

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 84TH DISTRICT

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Annual State of the State Address

Happy Thursday,

We have had a busy couple weeks here in Springfield. These past two weeks, I have chaired the term's first meeting of the House Personnel & Pensions Committee. It was a productive review of the current state of pensions in Illinois, and I am looking forward to the work ahead. It was also announced I am the chair of the Property tax subcommittee of the Revenue Committee (which I am a member of).

In addition, I maintain my position on the Veterans Affairs committee even though I am no longer chair. It is an honor to be serving on all of these committees, and am dedicated to ensuring that service members in Illinois are supported, and that the solid financial future of our state is secured.



The House will be session every week from now until the end of March, and there were 3,978 bills filed in the IL House and 2,530 bills filed in the IL Senate. We have a lot to do!

On Wednesday, February 15, Governor J.B. Pritzker delivered his annual State of the State and Budget Address to a joint session in the House Chamber. It was a pleasure to have the Governor back in the Chamber after a global pandemic and dangerous snowstorm prevented him from being here in person the past two years. In his speech the Governor discussed the gains our State has made in the past year, and outlined his priorities for legislation and the budget. We will now begin the process of working with administration leaders to develop a budget for the next fiscal year.

Now, the General Assembly will review the Governor's proposed budget, adjust and evaluate line items and pass the budget for the Governor's signature before the end of May. I am committed to continuing to ensure that we have a fiscally responsible and balanced budget.

As Chairperson on Personnel & Pensions, and a member of the Revenue & Finance Committees, I will continue to be a leader in ensuring fiscal responsibility in the State of Illinois. Please join me on Monday for my weekly morning coffee Facebook live to discuss the Budget Address and budget process. If you missed the Governor's address you can watch it [HERE](#).

We honored and remembered the five men who lost their lives, and all of those whose lives were forever changed, by the Henry Pratt tragedy four years ago. Russell Beyer,

Vicente Juarez, Clayton Parks, Josh Pinkard, Trevor Wehne were taken far too soon in a senseless act of gun violence. We cannot forget the events of that day.



Take care,

P.S. Please reach out to our office if you need assistance at (630)-585-1308 or send me an email.

We Wore Red to Raise Awareness About Women's Heart Disease

February is American Heart Month. Heart disease is largely preventable, yet it remains the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. National Wear Red Day is the icon day of American Heart Month where millions of Americans wear red to raise awareness about women's cardiovascular disease and help save lives. I joined lawmakers in the Illinois House from across the political spectrum in participating in this important day. You can see that video below.

American Heart Association.



Prevention efforts coupled with effective disease management can reduce the incidence of heart attacks and strokes, cut the number of deaths from these diseases, and relieve some of the disability suffered by heart attack and stroke survivors. To learn more information about preventing heart disease visit dph.illinois.gov.



House Committees I'm Currently Serving On

I am especially proud to be serving on these four committees this term. Through this newsletter I will keep you updated as we make progress on pensions, Veterans' services, and fiscal reform in the coming year.

If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding these issues, don't hesitate to reach out to my office at (630)-585-1308 or send me an email.

House Committees I'm
Currently Serving for Illinois
103rd General Assembly



Personnel & Pensions
Chairwoman



Veterans' Affairs



Revenue & Finance



Property Tax Subcommittee
Chairwoman

Legislative Achievements

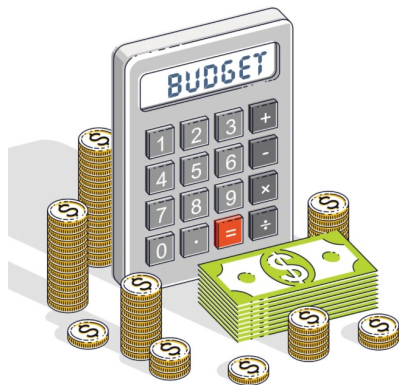
On Friday, February 10, Governor Pritzker signed 15 new bills into law, including two bills that I sponsored to help improve Veterans' services in Illinois. Together, these two bills, [HB2369](#) and [HB5542](#), amend the Department of Veterans Affairs' Act to strengthen the Illinois Joining Forces Foundation. We launched Illinois Joining Forces (IJF) in 2012 as a statewide, public-private network working to connect service members, Veterans, and their families to the services and resources in their local communities. Over the past decade, IJF has been nationally recognized for helping Veterans find the support they need, when they need it. This new law will help organizations across the state serve our Veterans and their families more effectively.



As a Veteran of the United States Marine Corps, supporting our service members has always been one of my top priorities. In the 103rd General Assembly I will continue to work to make Illinois the most welcoming and supportive state in the Nation for all Veterans and their families.

