

2024 End of Session BY Lobbyist Jessica Nardulli

The 2024 Illinois state legislative session – the second year of the 103rd General Assembly – ended in a dramatic fashion, which was not reflective of the session as a whole. Typically, the second year of any general assembly is less eventful than the first, as members campaign for their primaries (March 19) and then re-focus ahead to the general election in November. Lawmakers are less likely to do big things – particularly on taxes – if an election is coming up. While not always an iron-clad rule, legislative sessions are usually quieter during even-numbered years.

One issue was targeted for reform early in the session. During the Governor's State of the State Address, he announced his primary legislative effort would be to expand healthcare access and affordability. Contentious debates over reproductive rights and insurance regulations highlighted ideological divisions within the legislature. Significant changes were made to prior authorization and step therapy. Providers state this gives quicker and greater access to services for patients, by eliminating barriers to care and prescription drugs - although it is apparent these changes will come at an increase in costs for payers (employers and patients) when fully enacted in 2026 as they remove the ability of insurance carriers to use these cost control measures.

Environmental policy also emerged with bipartisan legislation. Illinois passed the Safety and Aid for the Environment in Carbon Capture and Sequestration Act (SB 1289) after weeks of intense negotiations. The bill includes some of the strongest carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) protections in the nation. The initiative is timely given that multiple corporations are currently targeting Illinois for carbon waste disposal. CCS projects have already been proposed across the state despite a lack of state and codified federal regulations. Companies have proposed injecting CO2 underground through 22 wells in six Illinois counties and CO2 pipelines have been proposed in 23 counties. The Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition (ICJC) and Coalition to Stop CO2 Pipelines engaged with stakeholders to draft the CCS protections bill.

Ultimately, the budget proved to be the most contentious item this year, as, counter to the typical rule, the General Assembly tackled revenue enhancements during an election year. The frustration felt by rank-and-file lawmakers led the General Assembly to miss their self-imposed deadline. While May 24 has long been on the calendar as the General Assembly's adjournment date, lawmakers have until the end of May before there is a three-fifths majority vote needed to pass a budget with an immediate effective date. The Senate remained in Springfield through Sunday, May 26, while the House adjourned after an all-nighter in the early hours of Wednesday, May 29. Despite holding 78 seats in the House, it took Democrats three tries to reach the 60 votes needed to approve more than \$1.1 billion in revenue increases, including a tax hike on sportsbooks and businesses, to balance the \$53.1 billion spending plan for fiscal year 2025. The spending plan passed the House 65-45 and the Senate 38-21.

In all, the General Assembly passed 466 measures to the Governor for his consideration. The legislature has 30 days to present a bill to the Governor, and the Governor has 60 days after receiving the bill to sign, veto, or issue an amendatory veto. The General Assembly will not return to Springfield until the Fall Veto Session. Dates have not yet been announced.