> Senate District

As worries loomed that people wouldn't feel safe waiting in congested areas to cast their ballot during the COVID-19 pandemic, State Senator Julie Morrison worked tirelessly with her colleagues, community members, and stakeholders to pass a comprehensive expansion of the state's current vote-by-mail program.

Every person who voted in the past two years will receive an application in their mailbox for an at-home ballot, giving people more access to vote safely in the 2020 election.

Morrison said COVID-19 has made congregating in small and enclosed spaces more dangerous. Long lines to get to the ballot box would require people to choose between their health and their right to vote, Morrison often echoed while pushing for the passage of the measure.

The same measure also made General Election Day, November 3, a state holiday.

Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when tension was higher and depression was more prevalent, Morrison used her platform to remind people of the Firearms Restraining Order Act – also known as the “Red Flag” law. The measure allows family members and law enforcement officials who have concerns that someone is a threat to themselves or others to ask a judge to

temporarily remove their guns.

To further help families during the pandemic, Morrison – who used to run a local food pantry – encouraged people willing and able to contribute food to local charities in the northern suburbs. Morrison continuously advocated for people to help their neighbors who didn't know how they would put food on their table.

Although stalled by the need to prioritize measures to combat the public health crisis, Morrison worked to offset the burdensome cost of epinephrine injectors by requiring insurers to cover them when they are medically necessary.

Senate Bill 2457 requires insurers to cover medically necessary EpiPens for all people – regardless of age.

In 2019, Morrison passed legislation to require insurers

to cover medically necessary epinephrine injectors – also known by the brand name of EpiPens – for minors. However, she wants to take the law one step further by removing the age limitation. If appropriate, Morrison hopes to bring forth the measure again during the fall veto session.

She also intends to continue her work to reform the state's ethics laws. Following several high-profile scandals last year, Morrison renewed her calls for stronger rules to govern conflicts of interest. She believes this – and other reforms – are still vitally necessary.





# Robert Peters

## *13<sup>th</sup> Senate District*

State Senator Robert Peters came into 2020 with a vision to radically update the way we look at safety and justice in our communities. Because of his passion, he was named Chair of the Special Committee on Public Safety.

Before joining the General Assembly, Peters had dedicated his career to the fight to reimagine public safety and justice, and last year he passed several laws with this goal in mind, including one to abolish private detention centers. Peters intends to use his role on the committee to pass legislation that will make Illinois more fair, equitable, just and safe.

Peters' public safety priorities include pushing for more equitable juries, reshaping felony murder charges, and abolishing the practice of cash bail. He also introduced a measure to require civics to be

taught in juvenile justice facilities, ensuring that when justice-involved young people rejoin society, they know their rights and duties.

Peters' life, like so many others, was uprooted in March when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Illinois. Peters immediately began devoting time to helping his community in whatever way he could. One of the most effective methods he found was to simply provide information. He hosted, co-hosted and moderated several virtual discussions throughout the spring with various other elected officials, public health experts, doctors and community activists, to provide as much relevant information as he could.

With background as a public organizer, Peters knows firsthand the importance of having a strong community, and as such,

he stands firmly behind the recent Black Lives Matter protests and the push for criminal justice reforms. After George Floyd's death at the hands of the police in Minnesota, protests erupted across the country, sometimes accompanied by regrettable acts of vandalism and destruction. Peters joined fellow Black legislators to simultaneously amplify the message of the protestors and help repair damage to Black communities during a series of days of action.

Peters stresses the importance of not forgetting where the unrest comes from and where we need to go from here. He believes that the story of this crisis isn't one of looting, but the why, the what, and the how - why are people so mad, what do people need, and how are we going to help?

Peters vows to continue his fight to reimagine safety and justice in our communities.

On Juneteenth, the anniversary of the day the last Black slaves were freed, Peters provided further help to communities still fighting the pandemic and pushing for an end to systemic racism, handing out masks and gloves, as well as reminding people of the importance of filling out the census.

In the coming year, Peters remains committed to public safety reform, improving Black and Brown lives by dismantling racist systems and generally increasing the quality of life for Illinois residents.







