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Daytripping The Lizzadro Museum

By Charles Herbst

Would you cut up this ancient Chinese carving for a pair of jade cuff links? In the 1940s, Joseph Lizzadro didn't either. As a lapidary hobbyist, he had been seeking a piece of jade to fashion into personal jewelry. This is the piece of jade that he received, which formed the beginning of his personal collection and, ultimately, the Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art.

Joseph Lizzadro was born in Southern Italy in 1898. As a young boy, Joseph was fascinated by rocks and minerals while playing marbles with agates. He and his father emigrated to Chicago, where he started working in his father's cobbler shop and learned the value of fine craftsmanship.

In 1916, at age 18, Lizzadro began working for the Meade Electric Company, which was then a retail appliance store. Thomas Meade, the proprietor, admired the work of Lizzadro and another employee and gave them stock in the company. Meade died unexpectedly in 1929, leaving the company to his two employees. The Meade Electric Company branched out into the installation of traffic signals. The company prospered and it made Lizzadro a wealthy man.

During the Great Depression, Lizzadro and his daughter Bonnie traveled to Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula in search of agates and other minerals. Lizzadro became interested in cutting and polishing the agates and other materials he collected. He reached out to skilled local people, who taught him lapidary and silversmithing skills.

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Joseph Lizzadro's first jade piece



Ron Wait passed on Sunday at age 80. Wait served as an Illinois Republican State Representative for Boone County for 26 years. He received a law degree from Drake University and an MBA from Northern Illinois University.

State Lawmakers Consider Tier 2 Pension Changes

Public employee unions seeking changes to Tier 2 retirement system

By Ben Szalinski Capitol News Illinois

Changes that would make Illinois pension systems compliant with Social Security by improving benefits for government employees hired since 2011 could be on the table when lawmakers return to Springfield in January.

The General Assembly passed legislation in 2010 to create a second tier of state pension benefits in hopes of reducing long-term liabilities. But the latest benefits structure for employees entering the government workforce after 2010,

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Illinois' Minimum Wage Increases to \$15 On Jan. 1, Completing 6-Year Transition

2019 law was Pritzker's first major legislative victory

By Ben Szalinski Capitol News Illinois

The minimum wage in Illinois will increase to \$15 an hour on Jan. 1, completing a six-year

transition period since the increase was approved in 2019.

Beginning New Year's Day, Illinois workers making minimum wage will see wages rise by \$1 and tipped workers will see their paychecks bump to \$9 an hour. Youth workers under 18 who work fewer than 650 hours a year will have a \$13 minimum wage.

The final increase, ending a six-year ramp which began with the minimum wage rising from \$8.25 to \$9.25 on Jan. 1, 2020, puts a bow on Gov. JB Pritzker's first major legislative victory. He signed the wage increase in February 2019 about a month after being sworn in for his first term, checking off a top campaign promise.

"Since day one of my administration, I've made it my mission to build an economy that works for everyone and raising the minimum

wage to \$15 an hour fulfills that promise to our working families," Pritzker said in a statement. "This increase honors the workers who power our state and ensures they can better support their families, bringing us closer to a stronger, more equitable economy for all."

Illinois will be one of 10 states with a minimum wage of \$15 or greater, according to the National Employment Law Project. Twenty-two other states are also increasing their wages on Jan. 1.

The minimum wage increase is one of many

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Bill Aims to Reduce State Requirements For Name Changes

Sponsors cite safety concerns for victims of domestic abuse, transgender people

By Atmika Iyer
Medill Illinois News Bureau
for Capitol News Illinois

Illinois lawmakers in early January could consider easing requirements for residents to change their names, a move proponents say will reduce risks for victims of domestic abuse, transgender residents and others.

The measure must clear the full Senate in the first week of January to reach Gov. JB Pritzker's desk, otherwise it must go through the entire

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Pensions from page 1 known as Tier 2, has raised concerns about its compliance with Social Security and fairness to public employees.

Not all public employees are covered by Social Security. But federal law does require governments to provide benefits that are at least equal to Social Security. If a pension system fails to meet that "Safe Harbor" requirement, the employer must make up the difference. Officials from pension systems have said doing so would be costly, though exactly how much so is unclear.

While calls for changes have grown louder in recent years, the underlying concerns aren't new, Sen. Robert Martwick, D-Chicago, told Capitol News Illinois.

"It was contemplated by members of the General Assembly during debate for its passage that Tier 2 could create a problem if it didn't satisfy Safe Harbor," Martwick said.

Tier 2 employees also say the benefits they receive, which are not as generous as those received by Tier 1 employees who were employed before 2011, will make retirement challenging and are currently hurting recruitment and retention in public sector jobs.

Lawmakers are tentatively scheduled to be back in Springfield on Jan. 4 for a lame duck session before new lawmakers are sworn in on Jan. 8.

"Whether that will all come together in a fashion that is ready for lame duck or not remains to be seen," Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, D-Oswego, told Capitol News Illinois. "I do think we're closer than we were than at the beginning of the legislative session."

Latest proposal

Kifowit's House pensions committee has held more than a dozen hearings exploring pension reform in the past two years, including on multiple bills she has filed. The latest bills, House bill 5909 and Senate bill 3998, are a product of the "We Are One Illinois" coalition of labor unions seeking Tier 2 reform.

"We understand this is a big lift," Illinois AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Pat Devaney said in a Dec. 13 committee hearing. "We're going to continue to push for a lame duck solution. We're ready today, tomorrow, through the holidays to work."

The union-backed proposal would aim to fix the "Safe Harbor" flaw of Tier 2, in part by increasing the maximum salary used to calculate pension benefits. The current maximum salary for Tier 2 employees is more than \$40,000 less than the Social Security salary base and has increased at half the rate of inflation. The new average salary calculation for Tier 2 would be the same as Tier 1.

Martwick said the problem with Tier 2 is it uses 60% of a person's highest average salary over eight years to calculate benefits, compared to 70%-80% under Tier 1.

The proposal would also include an annual non-compounded 3% cost of living adjustment for all pension systems to keep pace with inflation. Under the current law, Tier 2 pension systems for teachers, university employees and state employees receive non-compounded increases of 3% or half the rate of inflation, whichever is less. The Tier 2 pensions systems for judges and members of the General Assembly currently are compounded and increase by 3% or the rate of inflation, whichever is less.

Unions and government employers have also described a growing challenge to retain and recruit people to government jobs, in part because of the diminished quality of Tier 2 benefits.

"What we need to look at and identify is that the state of Illinois has a significant staffing shortage," Kifowit said. "When private businesses have a staff shortage, they increase their benefits and increase their pay to become competitive in the market to attract decent employees."

