



# Legislative Report

By Timothy S. Bramlet

TOI Legislative Consultant

## *Legislature returns to the State Capitol*

ILLINOIS LAWMAKERS have returned to the State Capitol for six weeks in advance of the state's March 20 primary election. With all new representative and senatorial districts being contested this year, there are numerous primary contests throughout the state.

There's also going to be a lot of turnover. Even before some incumbents might be turned out of office in March, or later in the year in the general election, 33 open seats exist in the House and Senate combined. That means that at least nearly 20 percent of the General Assembly will be new faces, including a handful of legislators who are seeking to switch chambers. And that's a lot of lame duck legislators who will be finishing out terms during the 2012 session.

It's still too early to tell what lies ahead in terms of legislation facing townships. Last year was tough, with a number of bills seeking to eliminate various phases of township government being pushed. One measure,

which was signed into law last summer, set up a commission to study local government and make recommendations for improving efficiency. Hopefully, the legislature will wait for that report before trying to push other ideas that were not formed with the insight and information available to the commission.

By February 16, we'll have a handle on what we'll be up against for the spring. That's the deadline for bill introductions. Of course, lawmakers can always slap on amendments to other bills right up until the last day, but the introduction deadline gives us a good taste of what's to come. And March 9 represents the first major hurdle in the process when all bills that were introduced have to be heard and passed by a substantive committee. Those that are not called or do not receive a majority vote are returned to the Rules Committee, where they will not be considered any further.

Legislative leaders have cut the number of session days this year compared to last, so the volume of legislation might not be as heavy. Consequently, TOI has a limited agenda this year. The Legislative Reference Bureau, the group of lawyers who draft bills and amendments, are working on a couple of proposals that we are putting forth. One is a bill that was introduced a year ago that didn't quite make it through the process that would outlaw disposing snow plowed from a residential driveway onto a public highway in a manner that constitutes a traffic hazard.

Another bill will seek to grant townships regulatory power over licensing pets in unincorporated areas of counties that do not impose such regulations themselves.

But the real focus of TOI this year will be attempting to keep the lid on legislation that takes a knee-jerk approach to the structure of township government. It's an election year, and the mood out there is decidedly anti-government. That's sure to lead to the introduction of bills that take a swipe at townships, without any real thought as to the consequences. Many of the past proposals purport to be money-saving, but in reality would result in just the opposite. Townships provide the most services for the least amount of money compared to cities, counties and the state. And we will be reminding lawmakers of that throughout the spring.

Hopefully, we can get through until the May 31 adjournment unscathed.



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