# Elgie R. Sims Jr.

## *17<sup>th</sup> Senate District*

State Senator Elgie R. Sims Jr. represents the 17th District, which spans Cook, Will and Kankakee Counties. He began the spring legislative session with much different priorities than he ended it with due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The focus shifted quickly to ensuring that the people he represents have the resources necessary to get through the crisis. Senator Sims and Senator Tom Cullerton worked with an Illinois company to provide sanitizer to communities in need. PathoSans donated 5,000 gallons of sanitizer to first responders and community groups.

Before Illinois could even get through the pandemic, racial acts of violence against George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery prompted people around the country to take to the streets with desperate calls to end systemic racism and stop police brutality. Unfortunately, some took advantage of the moment by looting businesses and properties.

Sims responded by going out into his community, talking to local leaders, and helping to clean up the damage that was done. He joined the Joint Caucus of Black Elected Officials in a series of Days of Action. He led the South Suburban event in Calumet City, where he fervently demanded change. He also coordinated a mask giveaway and conducted census outreach as

part of the event.

Criminal justice reform remains a top priority for Sims. He is currently the chairman of the Criminal Law Committee, and he joined Senators Robert Peters and Patricia Van Pelt for a discussion on the Illinois Senate Democratic Caucus' podcast regarding police reform. They shared their personal experiences, how they have been affected by the racist acts of violence, and possible solutions.

He has been greatly concerned about how the two crises have affected the mental health of the people Sims represents, so he co-hosted a virtual town hall series with the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Together, they had three mental health virtual events for youth, parents, and seniors. Each time, people shared their personal experiences, and NAMI

provided advice and resources and answered constituent questions.

Sims went to Springfield for the condensed special session with the weight of the pandemic heavy on his shoulders. As a budgeteer, Sims also had the difficult task of helping to craft the state's next fiscal plan. The budget maintains core services while providing desperately needed funds to the communities hardest hit by the novel coronavirus. He also supported legislation to expand voting by mail to ensure Illinoisans can safely vote during these unprecedented times.

As Illinois navigates Phase 4 of the state's reopening plan, Sims is working to ensure businesses, schools, and community groups have the necessary resources to safely reopen and recover.





# Steve Stadelman

## Telecommunications and InfoTechnology chair | 34<sup>th</sup> Senate District

After tireless advocacy on an issue that affects so many Illinoisans, State Senator Steve Stadelman began the 2020 legislative session with the governor signing legislation capping the cost of insulin co-payments, which will lower the cost of the life-saving drug for thousands. The father of a child with diabetes, Stadelman was an outspoken proponent of Senate Bill 667.

One of Stadelman's first legislative accomplishments of the 2020 legislative session was the Senate passage of Senate Bill 3028 in February, allowing the State Treasurer to invest up to 5% of the state's investment portfolio into Illinois infrastructure development companies. This change in the law would allow up to \$700 million in financing. The legislation encourages more businesses to locate, expand, and remain in Illinois by investing in

quality construction development firms with a significant presence within state borders.

He also introduced a measure to protect survivors of sexual assault. Right now, survivors must renew no-contact orders every two years, an often traumatic experience requiring them to confront the perpetrators in court. Under Senate Bill 3617, survivors would be able to seek indefinite orders of protection against individuals who are criminally convicted of sexual crimes against them.

Unfortunately, shortly after the Senate wrapped up session in the month of February, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the majority of the 2020 spring session to be cancelled. With the state and nation in economic turmoil, Stadelman urged the implementation of the "work-share" law he passed several

years ago. Similar laws are in place in 29 other states. Under the law, Illinois would offer partial benefits when a business cuts hours for at least 10% of its staff and shares the remaining work among affected employees.

In late April of this year, State Senator Steve Stadelman participated in a telephone town hall with a medical doctor and a representative from the Illinois Department of Public Health. During the hour-long town hall, the senator took calls from Rockford-area residents on their concerns about local issues and the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 27,000 calls were made and nearly 11,000 voicemails were left across the 34th District. Over 17,000 residents listened in over the hour, and 80 individuals directly participated in the event.