Another key fix in the bills would put the Tier 2 retirement ages back in line with Tier 1. Under current law, Tier 2 employees are eligible for retirement benefits at a higher age — depending on how long they've been employed — such as 67 for teachers compared to 62 for Tier 1, and age 55 for most police officers and firefighters, compared to 50 for those under Tier 1.

"It is hard to think that a Tier 1 and Tier 2 employee are doing the same amount of work and it is hard to think the Tier 2 employee is going to get fewer benefits just because of when they graduate," Brittany Archibald-Swank, a 4th grade teacher in Urbana, told Capitol News Illinois.

Other public employees worry about handling

the physical demands of a job as they get older.

"I can't do it. It's not a matter of willpower. It's a physical impossibility," Cook County Sheriff correctional officer Ryan Molina said at a Statehouse rally in November. Molina, who is under the Tier 2 system, would be eligible to retire at age 62 following 20 years of service under the current law, rather than 50 following 20 years of service under the Tier 1 law.

Martwick is backing the unions' proposal but said it won't be the final product as conversations continue.

"Every employer owes a responsibility to their employees to provide retirement savings so they have what they need to make their retirement," Martwick said.

Projected cost

Union officials and leaders of the state's pension funds told the committee recently it's not clear how much a Tier 2 fix would cost or what penalties the state would face if the Internal Revenue Service decided to act on the violation.

Only a few Tier 2 employees have retired or will retire in the next few years, officials from the pension systems said. But when they do retire, if their benefits are found noncompliant, units of government from the state to school districts will have to make up the difference to ensure benefits are adequate.

"It's not that we should fix the illegal parts of the benefits structure, it's that we have to fix it, otherwise others are going to fix it for us to the drastic detriment of state and local government finances," Devaney said.

Martwick shared a similar sentiment.

"My whole focus on this thing is throughout the course of this process that we are cognizant that there is no such thing as zero cost. Not doing something doesn't mean you're spending zero money," he said.

A report earlier this year by the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability shed some light on what those proposals could cost.

The April analysis of a different bill found it would cost the state \$5 billion in total through fiscal year 2045 to tie the salary cap to the Social Security wage base and improve the rate of the annual cost of living adjustment.

The analysis also showed lower retirement ages would cost about \$3 billion in total through FY45. But she said the most recent bill proposed by the unions is "more generous" and could cost more.

Between lowering the retirement ages and creating parity with Social Security, COGFA's analysis shows state pension costs could increase by about \$500 million annually. Kifowit said she believes that sum is small enough that the budget can "absorb" it without tax increases — though Illinois could already be facing a multi-billion deficit, according to early estimates from the governor's office.

She said her preference would be to continue making pension payments beyond what is required by law, like lawmakers did in fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

"I think we need to have a continual stream of additional payments, not just if we have extra money," Kifowit said.

The pension payment will consume about 19 percent, or \$10.4 billion, of the state's general revenue spending in FY25.

Kifowit said her goal is to avoid any surprise legislation that hasn't been well-vetted in committee hearings, pointing back to the 2010 legislation that created Tier 2, which was filed and passed through the legislature in just a few days.


"In my opinion, this isn't going to be the final proposal because it lacks some of the governor's proposal," Kifowit said.

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- Justin Klages, 24, Harvard, Dec. 16
- Juliann "Julie" Loos, 89, Belvidere, Dec. 21
- Gerald "Gerry" Mason, 80, Marengo, Dec. 23
- Ron Wait, 80, Belvidere, December 29


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Pensions

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Pritzker’s plan

Gov. JB Pritzker proposed a plan in February that focused more on restructuring the state’s pension payment law than fixing Tier 2. It would aim to make pensions 100 percent funded by fiscal year 2048, rather than 90% by FY45 under current law.

It also plans to use revenue streams currently paying back bonds and dedicate them to pension payments in the early 2030s when the bonds are retired.

Pritzker proposed reviewing and, “if necessary,” adjusting the salary cap on Tier 2 pensions to align with the Social Security wage base to stay compliant with the law. But he has not publicly taken a position on the latest union proposal.

“It’s not something that needs to get done exactly in the next session. But it’s clear that it needs to be dealt with because otherwise you create a whole ’nother liability for the state,” Pritzker said of the Safe Harbor issue at a November news conference.

Illinois’ unfunded pension liability grew by \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 2024 to \$143.7 billion, according to a December report from COGFA. The pensions systems were collectively funded at 46%, which is an improvement from 44.6% in fiscal year 2023.

The unfunded liability has been growing since fiscal year 2011 when Tier 2 took effect. That year the state had an \$83.1 billion liability. It peaked at \$144.2 billion in fiscal year 2020 and briefly declined thanks to strong investment returns in fiscal year 2021 but has continued to grow since then.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Name Change

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legislative process again after a new General Assembly convenes Jan. 8.

The bill, House Bill 5164, would eliminate an existing requirement to publish name changes with a local newspaper. It would also reduce the state residency requirement of people wanting to change their name from six months to three months.

“There are residents in our state who do not feel safe when they are an adoptee; they’re transgender; they’re an immigrant; they’re a survivor of domestic violence, survivor of sexual exploitation and human trafficking,” Sen. Ram Villivalam, the bill’s sponsor and a Chicago Democrat, said in an interview. “So they would like to change their name, and in doing so, we need to remove as many barriers as we can to ensure their health and safety.”

The goal of the bill is to decrease threats to people who have endured domestic abuse, discrimination and other threats to their safety. Villivalam said 24 states have already eased this requirement. Planned Parenthood, Equality Illinois and Brave Space Alliance are pushing for the change.

But the Senate’s top Republican, Sen. John Curran, R-Downers Grove, pushed back against the bill. He argued that impounding the records, meaning restricting access to them, should have a higher threshold.

Individuals are allowed to petition the court to impound records if they believe public disclosure would put them in harm’s way. That process allows individuals to self-attest to hardships and says they

may – but are not required to – submit documentation.

“Why make it permissive, rather than a requirement, to attach relevant documents to the petition,” Curran said during a November committee meeting.

But Mike Ziri, the director of public policy at Equality Illinois, said impounded records don’t disappear from court records and are not sealed, but rather are selectively available to the involved parties.

“So it’s not a complete sealing. There will still be access to parties and by the clerk, as well,” Ziri said. “In my experience, working with communities, folks who say they’ve experiencing hardship and heartache, they’re not making that up, and they want protection for very good reasons.”

The Republicans who hold a minority in the state senate questioned whether noncitizens with a criminal record could change their names to evade legal consequences as a result of the lowered requirements for a name change.

