



# Legislative Report

## Legislature in full gear

It didn't take long for members of the Illinois General Assembly to get into the spring session in full stride. Just a few weeks into session, the House and Senate have both slid past the first major deadline: getting bills out of committee. So far, TOI has fared well, helping to stall bills that we oppose and passing those that we favor. Action now turns to the floor where lawmakers must act on those bills surviving committee scrutiny before they leave for a two-week spring break.

A couple of key initiatives put forth by the Township Officials of Illinois this year have passed the Illinois Senate by overwhelming margins.

**Senate Bill 3462** (*Sen. Terry Link*) will change the distribution formula for townships receiving Motor Fuel Tax Funds. Currently, a road district must levy a tax of 8 cents or receive no MFT funding. Under SB 3462, townships levying a tax less than 8 cents will now receive funding on a pro-rated amount. It passed the Senate March 10 on a 51-3 roll call.

**Senate Bill 3430** (*Sen. Pam Althoff*) defines the authority of township road districts which were put into question following a court decision in McHenry County last fall. SB 3430 declares that township road commissioners have the same powers as road commissioners in non-township counties and removes some ambiguity in the law. It passed the Senate 56-0.

Both bills now go to the House of Representatives for further consideration there.

**Senate Bill 3010** (*Sen. Maggie Crotty*) allows townships to build town halls or senior centers with existing funds without a referendum. It passed out of Senate Local Government Committee and is at passage stage on the floor.

## Governor delivers budget address

In one of the shortest budget addresses in recent memory, spanning only about 20 minutes, Gov. Patrick Quinn laid out his spending priorities for Fiscal Year 2011 in a speech before a joint session of the Illinois General Assembly on March 10. He was short on

specifics, but proposed slashing funds for nearly every budget category, including schools and local governments. But he added that if lawmakers would consider enacting a one percent boost in the income tax from 3 to 4 percent, he would dedicate it for restoring funds to those two areas.

Otherwise, Quinn's budget calls for cutting \$1.3 billion from education, and another \$800 million elsewhere, including 30 percent of the Local Government Distributive Fund which sends state income tax money to cities and counties across the state. But most of the plan to deal with the state's current \$13 billion deficit is based on borrowing \$4.7 billion and deferring payment of another \$6 billion in bills into the next fiscal year.

It seems highly unlikely that the legislature will enact any kind of a tax increase this year, at least before the November elections. And reaction to the Governor's plan from both parties in the legislature was lukewarm, at best. There aren't many options available to lawmakers without a tax increase, but it looks like the Governor's plan may change considerably before it gets sent back to his desk in May.

## Plan to attend Topics Day

If you haven't already done so, please plan to attend TOI's Topics Day on Tuesday, April 20 in Springfield. It's the only opportunity to meet with your legislators face to face and discuss issues of importance to townships. We'll hear from **Senate Republican Leader Christine Radogno** at the kick-off luncheon and close the day with a gala legislative reception at the State Library across the street from the Capitol.