Over two months after the governor's initial Stay at Home Order was put in place, Stadelman returned to Springfield to pass the state's FY 2021 budget. He highlighted the additional funding the state received under the federal CARES act, which will be distributed to local governments, spent on a new Business Interruption Grant program, rent and mortgage assistance, and more.

Like all of us, Senator Stadelman is looking forward to returning to "normal" life, but he understands that there is a lot of work that needs to be done to repair the damage caused by COVID-19.







# Heather Steans

## Appropriations I chair | 7<sup>th</sup> Senate District

During one of the most unprecedented and challenging legislative sessions in the last century, State Senator Heather Steans worked for weeks under COVID-19 pandemic conditions to negotiate a state budget. Despite difficulties that could not have been imagined even a few months beforehand, Steans was able to work with other negotiators to craft a budget aimed at maintaining funding levels in the most important areas at a time when these services have never been more crucial.

While making \$1 billion in cuts in comparison to the governor's proposed Fiscal Year 2021 budget, Steans negotiated increased funding to the Department of Children and Family Services and programs that help seniors and people with developmental disabilities live independently in their homes – especially crucial as the state responds to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Funding for schools and public safety was also preserved under the plan, while programs that are truly crucial in responding to COVID-19 saw increases, including senior meal programs, home care and respite services, DCFS, and other programs that help people with developmental disabilities and their families. Importantly, the budget also continued the state's practice of fully funding pensions for the eighth year in a row.

Senator Steans also worked

to pass a revamped hospital assessment plan that provides an additional \$450 million annually to Illinois hospitals. Under Senate Bill 2541, rates for hospitals serving low-income individuals throughout the state and physician rates are increased, and the legislation also enables hospitals in under-resourced communities to improve health care access and address social determinants of health. The plan included \$250 million in increases through the hospital assessment program, \$50 million in physician rate increases, and \$150 million for a hospital transformation fund to help hospitals facing difficulties change what type of institution they are in the interest of more cost-effectively providing care to their community.

Throughout the ongoing pandemic, Senator Steans kept the

people she represents foremost in mind. Partnering with other local lawmakers, she hosted several virtual town hall events to field questions about the state's medical response, address concerns about the expansion of unemployment benefits, and other concerns. She's also communicated directly with people regularly about ongoing efforts at the state and federal level to address the economic woes that have come alongside COVID-19. She plans on keeping open these lines of communication and serving as an advocate as COVID-19 responses continue at the state level in every area of concern: social, medical, and economic.





# Patricia Van Pelt

## Public Health chair | 5<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Upon her return to Springfield, State Senator Patricia Van Pelt continued working on criminal justice reform. Since learning that the state crime lab had a DNA backlog of more than 750 murder cases in 2018, Van Pelt has remained dedicated to holding the Illinois State Police accountable to finding a solution.

She continued to push them regarding the DNA backlog, holding hearings in Springfield. ISP has made progress in reducing the backlog by using new technology to reduce the delay in processing evidence and by hiring additional forensic scientists. As a result, the number of delayed cases are down by 16%.

After a report last April from the Inspector General showed the Chicago Police Department's gang database was unethical and unreliable, Van Pelt sponsored

legislation to reform it by limiting who can access the databases, making database information inadmissible in court, and prohibiting gang database information from being used for employment, education, licensing and housing purposes.

CPD has promised a new database will only use timely and vetted information, with more meticulous entry methods and an appeal process that would allow registrants to petition to have their names removed. CPD also pledged the information won't be shared with immigration authorities and that names would only stay in the system for up to five years.

Last April, Van Pelt also learned that police falsely identified a man named Elisha Brittman, who was found unresponsive under a car in Chicago and beaten so badly

that his face was unrecognizable. The police failed to identify him through fingerprints or DNA, instead misidentifying him as Alfonso Bennett. Bennett's family decided to take Brittman off life support, which resulted in both of the families filing a lawsuit.

Van Pelt led the initiative known as the "Elisha Brittman Law" to make sure no other family ever faces a similar situation. Because it was derailed by the pandemic, Van Pelt plans to continue pushing this measure in the upcoming session.