“Is this creating a loophole for people who are here, who are criminals and part of things involved in the trafficking, involved in all of these nefarious activities that we’ve been reading about?” Sen. Sue Rezin, R-Morris, said.

Ziri said that the self-attestation was for impounding the court records of name changes, not to get the name change itself. Illinois law states that people on the sex offender registry, arsonists and people on the murderer and violent offender against youth list are barred from seeking name changes. The exceptions are marriage, religious reasons, human trafficking or gender identity. He also said a name change still requires the signature of a judge, and the process can take months.

“Changing your name does not allow you to escape the criminal record. That was legislation that was passed two years ago,” Ziri said. “That’s on top of the other requirement state police already have to check the criminal records with the name change granted months later.”

Villivalam said this bill takes Illinois “another step forward” in ensuring the health and safety of residents.

“Now, more than ever – given the rise in hate and discrimination across the board – people you know feel targeted. So the legislative work that we can do to reassure them on their safety and health is part of our job,” Villivalam said in an interview. “As people continue to feel the hate, feel the discrimination, get targeted, we need to continue to take these steps to make sure they feel healthy and safe.”

Atmika Iyer is a graduate student in journalism with Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications, and a Fellow in its Medill Illinois News Bureau working in partnership with Capitol News Illinois.

Pedestrian Killed, Driver Unknown

Press Release

On Sunday, December 29, 2024 at approximately 5:47am, the Boone County Sheriff’s Office, along with Capron Fire and Capron Rescue Squad, responded to an accident with injuries in the 11000 block of Rt. 173 east of Capron, IL.

Upon arrival, Deputies located a male pedestrian laying in the roadway that had been struck by a vehicle. The male was pronounced dead on scene by the Boone County Coroner’s Office.

The vehicle that struck the pedestrian left the scene and has not been located at this time.

The victim’s identity is not being released at this time until next of kin has been notified.

The Boone County Sheriff’s Office encourages anyone having information on this case, or any other case, to call the Boone County Sheriff’s Office at 815-544-2144 or Crime Stoppers at 815-547-7867.



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Imperial screen

Photos compliments of Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art

Lizzadro

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Lizzadro began collecting fine pieces, particularly jade from China. After the war, during the regime of Mao and the Great Leap Forward, ancient artifacts became disfavored in China. Using the wealth he had accumulated, Lizzadro was able to acquire many significant jade and other artifacts at a small fraction of the price that these pieces would have otherwise commanded. As his collection grew in the 1950s, it quickly overwhelmed his home and led to the establishment of the Lizzadro Museum of Art.

The museum opened in 1962 in Elmhurst. The museum has grown to become the largest museum of lapidary art in America. The Lizzadro Museum was fortunate to receive the contribution of a significant jade collection from the Oakland Museum. It has also received lapidary contributions from the collection of Richard Dreihaus. In 2019, the Lizzadro Museum moved to Oak Brook.

Much of the museum's collection focuses on Jade. Jade is the name for two semi-precious metamorphic stones, jadeite and nephrite. It is a very hard metamorphic rock that is found in various places on the earth. Chinese carvers had access to jadeite mines in what is now northeast Myanmar (Burma). Jade is very difficult to carve using traditional methods, and artists would use water and abrasive sand to produce their works. The museum has a good exhibit that explains both the geology and lapidary aspects of jade.

Jade is naturally white in color. Jade can come in a rainbow of colors, depending on the other minerals in the stone. We think of jade as green, but it is chromium contained in the rock that gives imperial jade its familiar greenish hue. Iron will cause jade to be blue. Black jade is from graphite. An artist working with a piece of jade does not know the color of the rock until it is exposed and must work with the color as it appears. Jade resists carbon dating and it is often impossi-



Blue jade incense burner in the shape of a pagoda

ble to determine exactly when a piece was made. The goal of a Chinese jade carver was to produce an article that matched a standard of perfection, rather than leaving a distinctive hallmark.

The museum also has an impressive collection of stone mosaics from both the Florentine and Roman tradition. In the entry vestibule, there is a stone mosaic of Joseph Lizzadro. Miniature dioramas showcase other pieces in the collection. Another gallery explores general aspects of geology, including birthstones. There are also special exhibitions.

This is a very unusual museum with a truly beautiful collection of objects. Regardless of your knowledge of geology, the collection is impressive. If you are looking for scientific background supporting the lapidary art, you'll find it here. Or, you can simply focus on the beautiful stones and carvings. Either way, you won't be disappointed. It should take about 60-90 minutes to tour the museum.

The museum is located at 1220 Kensington Road, at Jorie Blvd. in Oak Brook, just south of Oakbrook Center. Open daily 1-5 except Monday. Admission \$10. The website is lizzadromuseum.org.



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Wage

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economic changes that have happened since 2019, including effects of the pandemic, Illinois Chamber of Commerce CEO Lou Sandoval told Capitol News Illinois. He said those have caused businesses to adjust their operations in a variety of ways, such as increasing automation.

“I think you’re starting to see businesses pivot in terms of how they’re adjusting,” Sandoval said. “You’re seeing this at the national chains.” Some restaurants, for example, are “moving away from larger sit-down areas into grab-and-go.”

Illinois job growth has been slow since October 2019, according to a November report by the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. The state has seen a net increase of 28,700 jobs from October 2019 through October 2024. That’s a growth rate of 0.5%, compared to the national rate of 4.9%.

The rate of new job postings by businesses at the beginning of the year will shed some light on how the jump to \$15 on Jan. 1 is impacting business operations, Sandoval said.

To help small businesses with the change, the state provides a tax credit through 2027 to businesses with 50 or fewer employees for wages paid to minimum-wage workers.

The 2019 minimum wage law marked the first increase since the wage hit \$8.25 in 2010. Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford, D-Westchester, introduced a bill to raise it to \$15 an hour in 2017 that was passed by the General Assembly and vetoed by Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner. Lightford sponsored the initiative again in 2019.

“As a state, we have helped countless workers make ends meet, reduce financial stress, and provide a more solid foundation for their futures,” Lightford said in a statement. “The \$15 minimum wage is a testament to our commitment to economic justice and our belief that everyone who works full time deserves a living wage.”

The value of a \$15 minimum wage, however, has changed since lawmakers acted in 2019. A person making \$8.25 in February 2019 would need to earn \$10.30 today to have the same buying power after inflation, according to the Consumer Price Index. A \$15 hourly wage today has the buying power that \$12.02 had in February 2019. A person would need to make an \$18.72 wage today to have the same buying power that \$15 had in February 2019. Top Democrats didn’t say if they will push for new increases.

