

Illinois Legislative Report from Jenni Purdue – September 2016

A majority of the 2016 spring session was devoted to the unresolved FY16 budget (which still remains fairly unresolved at the current time) - but there were some areas where the general assembly was able to move a few items through both chambers and push a few issues forward this year.

SB1564 the Health Care Right of Conscience Act was passed and signed by the Governor. This bill requires that all health centers must make patients aware of all of their health treatment options and where to obtain them even if that health center does not provide that treatment for religious reasons. This bill was an agreed to bill by many health advocates, including those who advocate for reproductive health, and the Catholic church. There has been vocal opposition from pregnancy crisis centers, and there is currently a lawsuit pending brought on their behalf about this legislation.

HB5576 the Contraceptive Coverage bill was passed and signed by the Governor. This bill requires that all birth control methods should be covered by insurance for free not just whatever the insurance deems as acceptable. This will give women more options to choose from and/or be able to stay on a birth control method that works for them without extra fees from their insurance company.

SB2221 increases oversight on DNA testing of sexual assault kits in police custody and sets up a reporting mechanism for local police departments as well as establishes a way to better track those who have committed multiple assaults. This has passed both chambers and has been signed by the Governor.

HB5538 is a bill concerning police training around domestic violence, and this bill strengthens the law around domestic violence training that officers receive. This bill passed both houses unanimously and is awaiting the Governor's signature.

SB730 increases child care for those receiving TANF, this passed along partisan lines, and is sitting on the Governor's desk. It may be vetoed by the Governor.

We also passed our two resolutions (one the House - HR1021 and one in the Senate - SR114) designating Equal Pay Day in Illinois; and Senator Heather Steans introduced SJRCA 24 for the Equal Rights Amendment.

We went into overtime session throughout June trying to solve the budget mess, and only came up with a terrible "stop-gap" budget that runs from July 1, 2015 - Dec 31, 2016 that is funded at only 65% of a fully funded budget for that time frame. (Although the education budget for FY17 is fully funded in this "stop-gap" and the FY16 education budget was the only budget that was signed into law - so K-12 education funding is safe throughout this whole budget turmoil). The state's past due bills are racking up around 10 billion dollars right now, and our structural deficit is hovering around 7.8 billion. Hopefully during veto session the Governor and general assembly can work together to pass revenue increases and compromise on what cuts need to be made in order to go into 2017 (and the 2nd half of FY17) on more sound fiscal footing. (*fingers crossed*)