The measure would provide hospitals with a procedure in cases when they come across unidentifiable patients. Such efforts may include filing a missing person report for the unidentified patient, fingerprinting, or even sending identifying materials to local media. If the hospital receives a claim from a possible family member, a voluntary DNA test would be conducted.

Van Pelt also stepped up to help residents of the district she represents during the COVID-19 pandemic, holding a hearing for local residents, advocating for more testing kits, and fighting on behalf of those most vulnerable to the virus through raising funds and distributing tens of thousands of pairs of personal protective equipment to seniors. Van Pelt plans to continue her work to end systemic racism and to enact police reform next year.







# Celina Villanueva

## Public Health chair | 11<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Celina Villanueva continued her fight alongside community members to bring about change in Springfield this year as a state senator. After serving in the Illinois House of Representatives, Senator Villanueva was appointed to the upper chamber of the General Assembly in 2020. Despite the challenges lawmakers faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, Senator Villanueva continued to work tirelessly to modernize our democracy, develop young leaders, and uplift marginalized voices.

To combat voter suppression and protect our democracy, State Senator Celina Villanueva proudly supported this year's election omnibus package. Under the bill, voters who participated in an election during the past two years will be sent an application to vote by mail. This proactive solution, championed by Senator Villanueva, would keep voters safe and allow more people to participate in democratic processes than ever before. She supports efforts to make these changes a permanent part of how we vote in Illinois.

With young people rising to the forefront of a variety of movements, State Senator Celina Villanueva hosted a series of conversations with young leaders on how they can be better allies in the fight for justice. She worked to unite Black and Latinx communities after the murder of George Floyd sparked worldwide protests. By uniting

diverse coalitions of young people, Senator Villanueva is preparing the next generation of leaders to step forward.

After developers sent a dust cloud racing through Little Village, Senator Villanueva joined community leaders and other elected officials in the "Hell No, Hilco" movement. She worked closely with local organizations to bring attention to the environmental harm being done to the community with the highest number of positive COVID-19 cases. Because of the work of the people involved in the movement, the attorney general and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency have filed suit against the developers.

When Senator Villanueva arrived in the Senate, she brought the voices of her community with her. As an elected leader, she

promised to uplift the voices of marginalized people in the halls of power. In this year's state budget, Senator Villanueva fought to ensure immigrant communities were not left behind. Securing an additional \$32 million for immigrant services and Medicaid coverage regardless of status, Senator Villanueva sent a strong message that she and her coalition of community members are watching out for everyone.

State Senator Celina Villanueva brings a fresh perspective to the Illinois Senate and is eager to continue her advocacy for the most vulnerable among us.





# Ram Villivalam

## Transportation chair | 8<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Returning to Springfield for his second legislative session, State Senator Ram Villivalam hit the ground running and immediately began working on legislation that would provide small businesses with a tax credit worth \$5,000 per new employee making at least \$15 an hour and working 35 hours per week.

Not long after returning to Springfield, Villivalam was appointed the new chairperson of the Senate Transportation Committee and vowed to create and implement an open, transparent and accountable process for legislation that would maintain and improve transportation and infrastructure systems in a data-driven, equitable way.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Villivalam's plans to introduce legislation addressing paid family

medical leave and a constitutional amendment permanently banning right-to-work in Illinois had to be delayed. After Illinois began its Stay at Home Order, Villivalam shifted to a dedicated local response to the pandemic and began working with members of the communities he represents to support people in need during the crisis.

While Villivalam's second legislative session was cut short, his office has excelled in its pandemic community outreach efforts and has provided an array of services. These include making 6,139 wellness check calls to seniors to connect them to vital federal, state, and local services; handling 158 COVID-19 related constituent cases; completing 137 food pantry/grocery deliveries; creating a GoFundMe raising approximately \$15,000 in support of local food

pantries; and making more than 100,000 calls to area residents to offer assistance and answer questions.