“As a Senator of 25 years, history has shown my commitment of fighting to ensure workers are paid a living wage. That commitment still holds strong today,” Lightford said in an email statement.

Pritzker said he supports ideas that will help workers make more money, but didn’t commit to supporting any plan to raise the minimum wage further when pressed about it at a news conference Dec. 11.

“We always are thinking about how do you balance the need for higher wages with the needs that businesses have to hire people and do it affordably. But I think we did it the right way when we did it back in 2019,” Pritzker said.

The new \$15 wage equates to a 40-hour-per-week annual salary of \$31,200 before taxes. That equals the federal government’s poverty level for a four-person household. The poverty level is \$15,060 in a single-person household.

But according to calculations in a national project by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, \$15 hourly still doesn’t equate to a “living” wage in Illinois, based on U.S. Census Bureau cost of living and other cost estimates provided by federal agencies adjusted for inflation.

A single adult with no children needs a \$22.86

hourly salary to make a living wage in Illinois, while a two-parent household with two working adults and three children would each need to earn \$31.69. In a two-parent household with one working adult and one child, the worker needs \$36.49 to make a living wage, according to the MIT project.

Inflation is making it hard for workers to benefit from wage increases, Sandoval said, adding rising wages also cause businesses to raise prices.

“They might get the wage increase on one side, but their cost of living goes up accordingly,” Sandoval said.

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State Officials Seek To Boost Renewables, Energy Storage

Lawmakers and advocates rush to avert a crisis as prices and demand spike

By Andrew Adams *Capitol News Illinois*

When you flip the switch, the lights come on.

But in Illinois, after years of sweeping reforms to the energy industry and growing demand for electricity, that premise is coming into question.

Several experts – including those involved in crafting the state’s energy reform, current and former regulators, and those in the renewable energy industry – are warning that prices will spike this summer and rolling blackouts could become necessary in the coming years. That is, unless the state takes action to make sure enough electricity is available – in the right place and at the right times of day.

“If we don’t continue finding other ways of energy – making sure we can store it in some way – we’re going to see that supply and demand kind of thing,” Rep. Barbara Hernandez, an Aurora Democrat and sponsor of a bill to incentivize energy storage, told Capitol News Illinois. “We’ll see a lot of demand, but the supply will not be there and it’s going to create a lot of blackouts in our communities. But also, our families are going to be paying the price and we’re going to see an increase in utilities.”

Several factors contribute to the concern over the grid’s future. A growing number of data centers in the U.S. and in Illinois are demanding massive amounts of energy. The state’s fossil fuel industry is – by design – in decline. And backlogs at regional grid operators have delayed renewable electricity generation from coming online.

The state also isn’t bringing renewable energy online quickly enough, according to a lead sponsor of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act – Gov. JB Pritzker’s marquee climate legislation that seeks to decarbonize the state’s electric grid by 2045.

“We in Illinois are behind on our goals for renewable generation,” Sen. Bill Cunningham, D-Chicago, told Capitol News Illinois.

Lawmakers, meanwhile, are hurriedly working to find solutions that could be rolled out quickly to keep electricity reliable and affordable.

A short lame duck legislative session tentatively

planned for Jan. 4-7 could become an energy policy battleground with long-term consequences. But the tight timeline could cause the legislative process to drag into Springfield’s regular session as a new General Assembly is sworn in on Jan. 8.

Illinois’ renewable energy plan

In 2021, state lawmakers passed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, or CEJA, a sweeping regulatory reform that advocates hailed as a nation-leading effort to transition the state off fossil fuels while boosting the economy and protecting consumers.

But three years in, the state is struggling to keep up with its goals to bring new renewable energy online as fossil fuel plant owners reconsider their future in a state that’s looking to fully phase out carbon emissions by 2045.

Coal-fired electricity generation fell from 46% of the state’s portfolio in 2009 to 15% in 2023 due to tightening emissions regulations and economic pressures according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. About one-third of the total drop in coal capacity occurred in 2022 alone.

Natural gas-powered generation increased over that period, reaching an all-time high last year, but those plants will also be subject to closure over the next two decades.

CEJA’s aim was to replace fossil fuels with renewables by incentivizing investment in wind and solar. But regulators now worry that the pool of money that funds that transition could soon fall short.

Illinois requires electric utilities to supply a minimum percentage of customer demand with renewable energy. The Illinois Power Agency purchases this electricity at “procurement events” using a complex system of financial instruments such as “renewable energy credits.” It tracks its progress through what’s known as the renewable portfolio standard, or RPS.

The RPS is funded by Illinois utility customers through a charge on their monthly bills. Utilities then use the money collected from this charge to purchase renewable energy credits.

The state’s next benchmark is to have 40% of electricity sales come from renewable sources by 2030. As of October, the RPS was less than halfway to meeting that mark, although there is still time for the state to back new developments to meet that goal.

IPA Director Brian Granahan said while the RPS’ funding is sufficient for now, it could fall short in the near future.

“We face substantial uncertainty past 2026,” Granahan told Capitol News Illinois.

The IPA’s most recent forecast shows the RPS facing a potential budget shortfall by mid-2027, based on its long-term renewable procurement plan. By 2039, the RPS has a projected budget shortfall of \$3.13 billion dollars. This “uncertainty” over the future of the RPS budget has several causes, including forecasted increases in the price of renewable energy credits. Increased demand for electricity also contributes to higher projected costs in the RPS budget.

At its most recent procurement event that concluded in early December, the IPA met its solar target but was able to procure only about half of its target for wind projects, mirroring a national downturn in wind energy developments. Wind and hydroelectric power make up 55% of the overall RPS, with solar making up the other 45%.

Mark Pruitt, an energy planning consultant and former director of the IPA, said without changes to the law or the energy market, the agency would need to scale back its renewable energy procurement by “40 to 60 percent” over about 15 years.

“At the time when you really need to get as much new capacity in the market, your primary finance vehicle is starved for cash,” Pruitt said.

