



Legislative Report

So much for “normal”

DURING NORMAL TIMES, this would be the part of the year that is relatively quiet on the legislative front. It would be the calm following a raucous election cycle and just before the start of a new General Assembly. It would be a celebration of the holiday season, with not much attention being given to the state’s official business.

But that is during normal times.

Instead, Illinois politicians are embarking on a process that is adding chapters to our state’s colorful history. Just at the time when our citizens are taking pride in the celebration of the 200th birthday of a native son and our country’s most revered president. Just at the time we are taking pride in the inauguration of another native son, the country’s first African American president. Just at that time, FBI agents stage a pre-dawn visit to the home of our state’s chief executive and scurry him off to jail for alleged offenses that are still hard for many to believe. It foisted Illinois onto the national stage for all of the wrong reasons.

And it has compelled the Illinois General Assembly to once again return to Springfield to deal, once and for all, with a Governor who has traveled the roughest of all roads with his colleagues in state government.

While all of this is being unraveled, the regular work of the state legislature is being put on hold.

But eventually, things will return to normal ... in a sense. We’ll have a new governor, and we’ll have new leadership in the Illinois Senate. And hopefully, we will have a legislature that is finally able to focus on the crucial issues facing our state.

Sen. John Cullerton (D-Chicago) was recently chosen by his Democrat colleagues to serve as the new Senate President, replacing the retiring Sen. Emil Jones (D-Chicago). Prior to December 9, when the Governor’s troubles with the U.S. Justice Department came to a head, speculation centered on how the new Senate leader would deal with his former House colleague, Mike Madigan, and the Governor. Now, the entire state will be looking to see how all of the new leadership in Illinois will mix amongst themselves and between the two parties.

Cullerton will be dealing with a new leader on the GOP side, as well. Sen. Christine Radogno (R-Lemont) received the nod of Republican Senators to lead them

following the resignation of former leader Frank Watson (R-Greenville) following a stroke this fall. She becomes the first female leader of a legislative caucus in the state’s history. Tom Cross (R-Oswego) will continue to lead the House Republicans.

Regardless of all of the response by the General Assembly to goings on that are epic in their historic perspective, things will need to get back to normal. On January 14, a new General Assembly will be sworn into office. A \$4 billion deficit and a crumbling infrastructure will still be waiting for them. And all of the normal business of a state legislature must start to occur again.

The Township Officials of Illinois is now in the process of developing the association’s legislative agenda for 2009, which we will feature in next month’s issue. Hopefully, all of this tumult will be behind us by then.

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