During the pandemic, Villivalam has also participated in several online presentations and briefings with fellow local lawmakers and community leaders, including town halls on resources for small businesses, first responders, and schools; participated in a webinar in conjunction with the Asian American Legislative Caucus and the Asian American Caucus of Chicago to talk about assistance for Asian American businesses; and hosted an Asian American Caucus call with Department of Human Services Secretary Grace Hou and various non-profits serving the Asian American community.

Senator Villivalam returned to Springfield for a special session to vote on a COVID-19 budget and other emergency legislation. While he won't be able to hold regular events or meet with area residents this summer or until the pandemic has been dealt with, he will continue to offer exemplary services. He looks forward to getting Illinois' economy back on track and ensuring local communities can recover from the effects of COVID-19.







LEGISLATIVE  
ISSUES

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# SENATE IN REVIEW







## AGRICULTURE

### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Ensures no cuts to the Dept. of Agriculture under the state budget, preserves appropriations for Ag Education Fair Sections unable to hold their fairs due to COVID-19, provides aid for farmers to cope with COVID-related supply chain issues, and sets level funding for 4-H clubs and county fairs.
- Includes \$285,000 for an urban fishing program within the Chicago Park District.

## BUDGET

### **HB 64**

- Makes capital construction re-appropriations.
- Includes \$10.4 billion for pay-as-you-go projects.
- Includes \$20.8 billion for bonded construction projects.
- Leverages \$10 billion in federal dollars.
- Distributes \$3.6 billion to local governments.
- Includes \$333 million for K-12 building repair and construction and \$106 million for early childhood education facilities.

### **HB 357**

- The FY 21 Budget Implementation Act.
- Provides additional funding and expands eligibility for LIHEAP, the state's income-based energy assistance program.
- Creates Business Interruption (BIG) grants to help small businesses recover from the pandemic, with special set asides for downstate businesses, child care providers, and businesses in underserved communities.
- Provides nearly \$400 million in rent and mortgage assistance, with special set asides for downstate and underserved communities.
- Sends \$250 million to local governments that did not get direct or county-level assistance from the federal government for COVID-19 related expenses and provides full LGDF payments.
- Funds immigrant Welcoming Centers by an additional \$32 million to help them deal with COVID-19 related problems.
- Provides an additional \$30 million for mental health, substance abuse programs and other social services to address problems stemming from COVID-19.
- Creates the Legislative Oversight Budget Commission.
- Increases wages for ID/DD and MC/DD frontline workers to reflect minimum wage increases.
- Provides a \$0.26 per hour raise to ICF/DD and MC/DD workers.
- Allows Medicaid to cover undocumented older citizens with incomes at or below the federal poverty level.

### **SB 264**

- Provides level funding for education and higher education.
- Holds most state agencies flat, including making the full pension payment.
- Provides funding to help the state recover from COVID-19, including additional funding for the Department of Public Health, and increased funding to help older citizens and people with disabilities stay in their homes.
- Creates Business Interruption (BIG) grants to help small businesses recover from the pandemic, with special



set asides for downstate businesses, child care providers, and businesses in underserved communities.

- Provides nearly \$400 million in rent and mortgage assistance, with special set asides for downstate and underserved communities.
- Sends \$250 million to local governments that did not get direct or county-level assistance from the federal government for COVID-19 related expenses and provides full LGDF payments.
- Funds immigrant Welcoming Centers by an additional \$32 million to help them deal with COVID-19 related problems.
- Provides an additional \$30 million for mental health, substance abuse programs and other social services to address problems stemming from COVID-19.

#### **SB 2099**

- Authorizes the state to borrow from the Federal Reserve.

## **BUSINESS**

#### **HB 2455** (*see also Labor*)

- Provides that employers will not be charged for unemployment benefits paid to a person whose unemployment is the result of COVID-19.

#### **HB 2682**

- Allows bars and restaurants to sell cocktails for curbside pickup and delivery to help them survive closures and limited operations due to COVID-19.
- Includes several regulatory relief provisions like automatic renewal and extension of liquor licenses and waiver or deferral of some liquor license-related fees.

#### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Creates more than \$600 million in Business Interruption (BIG) grants to help small businesses recover from the pandemic, with special set asides for downstate businesses, child care providers, and businesses in underserved communities.