The IPA is working with some industry groups

Continued on page 7

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has old newspapers free
for picking up from time to time.
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LEGAL NOTICES

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL
BOONE COUNTY
CARLOS ROJAS CEBALLOS, Plaintiff
-VS- CASE # 2024-DN-67
EVA GONZALEZ ARIZMENDI, Defendant
NOTICE OF PUBLICATION
Notice is given to you, EVA GONZALEZ ARIZMENDI, Defendant that this cause has been commenced against you in this Court asking for DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE and other relief.
I have been separated from Eva Gonzalez Arizmendi for 30 years. I do not know her whereabouts in Mexico (Veracruz)
Dated: 11/26/2024
Pamela Coduto
Clerk of the Circuit Court
17th Judicial Court
Boone County, Illinois
Published in *The Boone County Journal* 12/19, 12/26/2024, 01/02/2025 (P)

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
COUNTY DEPARTMENT – PROBATE DIVISION
Estate of THOMAS J. HORVATH, Deceased
No. 24 PR 45

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given of the death of THOMAS J. HORVATH of Poplar Grove, Illinois. Letters of Office as Independent Executor were issued on December 10, 2024, to TERENCE M. HORVATH, 3116 South Amble Pass, Gold Canyon, AZ 85118, who is the legal representative of the Estate of THOMAS J. HORVATH, whose attorney is Franks, Gerkin, Ponitz & Greeley, P.C., 19333 East Grant Highway, P.O. Box 5, Marengo, IL 60152.

Claims against the estate may be filed within six (6) months from the date of first publication, or within three (3) months from the date of mailing or delivery of Notice to creditors, if mailing or delivery is required by Section 5/18-3 of the Illinois Probate Act, 1975, as amended, whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date stated above shall be barred.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the office of the Boone County Circuit Clerk-Probate Division at the Boone County Courthouse, 601 North Main Street, Belvidere, IL, or with the estate legal representative, or both. When a claim is filed with the representative but not with the Court, the representative may file the claim with the Court but has no duty to do so.

Copies of claims filed with the Circuit Clerk's Office-Probate Division, must be mailed or delivered to the estate legal representative and his attorney within ten (10) days after said claim has been filed.

PREPARED BY:

Christopher T. Marx – ARDC#: 6291152
FRANKS, GERKIN, PONITZ & GREELEY, P.C.
Attorneys for Independent Executor
Our File No.: 21889.175
19333 East Grant Highway, P.O. Box 5
Marengo, IL 60152
(815) 923-2107
pleadings@fgplaw.com
Published in *The Boone County Journal* Dec. 19, 26, Jan 2

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT FOR
BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS - CHANCERY DIVISION
CARRINGTON MORTGAGE SERVICES, LLC, Plaintiff,
vs. Case No.: 2024FC49
BRIAN MIELKE; LOUIS MIELKE; SECRETARY OF HOUSING
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT; FOUNDATION FINANCE
COMPANY LLC; ASMC SERVICING LTD.; FIRST NORTHERN
CREDIT UNION; MV REALTY OF ILLINOIS, LLC; UNKNOWN
OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, Defendants.
Property Address:
220 Beacon Dr, Belvidere, IL 61008

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO THE FOLLOWING,

BRIAN MIELKE

LOUIS MIELKE

defendants, that this case has been commenced in this Court against you and other defendants, asking for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to wit:

LOT EIGHT (8) IN BLOCK TWO (2) AS DESIGNATED UPON THE PLAT OF BIESTER'S THIRD SUBDIVISION, BEING A PART OF LOT 4 OF PROSPECT HILL SUBDIVISION, THE PLAT OF WHICH FIRST NAMED SUBDIVISION IS RECORDED IN BOOK 4 OF PLATS ON PAGE 30 IN THE RECORDER'S OFFICE OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS.

Commonly known as: 220 Beacon Dr, Belvidere, IL 61008

Names of the titleholders of record: BRIAN MIELKE; LOUIS MIELKE.

Date of the Mortgage: September 30, 2008.

Name or names of the mortgagors: BRIAN MIELKE; LOUIS MIELKE.

Name of the mortgage: GSF Mortgage Corp..

Date and place of recording: October 1, 2008; Office of the Recorder of the Deeds of Boone County, Illinois.

Identification of recording: Document No. 2008R08245.

NOW THEREFORE, unless you file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case, on or before January 25, 2025, A JUDGMENT OR DECREE BY DEFAULT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED IN THE COMPLAINT.

E-filing is now mandatory with limited exceptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit <http://illinoiscourts.gov/self-help> or talk with your local circuit clerk's office. If you cannot e-file, you may be able to get an exemption that allows you to file in-person or by mail. Ask your circuit clerk for more information or visit www.illinoislegalaid.org. For information about defending yourself in a court case (including filing an appearance or fee waiver), or to apply for free legal help, go to www.illinoislegalaid.org. You can also ask your local circuit clerk's office for a fee waiver application.

PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT, THE PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

Lender Legal PLLC
1800 Pembroke Drive, Suite 250
Orlando, Florida 32810
Tel: (407) 730-4644
Service Emails:
cwinters@lenderlegal.com
EService@LenderLegal.com

LLS13560-IL - MIELKE
_s/ Colin Winters, Esq.____
Colin Winters, Esq.
Counsel of Record for Plaintiff
ARDC # 6297980
Published in *The Boone County Journal* Dec 26, Jan 2, 9, 2025

NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOONE COUNTY IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
Ma Calderon Zarate, Plaintiff
V. Case No. 2024-DN-53
Joel Huerta Parra, Defendant TO: JOEL HUERTA PARRA,
TAKE NOTICE that a Complaint has been filed in the above case in the Circuit Court of Boone County, Illinois. The relief sought is an Absolute Divorce by the Plaintiff, Ma Calderon Zarate.
You are required to file a response to this Complaint no later than January 24th, 2025 which is 40 days from the date of the first publication of this notice. If you fail to respond by this date, the Plaintiff will request the Court to grant the relief sought in the Complaint.
This notice is given on the 13th day of December, 2024. Christian E Solares
Attorney for Plaintiff
Midwest Law Works, LLC Christian Solares, ARDC #6325075 4855 E State St., # 25
Phone Number: 815-312-1703
E-mail: Christian@midwestlawworks.com
E-FILED
Nov 27 2024
02:24PM
PAMELA CODUTO
Published in *The Boone County Journal* 12/26, 2024, 1/ 2,9, 16, 2025

MECHANIC'S LIEN

NOTICE TO: CARA RIVERA & CHRYSLER CAPITAL
Notice of Intent to enforce Mechanic's Lien pursuant to Chapter 770 ILCS 50/3 et seq to: Cara Rivera and Chrysler Capital for a 2017 Chrysler Pacifica, VIN: 2C4RC1EG8HR633230 for the amount due and owing \$2000.00. To be sold at a public sale on February 3, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., at Ed & Lou's Towing, Inc., 6574 Revlon Drive, Belvidere, IL 61008, 815-323-1500
Published in *The Boone County Journal*: 01/02/2025