To learn more about Illinois Joining Forces, or to Request Assistance [click here](#)

Budget Basics



Governor Pritzker's Wednesday State of the State address was also his Budget Address, where he laid out his budget priorities for this legislative session. Over the next weeks, myself and other lawmakers will be going through the Governor's proposed budget line-by-line, and working with administration officials, while getting input from other stakeholders, to create a plan for the next fiscal year. Our job in the General Assembly is to review and adjust if needed his proposal and go line by line. Here are some budget basics to know:

The General Revenue Fund

- Illinois' Fiscal Year begins on July 1 and ends on June 30.
- The state's main discretionary spending account is the General Revenue Fund (GRF).
- Last year the GRF topped \$50 billion for the first time, thanks in part to the elimination of some corporate tax exemptions, and an economic recovery that boosted income and sales tax collections.
- In past 7 months of the current fiscal year, revenues are already outpacing even last year's strong performance by [\\$2.3 billion](#).
- In recent years we have made strong progress on improving the State's fiscal health:
 - eliminated nearly \$17 billion bill backlog
 - making extra payments on bills and pensions
 - earned historic 6 credit upgrades
 - offered working families \$1 billion in tax relief this past year.

Pensions

- Generally about 20% of the GRF is allocated to pension payments. They are the single biggest GRF expenditure.
- In the current fiscal year the state upped its pension contribution by \$200M beyond legally required levels, yet unfunded pension liability grew to \$139B last year.
- The Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability (COGFA) [estimated](#) that Illinois would have to increase our contribution by \$4.4B this year to stave off continued increases in unfunded liabilities.

- Article 13, Section 5, of the Illinois Constitution, approved by 57% of voters in 1970, expressly provides that the benefits of membership in a public retirement system 'shall not be diminished or impaired.' This means that legislatures can increase pension benefits at any point, but can never reduce them, not even with respect to pensions not yet accrued.

Free Income Tax Preparation Assistance Available

If you need assistance filing your 2022 income taxes, you can receive free help from qualified volunteers across Illinois. Here are some taxpayer assistance programs:

IRS' Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

- For people making \$60,000 annually or less
- For persons with disabilities
- For limited english-speaking taxpayers

IRS' Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)

- Particularly for those over the age of 60
- Specializes in pensions and retirement-related issues

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Program

- Focuses on taxpayers over the age of 50 or who have low-to-moderate income.
- AARP membership is not required.

Ladder Up Tax Assistance Program

- For families earning up to \$60,000 and individuals earning up to \$32,000 annually.
- IRS-certified volunteer tax preparers assist in filing federal and state returns.



To find a **VITA** location near you, [CLICK HERE](#)

To find a **TCE** location near you, [CLICK HERE](#)

To find an **AARP** location near you, [CLICK HERE](#)

To find a **Ladder Up** location near you, [CLICK HERE](#)

Individuals with questions should contact Illinois Department of Revenue's Taxpayer Assistance Division at 800-732-8866

Notice: Medicaid Verification Resumes This Year

Medicaid



As the Illinois COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ends this spring, so will Medicaid's continuous enrollment. It is estimated that when the continuous enrollment program ends, about 9.5% of Medicaid enrollees nationwide, or 8.2 million people, will lose coverage because they are no longer eligible. People found ineligible may still have other options for low-cost insurance.

What should you do?

When it's your time for renewal, **the Department of Healthcare and Family Services will be sending you a letter with details.** If you're signed up with Manage My Case, you can handle your renewal online. To avoid losing coverage, DHFS strongly urges Medicaid enrollees to fill out their renewal forms as soon as possible.

The agency will resume regular verifications starting in late April, and people with a June renewal date will be the first ones to go through the restarted process. Those people will need to submit their renewal forms before June 1 so they can maintain coverage without disruption.

To go to "Manage My Case" - [CLICK HERE](#)

Guide for Setting up manage my Case (English) - [CLICK HERE](#)

Guide for setting up manage my case (Spanish) - [CLICK HERE](#)

Questions about renewing your Medicaid coverage? Call 1-866-255-5437 (TTY: 1-877-204-1012). Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Or e-mail HFS at www.medredes.hfs.illinois.gov

National Veterans Legal Services Program

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs is partnering with the National Veterans Legal Services Program to offer *free* access to legal representation for Illinois Veterans and their families before the US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CVAC).

NVLSP is a national nonprofit organization that has worked since 1981 to ensure the government delivers to our nation's 22 million Veterans and active duty personnel.

To learn more about NVLSP click [here](#).

To visit the IDVA website click [here](#) to see what services and resources are offered



NVLSP

NATIONAL VETERANS LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

Facebook Live

I continue to host Monday Morning Coffee live via Facebook at 9:00am-10:00am where you can post your comments and questions.

I realize not everyone has Facebook. The good news is that you can still participate. If you would like to join us on Monday mornings, you can join in via ZOOM! Once connected via ZOOM, you'll be able to interact just as if you were on Facebook. Don't worry you will not be on live - your video feed and mic will be muted.

The ZOOM link will be emailed to everyone separately for Monday morning participation.

If you would like to join us, please email Michelle@ILDistrict84.com or call the office at 630.585.1308.



MONDAY MORNING COFFEE WITH REPRESENTATIVE KIFOWIT 9:00am



You can find us on FB :
@ILDistrict84



If you missed my last Monday Morning Coffee, you can watch it here:



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