#### **SB 2052** (*see also Economic Development*)

- Extends several TIF districts throughout the state.

## **CIVIL RIGHTS**

#### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Provides \$32 million in funding for services to immigrant welcoming centers to help recent immigrants get the COVID-19-related help they need.
- Allows undocumented individuals over age 65 to qualify for Medicaid coverage.

#### **SB 1864** (*see also Health*)

- Allows individuals, including undocumented immigrants, who are not otherwise eligible for Medicaid to qualify for medical care and treatment related to COVID-19 for the duration of any federal or State declared emergency.





## CRIMINAL LAW

### **SB 471** (*see also Labor*)

- Increases penalties for battery of a retail worker who is enforcing public health guidelines during a public health emergency.

### **SB 557**

- Allows survivors of sexual assault to get medical forensic exams (rape kits) at federally qualified health centers in addition to hospitals during public health emergencies.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### **HB 2682** (*see also Business*)

- Allows bars and restaurants to sell cocktails for curbside pickup and delivery to help them survive closures and limited operations due to COVID-19.
- Includes several regulatory relief provisions like automatic renewal and extension of liquor licenses and waiver or deferral of some liquor license-related fees.

### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Creates more than \$600 million in Business Interruption (BIG) grants to help small businesses recover from the pandemic, with special set asides for downstate businesses, child care providers, and businesses in underserved communities.

### **SB 2052**

- Extends several TIF districts.

## EDUCATION

### **HB 64** (*see also Budget*)

- Provides \$333 million for school repair and construction.
- Provides \$106 million for early childhood education facilities.

### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Provides level funding for education and higher education, including the free and reduced lunch program.
- Provides \$350,000 for a ParentTeach parenting education pilot program.

### **SB 1569**

- Extends educator license renewals for one year.
- Allows mandatory tests to be taken remotely.
- Modifies income requirements for the state's AIM HIGH education grant program, saying a student's income when they enter the program will remain their income for the duration of their inclusion in the program.

### **SB 1937**

- Allows specified school districts to exceed their indebtedness limits if voters approve a bond authorization.



## ELECTIONS

### HB 2238

- Trailer bill to SB 1863; requires ballot collection boxes to be locked and opened only by election authorities.

### SB 264 (*see also Budget*)

- Provides an additional \$27.1 million in funding for improvements to technology, including cyber security and navigation systems.
- Provides an additional \$6 million to implement expanded vote-by-mail in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### SB 1863

- Expands the state vote by mail program by sending an application for a ballot to anyone who has voted or registered to vote in the past two years.
- Allows election authorities to establish curb-side voting for both early voting and voting on Election Day.
- Establishes General Election Day, November 3, 2020, as a state holiday.

## ENERGY

- Following prompting from legislators and the governor's office, the Illinois Commerce Commission announced significant protections for Illinois residents who are struggling to pay their utility bills, including lower fees and better repayment options.

### HB 357 (*see also Budget*)

- Provides additional funding and expands eligibility for LIHEAP, the state's income-based energy assistance program.
- The Illinois Power Agency's budget includes \$50 million to bolster clean energy opportunities in low-income communities.

## ETHICS

### SB 2135 (*see also State Government*)

- Creates the bipartisan, bicameral Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission to monitor the governor's actions regarding the Restore Illinois Plan.
- Authorizes government bodies subject to the Open Meetings Act to meet via audio or video conferencing, as long as the public still has the ability to see or hear the meeting and that two days' notice of each meeting is provided.
- Establishes an August 1, 2020 deadline for individuals subject to the Illinois Government and Ethics Act to file their 2020 statements of economic interest.

## FAMILY

### HB 2096 (*see also Local Government*)

- Prevents townships from counting stimulus checks, and any future federal government rebates created in



response to the COVID-19 emergency, as earned income when determining a family's eligibility for General Assistance benefits.

**SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Provides \$180 million in additional funding to the Department of Children and Family Services to ensure we are still protecting our state's most vulnerable children.
- Provides a \$28 million increase to the Community Care Program, which helps people who might otherwise need to go to an assisted living facility stay in their homes.
- Increases funding for the Home Services Program, which helps people with disabilities live independent lives in their own homes, by more than \$110 million.