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT BOONE COUNTY,
601 NORTH MAIN STREET, BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS
ESTATE OF Shannon Beard, DECEASED. 24 PR 53
Notice is given to creditors of the death of the above named decedent. Letters of office were issued to Ashley Varchetto, 50 Yorktown Shopping Center, Apt. 378, Lombard, Illinois 60148, as Independent Executor, whose attorney of record is Peter M. Brady, Peck Ritchey, LLC, 321 South Plymouth Court, 6th Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60604.
The estate will be administered without court supervision, unless under section 5/28-4 of the Probate Act (Ill. Compiled Stat. 1992, Ch. 755, par. 5/28-4) any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the clerk.
Claims against the estate may be filed with the clerk or with the representative, or both, on or before July 2, 2025, or, if mailing or delivery of a notice from the representative is required by section 5/18-3 of the Probate Act, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered by the claimant to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.
E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp>.
Peter M. Brady
Peck Ritchey, LLC
321 South Plymouth Court, 6th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60604
(312)201-0900
I3258138
Published in *The Boone County Journal* Jan 2, 9, 16, 2025

Shedding Light On Solar Panel Contracts

By Phyllis Coulter *FarmWeek*

Allan Delphi, a LaSalle County farmer and landowner, felt the heat of the sun shining on him when making decisions that would affect him, his children, grandchildren and possibly others who work his land in the future.

"I have had five solar companies approach me. Each one told me what they would do for me. I even had one more today," he said while attending a recent farmland owners conference in Oglesby.

At the event, sponsored by the University of Illinois Extension at Illinois Valley Community College, he gathered more information. Delphi said he is thankful that the responsibility of making the decision isn't his alone. He has involved family members, a lawyer and his support team.

Delphi told *FarmWeek* he's learned a lot during the process, studying the easements, learning about equipment and construction and details about decommissioning.

"I'm in my 70s. This project will last at least 40 years," he said of the care he is taking for his three sons and five grandchildren.

The company they have chosen practices agrivoltaics, the dual use of land for solar energy production and agriculture. They will likely graze sheep initially, but more research is being done

on short corn varieties and other crops that might be compatible with the solar system, said Delphi, who likes the idea of the contracted land still being used for farming.

During his presentation, Garrett Thalgot, assistant general counsel for Illinois Farm Bureau, emphasized the importance of asking questions and having a good team when considering signing a solar project contract.

Insurance is something to consider. It is important to discuss a solar contract with your insurance company and attorney and see what is covered by the energy company and what changes might need to be made to the farmer's or landowner's policy.

Also, be sure to look at the acreage guarantees. It's important to know if five or 50 acres are guaranteed to be involved in the contract.

In terms of compensation for land rented, it is important for landowners to have an escalation provision, so the rental price keeps up with rising rates of rent over the next 50 years, the IFB attorney told *FarmWeek*.

Thalgot agreed it is important to be clear on the details of decommissioning when in some cases it won't happen for as many as 60 years. The energy company might be sold by then and other generations might be farming.

Some landowners may be against putting solar farms on agricultural land, but eminent domain is not available to solar developers. The landowner has the right to choose what is right for his farming operation for the future and how to use his or her property rights, Thalgot told *FarmWeek*.

Mary Ludwig, an attorney and partner with Johnson & Taylor in Pontiac, compared property rights to a "bundle of sticks." That bundle includes air, water and mineral rights in the present and future, she told landowners at the conference.

As for solar and wind contracts, Ludwig offered many of the same cautions as the IFB counsel. She said to make sure attorney fees are considered in the contract costs to understand the contract length and provisions of decommissioning.

"About one-third of landowners receive a letter from an energy company," Elizabeth Strom, an Accredited Farm Manager and vice president of Murray Wise Associates LLC in Champaign told landowners in attendance.

"Before you sign, make sure you fully understand the contract," Strom said.

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.

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Energy

from page 5

on legislation that would address problems with the RPS budget, according to Granahan. The agency has also suggested the legislature give it more flexibility to modify procurement amounts, break up the RPS into budgets for large- and small-scale projects, or implement an unspecified “safety net” to ensure that approved projects are always funded.

Pritzker’s administration, meanwhile, points to successes since CEJA’s passage, including Illinois becoming a powerhouse for the solar industry and the fifth-largest producer of electricity overall. That’s largely due to its nation-leading fleet of nuclear reactors, several of which received subsidies under the law.

“The state was falling behind on our clean energy targets, but thanks to the ambition, vision, and policy set out in CEJA, Illinois keeps stepping up to reach our clean energy goals,” Pritzker spokesperson Alex Gough said in a statement.

Energy storage

Illinois lawmakers, energy industry groups and consumer advocates are looking to address another well-established problem with renewable energy – its intermittent nature.

Because solar and wind generation cannot be turned on or off at times of high demand – like natural gas or coal plants – they often generate electricity at the “wrong” times of day. Solar, for example, stops generating electricity in the evening and at night, but the peak daily demand often comes as people return home from work.

“Not all megawatts are created equal,” Pruitt said. “A megawatt that’s delivered at 2 in the morning does not have the same value as a megawatt that’s delivered at 3 in the afternoon.”

One proposal would implement new incentives for building large-scale batteries at either the consumer or power plant scale to store electricity generated by renewables and make its availability more regular.

Bills from Cunningham and Hernandez would require state agencies to treat energy storage similarly to renewable energy. That includes authorizing the IPA to solicit energy storage developments and requiring the Illinois Commerce Commission and large utilities to develop plans for integrating storage into existing power systems.

Renewable energy groups and others interested in addressing climate change have urged quick action to prop up the nascent industry.

A study from Pruitt’s consulting firm – which was supported by several clean energy trade groups – found that “immediate action is required” to allow time for new energy storage to be built before existing power plants go dark over the next 20 years. That study also found that while there would be upfront costs for electric customers in the first few years, it would save money in the long term.

A Union of Concerned Scientists report from November recommended that Illinois act quickly to get at least 3,000 megawatts of storage online by 2030 to reduce the risk of forcing the state to import fossil fuel-generated energy from other states.

“Across all scenarios, Illinois requires substantial energy storage development to meet long-term CEJA decarbonization goals,” the report found.

Hernandez said she’d like to see such a bill move in the lame duck session. Cunningham echoed that sentiment but left the door open to the issue taking longer to resolve.

“It’s definitely something we’ll try to address in lame duck, but if not, it’s something that will be top of list in the regular session,” Cunningham said.

Pritzker pumped the brakes on a lame duck energy package in mid-December, telling reporters there “isn’t currently some bill that’s being put together” that would address a broad range of energy issues.

