



Legislative Report

New General Assembly members prepare to take on difficult agenda

NEARLY THREE DOZEN new members of the Illinois General Assembly will be sworn in this month as they step into one of the most precarious financial situations that Illinois has ever faced.

Retirements, defeat at the polls, and death have resulted in the departure of 24 members of the House of Representatives and 9 more from the Senate. That marks a fairly dramatic turnover in the ranks of the legislature compared to years past. Although most of the new members have yet to set foot in the State Capitol, three Senators will be assuming seats they were appointed to in the last term, as well as six House members. One vacancy came after the November 2 election with the surprise retirement of Sen. Gary Dahl (R-Granville). Newly elected GOP Rep. Sue Rezin was appointed to Dahl's seat and will move up to the Senate without ever having served in the House, even though that is the spot she was elected to last fall.

As the old saying goes, it will take a scorecard to know the players this year.

Legislative schedules released

The House and Senate have released full schedules for the spring session of the General Assembly. By and large, the schedules between the two chambers are pretty much in line with each other. Both will meet the first two weeks of January (the first week is to finish the work of the old General Assembly; the second is to start off the new group). They will then adjourn for two weeks and return in earnest the first of February.

Both chambers are out the third week in March and the third week in April (spring break). The Senate will also take off the final week in April. Final adjournment is scheduled for the constitutionally-mandated date of May 31.

Here is a rundown of important dates for the spring:

January 12 – swearing in

February 10 – deadline introduction of Senate Bills

February 16 – Governor's budget address

February 24 – deadline introduction of House Bills

March 17 – deadline for committee passage for House and Senate

April 15 – deadline for passage of bills in House and Senate

May 13 – deadline for committee passage of bills in opposite chamber

May 31 – adjournment

TOI agenda taking shape

The Legislative Committee of TOI, led by chair Susan Carpentier, has been hard at work finalizing the TOI legislative agenda for 2011. Bills are now being drafted and will be introduced over the next few weeks. Next month's column will outline those bills in detail.



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