**SB 1864** (*see also Health*)

- Allows one month's income for CHIP, All Kids, and Medicaid eligibility to be verified by a single pay stub, making it easier for parents to ensure their children are covered.
- Requires the Department of Healthcare and Family Services and the Department of Insurance to oversee a health care affordability study to explore options to make health care more affordable for low- and middle-income families.

## GAMING

**SB 516**

- Alters the tax structure for the Chicago casino to ensure it can operate viably and provide economic investment to the city and needed funding for Chicago's police and fire pension funds.
- Requires the gaming board to reopen the casino application period if it does not grant a license at one of the new locations. This will allow Danville to submit a new application.
- Changes the period in which casinos are required to pay their reconciliation fees from 2 years with interest to 6 years no interest.

## HEALTH

**HB 64**

- Provides \$60 million for community health construction grants to build community health clinics in health care deserts.

**SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Provides an additional \$600 million dollars to the Illinois Department of Public Health and fully funds other vital state agencies that help protect public health during this crisis.
- Provides an additional \$400 million for local health departments.
- Expands funding for Medicaid to help ensure everyone can get the health care they need during this crisis.
- Provides \$30 million for additional mental health and substance abuse programs for people impacted by COVID-19.

**SB 667**

- Caps the out-of-pocket cost of insulin at \$100 per month for diabetes patients, regardless of the supply they require.





#### **SB 1864**

- Requires Medicaid to cover routine care costs incurred for an approved clinical trial involving the prevention, detection, or treatment of cancer or any other life-threatening disease.
- Allows individuals, including undocumented immigrants, who are not otherwise eligible for Medicaid to qualify for medical assistance related to COVID-19 for the duration of any federal or State declared emergency.
- Creates the Kidney Disease Prevention and Education Task Force.
- Requires the Department of Healthcare and Family Services and the Department of Insurance, to oversee a health care affordability study to explore options to make health care more affordable for low- and middle-income residents.

#### **SB 2541**

- Creates a phase II of the state's hospital assessment system. Pending approval by the federal government, phase II adjusts the tax and revenue structure imposed on hospitals to fund Medicaid services, ultimately ensuring that no hospital receives a lesser hospital tax payout than it currently does under Phase I.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

#### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Provides level funding for education and higher education.

#### **SB 1569** (*see also Education*)

- Modifies income requirements for the state's AIM HIGH education grant program.
- The Illinois Articulation Initiative ; calls for credits to be transferred and prerequisite requirements to be met if a student gets a "pass," "credit," or "satisfactory" during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **HOUSING**

#### **HB 64**

- Includes \$200 million for affordable housing construction grants.

#### **HB 2096** (*see also Local Government*)

- Allows the Housing Authority of Cook County to enter into business arrangements with developers to provide safe and stable housing in the region.

#### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Provides \$396 million to the Illinois Housing Development Authority for grants to help people who have lost their income due to COVID-19 make rent and mortgage payments.

## **HUMAN SERVICES**

#### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Provides \$14.7 billion GRF for human services agencies in FY 21, including expenses associated with Medicaid.
- Provides additional funding for programs that help older citizens and disabilities stay in their own homes, including \$597.3 million for the Home Services Program.



- Provides an additional \$30 million for mental health, substance abuse, and other social service programs to address problems stemming from COVID-19.
- Provides \$19 million for youth employment services.
- Provides \$50.3 to transition people with disabilities from group homes to smaller community based settings, in compliance with the Colbert Consent Decree.
- Provides \$45 million of cannabis revenue to the Restore, Renew and Reinvest Program to for violence prevention, re-entry, and health programs in communities affected by the War on Drugs.

## INSURANCE

### **SB 2135** (*see also State Government*)

- Creates the Task Force on Business Interruption Insurance Policies to investigate these insurance policies in light of COVID-19 and make recommendations for changes.

## LABOR

### **HB 2455**

- Puts in place COVID-19 protections for workers and guidelines for employers.