But the governor did signal support for energy

storage legislation and a spokesperson later clarified Pritzker is aware of a smaller bill that is likely to come up in January.

“I think that would be an important topic for us to take up,” the governor said of battery storage.

Moving electricity around

The complex process of moving electricity from one place to another, and the federal regulators who coordinate that process, have also complicated CEJA’s rollout.

When electricity is needed, it must be moved from a power plant, solar farm or storage facility to its end user – like a household or factory. As new generation projects come online, new transmission lines must be built, like roads going to and from a freshly developed neighborhood.

Most grid operators face major backlogs for approving new generation projects. As of April, the two grid operators in Illinois – PJM Interconnection and the Midcontinent Independent System Operator – have almost 600 gigawatts of generation capacity waiting to go online, according to a report from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. That’s roughly equivalent to 600 nuclear power plants. These backlogs are due to a surge in interconnection requests over the past 10 years, leading to a slowdown in regulatory approvals for necessary infrastructure upgrades, including transmission lines.

Nationwide, generation projects that came online in 2023 averaged nearly five years waiting in the queue, up from three years in 2015 and less than two years in 2008, according to that report.

Clara Summers – who manages the “Consumers for Better Grid” campaign for the consumer advocacy group Citizens Utility Board – said PJM’s interconnection queue is “particularly egregious,” leading to problems with the local electricity market.

“The market can’t work if the interconnection queue doesn’t work and it hasn’t for a while,” Summers said of PJM, which serves northern Illinois and much of the eastern United States. “That’s something that just fundamentally needs to be fixed.”

Electricity generation developers responded in a 2024 survey published by Columbia University’s Center on Global Energy Policy that PJM’s interconnection process makes other stages of development challenging, such as sourcing materials and financing.

The report suggested that federal regulators adopt reforms to generation development to ease interconnection, ranging from making it easier for new projects to be built at the site of retiring plants to reducing the requirements placed on energy generation developers before they’re allowed to begin construction.

This problem reared its head over the summer when PJM held an auction to secure electric “capacity” for the upcoming year. These auctions are the mechanism by which grid operators ensure there is enough electricity generation to meet future demand.

That auction set the price for capacity at \$269.92 per megawatt-day, twice the average over the past decade and more than 9 times higher than last year’s price. PJM projects the total cost to provide electricity for the 2025-2026 delivery year to be \$14.7 billion, a \$12.5 billion jump from last year and a 35% increase over the second-highest annual capacity price.

That means prices for customers will increase by between \$7 and \$10 for the average household in the Commonwealth Edison territory in northern Illinois, according to the Citizens Utility Board.

CUB, the Illinois Attorney General and the attorneys general of several other states argued in a November complaint to federal regulators that the auction was artificially high because PJM undercounted how much electricity would be available in the future, among other reasons.

PJM has already filed rule changes for future

auctions in response to that complaint and others. Advocates called the filing a “major win” for customers in PJM’s territory, though experts said the high prices still signify trouble for the grid.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator, or MISO, operates the grid for much of the Midwest, including downstate Illinois. Earlier this month, it approved the next phase of its multi-year plan for long-range transmission lines. Those projects will cost an estimated \$21.8 billion and will move electricity around the Midwest.

James Gignac, a senior policy manager at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said this model should be considered by other grid operators – including PJM – to increase transmission line construction and put cheaper and cleaner energy on the grid.

“The quicker that we can get these long-range projects approved and moving toward construction, the sooner we’ll have that increased capacity for projects to be able to access the grid more quickly and at a lower cost,” he said.

Several of the first round of MISO transmission line projects are currently under review at the Illinois Commerce Commission. While federal regulators limited states’ authority in long-term planning earlier this year, state regulators still play an important role in procedural approvals.

Cunningham filed a bill this spring that outlines several changes to transmission line regulation and incentives, though it’s unclear if facets of it would be included in any energy legislation that moves quickly.

“We can incentivize transmission development in the same way we incentivize renewables and dedicate a portion of everyone’s electric bill,” Cunningham said.

Data centers and demand

Illinois’ grid problems are also exacerbated by a growing demand for electricity.

In recent years data centers and large-scale industrial and manufacturing development have boomed nationwide and especially in Illinois. Data centers, which are key for artificial intelligence development and other high-tech businesses, require massive amounts of electricity, as do manufacturing plants.

Illinois has been competing to land data centers by providing tax incentives to build facilities here. Pritzker has said the data center tax credit helped move Illinois from “kind of middle of the pack to now becoming the third-largest data center market in the nation and the fifth-largest in the entire world.”

But data center developments are already increasing demand in northern Illinois and hastening the need for greater electricity generation.

A report from the consulting firm Grid Strategies found that that demand for electricity will increase by 15.8% over the next five years, about a five-fold increase over nationwide growth estimates from two years ago. PJM territory is expected to see some of the largest demand growth, driven in part by an “unprecedented” increase in data centers.

For drafters of CEJA, the level of demand growth was unexpected.

“We knew that demand would go up,” Cunningham said. “But the words ‘data center’ were never used in CEJA negotiations.”

The Columbia University study of PJM’s grid, meanwhile, recommended state-level changes to mitigate the risks of delays in getting renewable generation online as demand increases.

“State regulators and other policymakers will also be wise to manage the phaseout of existing resources carefully,” the report suggested. “One way of doing so is to build ‘reliability safety valves’ into environmentally driven retirement schedules.”

In Illinois, that could mean state lawmakers and regulators now face difficult choices on an increasingly short timeline: increase costs to customers, back down from the state’s most ambitious decarbonization goals or accept an increasingly unreliable grid.

Pritzker Endorses Hemp Regulation Bill

Says new, dangerous products threaten children's safety

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

More than five years after Illinois began issuing permits for legal production of industrial hemp, Gov. JB Pritzker said Friday he now favors legislation to bring the industry under tighter regulation.

At a news conference in Chicago, Pritzker said in the short time since both the state and federal governments legalized hemp production, a new industry has emerged in which chemicals are extracted from hemp plants to produce intoxicating and potentially dangerous products that are currently unregulated.

“Commonly known as intoxicating hemp, this industry is selling hemp-derived products such as delta-8, and they’re using deceptive advertising tactics to market them directly to minors,” Pritzker said. “These products have an intoxicating effect, often to dangerous levels. They’re untested and unregulated and are widely available and accessible to young people.”

Illinois lawmakers passed legislation in 2018 to allow the commercial production of hemp, the same year Congress legalized hemp nationwide through the 2018 Farm Bill. The crop was once commonly used in the United States to make rope, textiles and other products, but it was effectively banned decades ago because of its close botanical relationship with marijuana.