### **SB 471**

- Expands disability benefits for first responders, creates an aggravated offense for battery against retail employees who are enforcing public health guidelines, and requires race courses looking to become racinos to recognize workers' collective bargaining rights.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### **HB 2096**

- Clarifies that townships may not count stimulus checks and other federal government rebates created in response to the COVID-19 emergency toward earned income when determining eligibility for General Assistance programs.
- Allows students living in unincorporated areas who meet the poverty income guideline to obtain a library card from their local library without paying a non-resident fee.

### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Lifts the current reserve on Local Government Distributive Fund distributions and fully funds the LGDF.
- Provides \$250 million to local governments that did not receive direct or county-level funding for COVID-19 related expenses from the federal government.

### **SB 2135** (*see also State Government*)

- Authorizes government bodies subject to the Open Meetings Act to meet via audio or video conferencing, as long as the public still has the ability to see or hear the meeting and that two days' notice of each meeting is provided.



## OLDER PEOPLE

### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Provides \$201.7 million in additional funding to the Illinois Department on Aging.
- Provides area Agencies on Aging an additional \$1.2 million to provide community-based services to older citizens at a local level.
- Provides \$1 billion in support for the Community Care Program to help older citizens stay in their homes, as well as increased funding for senior meal delivery.
- Provided additional funding for the Senior Helpline.

### **SB 685** (*see also Revenue*)

- Empowers county governments to approve 2020 homestead exemptions for those with disabilities, veterans with disabilities and older citizens who qualified in 2019.

## PENSIONS

### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Makes the full statutorily required pension payment.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

### **HB 2455** (*see also Labor*)

- Creates a rebuttable presumption that Chicago first responders who die of COVID-19 contracted it in the line of duty, ensuring their survivor can collect associated death benefits.

### **SB 264** (*see also Budget*)

- Fully funds state agencies that are protecting the people of Illinois during the COVID-19 crisis, like the Illinois State Police and the Emergency Management Authority.

### **SB 471** (*see also Labor*)

- Extends disability leave benefits for first responders in response to reduced access to physical therapy and other treatments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## REVENUE

### **SB 685** (*see also Older People*)

- Empowers county governments to approve 2020 homestead exemptions for those with disabilities, veterans with disabilities and older citizens who qualified in 2019.
- Allows counties with less than 3 million residents to waive interest penalties and fees for late property tax payments due in 2020.
- Defers property tax sales.





## STATE GOVERNMENT

### HB 2174

- Extends a number of laws that were set to expire in 2020.

### SB 264 (see also *Budget*)

- Provides \$15 million to upgrade state government broadband internet.

### SB 2135

- Created a legislative panel to increase oversight on the governor's Restore Illinois Plan.
- Allowed local governments to hold virtual meetings and still meet the requirements of the Open Meetings Act.
- Requires the Broadband Advisory Council to undertake a study on free internet for all.

## TRANSPORTATION

### SB 531

- Allows the Will County Board to establish a toll rate for the toll bridge over the Des Plaines River near Houbolt Road.

### SB 1857

- Extends authorization for design-bid-build contracts.

## VETERANS

### SB 264 (see also *Budget*)

- Ensures that all state veterans' homes will receive level funding.
- Provides nearly \$6 million for COVID-19 response and safety.
- Provides adequate funding for the Chicago home to open.

### SB 685 (see also *Revenue*)

- Allows county governments to automatically extend homestead exemptions for veterans with disabilities without the veterans reapplying.



# Communications Staff

## 101<sup>st</sup> General Assembly - Spring 2020



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Deputy Director



**Moyo Adeolu**



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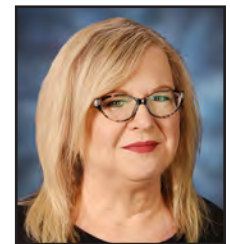
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**Kenneth Lowe**



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**Halie Owens**



**Adrianna Pitrelli**



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**Jan'et Scott**



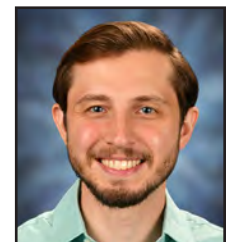
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