The legislation legalizing hemp anticipated it would again be used to make industrial products, but also for the production of CBD oils that can be extracted from the plant. Those oils, and products made with them, have become popular due to the belief that they have multiple health benefits.

But the recent boom of intoxicating hemp-derived products has raised new concerns about the need for additional regulation.

House Bill 4293, which originally dealt with regulation of massage therapists, passed out of the House last spring and was sent to the Senate where it was stripped of its original language and replaced with new language regulating intoxicating hemp-derived products.

The bill would not ban such products but would impose limits on the amount of the intoxicating substance THC they can contain, and it would regulate how those products can be marketed and advertised. It also limits the manufacture and sale of those products to licensed businesses.

The amended bill passed out the Senate 54-1 in May and was sent back to the House where no further action has been taken.

“It is vital we move forward towards regulation of hemp and delta-8 products and do so in a way that is equitable and provides opportunities within the evolving industry,” Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford, D-Westchester, said during the news conference. “We support the hemp industry. This is not an effort to bash the hemp industry. We want the hemp industry to survive and thrive and continue evolving.”

The push to impose new limits on the production and sale of intoxicating hemp comes at the same time the Illinois Department of Agriculture has been working to develop new state regulations to bring the Illinois industry into compliance with new federal regulations.

The legislative Joint Committee on Administrative Rules, which oversees the administrative rulemaking process, gave its approval to those rules Tuesday. That came after extensive negotiations with the Illinois Hemp Business Association, a lobby group that represents many small, minority-owned hemp businesses.

In a statement, the association said this week it was satisfied with the final negotiated version of the administrative rules, but still had significant concerns about the new hemp regulation bill. The association said it “threatens the industry by potentially banning beneficial components of the hemp plant.”

But the Cannabis Business Association of Illinois, which represents the cannabis industry, issued a statement Friday supporting the legislation.

“We applaud Gov. JB Pritzker’s call to protect consumers and rein in the gray market,” the group’s executive director Tiffany Chappell Ingram said in a statement. “We urge lawmakers to take swift action, as Illinois is already falling behind other states that have adopted meaningful regulations.”

Lawmakers are expected to consider the bill during an upcoming lame duck session, which is tentatively scheduled to begin Thursday, Jan. 2.

Illinois Democrats Brace for Second Trump Administration

Leaders ponder options ahead of Jan. 20 inauguration

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

During Donald Trump’s first term as president, Gov. JB Pritzker and Democrats in the Illinois General Assembly spent much of their time enacting laws and policies in direct opposition to the conservative agenda they saw coming from the White House.

Those included the 2019 Reproductive Health Act that declared abortion access to be a “fundamental right” under state law, which lawmakers passed in anticipation that a conservative Supreme Court would eventually overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

It also included numerous head-to-head confrontations with the Trump administration during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Pritzker was ordering public health measures aimed at preventing the spread of the disease while openly criticizing Trump for refusing to do the same.

Now, as Trump prepares to take office again, Pritzker and Democratic leaders are bracing themselves for another round of conflict with the White House while planning for legislation and policies to blunt the potential impact of a second Trump administration.

“Over the years ahead, we’ll do more than just protect against the possible reversion to an agenda that threatens to take us backward,” Pritzker said at a Nov. 7 post-election news conference. “We will continue to advance a positive, productive and inclusive agenda of our own, one that brings opportunity to Illinois and helps uplift the nation as a whole.”

On Wednesday, Pritzker and Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, also a Democrat, announced the formation of Governors Safeguarding Democracy, a coalition they say will focus on protecting against “the dangers of authoritarianism and the undermining” of state-level institutions.

That announcement came as lawmakers were convening at the Statehouse for the start of their scheduled two-week fall veto session.

Speaking with reporters Wednesday, Pritzker said he does not yet have a list of specific measures he wants lawmakers to consider immediately, but that some sort of action could come as early as January, before Trump is sworn into office.

“I haven’t heard anything that has to be addressed right now during this veto session,” he said. “Having said that there is time to be able to do that before the Jan. 20 inauguration.”

Likewise, House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch, D-Hillside, said Tuesday, the opening day of the veto session, that it was still too early to know exactly what Trump plans to do in his first few days or how the state should respond. But he said Trump’s record during his first term in office, as well as statements he made during the campaign, offer clues about some of the issues that will be important in Illinois.

“We have to be prepared to continue to defend our values as Illinoisans and do the things that we know how to do to protect workers, protect women, protect LGBTQ-plus communities, immigrant communities,” Welch said.

Welch also pointed to some of the early moves Trump has made since winning the election as signals about the issues Illinois lawmakers will confront. Those include promises to launch mass deportations of immigrants, suggestions from advisors about eliminating federal employee labor unions, and the naming of former Republican Rep. Lee Zeldin to head the Environmental Protection Agency.

“He appointed a former congressman to be head of the EPA who has a 14% record on good environmental legislation,” Welch said. “We have to be concerned about immigration. This country was made and built on immigration. ... We have to be concerned with workers’ rights.”

Legislative Republicans, meanwhile, argued that Trump won the election because voters were more concerned about bread-and-butter issues like inflation and the economy.

Citing a recent report showing the state facing a potential \$3.2 billion budget deficit in the upcoming fiscal year, GOP leaders said Illinois would be better served if Democrats who control the General Assembly focused more on the state’s own financial condition and less on drawing battle lines with the Trump administration.

Read more: Lawmakers return to Springfield as projected budget deficit looms

“Voters throughout this country have sent a clear message in the last election that they want elected officials to focus on making life more affordable for American families,” Senate Republican Leader John Curran, of Downers Grove, said during a news conference Tuesday.

He said the task will be more challenging in Illinois due to the impending deficit.

“This budget deficit really is a product of Gov. Pritzker and his allies’, year over year, gluttonous appetite for more spending,” Curran said.

While Democrats have said they are prepared to tackle the deficit, they didn’t give specifics. Sen. Elgie Sims, D-Chicago, who spearheads the budget process in the Senate, told Capitol News Illinois this week there haven’t been any discussions of raising taxes.

Welch acknowledged that Trump will come into office in January with more of a mandate than he had after the 2016 election, when he won a majority of electoral votes but lost the popular vote to Democrat Hillary Clinton.

“The American people did speak, and if you believe in democracy, you have to accept the results of the election,” he said. “But we didn’t elect a dictator. We elected a president of the United States who has to follow the Constitution of the United States. ... That Constitution respects people’s fundamental freedoms. That Constitution protects individual rights. That Constitution protects everyone across this country, not just some people, and we have to make sure that he doesn’t go too far.”