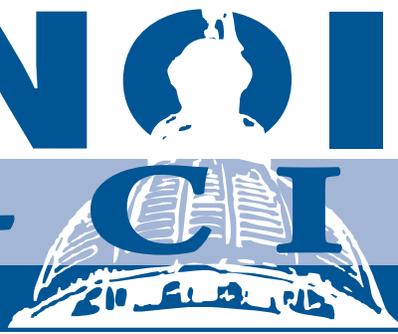


ILLINOIS AFL-CIO

NEWS UPDATE - 01/15/21



New Session Begins; Welch Elected Speaker of House



Chris Welch
IL House Speaker

After weeks of speculation and maneuvering, the Illinois House of Representatives elected the Emanuel “Chris” Welch to lead the chamber as Speaker of the House.

Welch, the state’s first black Speaker, takes the helm after longtime Speaker Michael J. Madigan suspended his bid for the position when it became clear he would not gain the necessary 60 votes.

The new legislature was sworn in on Wednesday and Welch was voted in following the inaugural ceremony. He has not announced his leadership team yet.

“We congratulate Speaker Welch. We have worked with him in both the political and legislative realms and look forward to a great partnership going forward,” said Illinois AFL-CIO President Tim Drea said.

Secretary Treasurer Pat Devaney added: “He has always been

a strong voice for unions and working families. He has a firm grasp of the legislative process and can get things done. With the challenges facing the state right now, his leadership will be invaluable.”

Welch (D-Hillside) was first elected the House in 2012 and in eight years has earned a 92 percent Illinois AFL-CIO voting record on labor issues. He was selected as the Zeke Giorgi Labor Legislator of the Year in 2016 – the Illinois AFL-CIO’s highest honor for an elected official.

He has served on several key committees, including chairing the House Executive Committee. Prior to being a state representative, Welch served 12 years on the Proviso Township High School Board of Education including 10 years as chair.

The first day of session also saw Senate President Don Harmon (D-Oak Park) elected to his post for a full-term after taking over for John Cullerton, who retired last year. Republican leaders are Rep. Jim Durkin (R-Western Springs) and Sen. Dan McConchie (R-Hawthorn Woods).

Illinois AFL-CIO Salutes Michael J. Madigan

The relationship between unions and former Speaker Michael J. Madigan was forged through decades of battling the enemies of unions and coming together to make a better life for workers both on the job and off.

“Speaker Michael Madigan is a giant in the eyes of the labor movement,” Drea said. “When our enemies came to destroy us, he stood with us and guarded the door. It is an understatement, but his footprint on improving the lives of everyday workers will be felt for a long time.”

Madigan has served in the House since 1971 and had been Speaker of the House since 1983, except for 1995-96 when the GOP held the majority.

While the list of Madigan’s labor accomplishments is long, he will perhaps be most recently and fondly remembered

by union members for standing up to Bruce Rauner during his single term as governor.

Rauner made Right To Work and destroying unions a centerpiece of his agenda and held the state budget hostage for more than two years to force Democrats to abandon unions.

Madigan held the Democratic majority together during the brutal standoff.

“There aren’t enough words to describe what Speaker Madigan has meant to workers,” Devaney said. “He will be missed, not only for his leadership which is well-documented, but for his advocacy of the working class.”

The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Social Justice Agenda

During the period of social unrest, the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus announced their plans to pursue massive equity reforms focused on four pillars: Education, Economic Access, Health and Human Services, and Criminal Justice Reform. After the atrocities we observed this summer, the Illinois AFL-CIO recognized the need for comprehensive equity reform initiatives and quickly dug into the reform proposals as they were released at the start of the lame duck session.

At the end of the lame duck session, the Black Caucus was successful in passing three of four of their legislative agenda items: Education, Economic Access, and Criminal Justice Reform.

Education Omnibus Bill

The Education Omnibus bill focuses on improving education outcomes for minority students by expanding college access, increasing early childhood services, and recruiting diverse teachers to increase the diversity of their ranks. After negotiation from groups on both sides of the issue, the final version of the bill cut a provision to extend the school year and the bill did not increase access to a tax credit funding stream used to support careers in technical education.

Economic Access Bills

The Economic Access bills improve access to economic opportunities for minorities without cutting any prevailing wage provisions or existing labor protections. The economic access bills limit predatory lending and payday loans, increases access to state contracting for minorities and women, and increases employment opportunities for people with prior convictions.

Criminal Justice Reform

The Criminal Justice bill makes expansive reforms by eliminating cash bail, increasing the use of body cameras and police training, and creating a police-certification system. The initial version of the bill substantially limited collective bargaining rights of peace officers by restricting bargaining to wage and benefits. In the previous version, peace officers were specifically restricted from bargaining over discipline and grievance procedures. That version also eliminated qualified immunity, meaning peace officers could potentially be sued personally for actions taken on the job.

After lobbying from the Illinois AFL-CIO and affiliates, the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus removed harmful language that limited collective bargaining to wages and benefits and the provisions eliminating the ability to collectively bargain over discipline and grievance procedures. In regard to collective bargaining, the final version of the bill also eliminated residency requirements for peace officers as a mandatory subject of bargaining in cities over 100,000 which was previously set to cities over a million.

Workers' Compensation Bill HB4276

The Illinois AFL-CIO was successful in passing critical legislation for essential workers who contract COVID-19 during their employment. During the Special Legislative Session in May, the Illinois AFL-CIO and its union affiliates expanded workers' compensation coverage to essential workers who become infected with the COVID-19 virus due to their employment. The bill created a rebuttable presumption that essential workers who contract COVID-19 did so because of their employment. The workers' compensation bill passed in May expired on December 31, 2020. HB 4276 (Hoffman/Cunningham) extends the deadline for the expansion of workers' compensation coverage until June 30, 2021 closing the lapse in coverage between the expiration date and the enactment of the new bill.

Chicago Teachers Union Bill HB 2275

There were also huge wins for collective bargaining rights for teachers in Chicago. The Illinois AFL-CIO and its affiliates advocated for the restoration of bargaining rights for teachers in the Chicago Teachers Union. The bill restores the Chicago Teachers Union ability to bargain over layoffs, class sizes, cleanliness, school days, school length, and many other non-salary issues. These restrictions were put into place by the Republican-led state legislature in 1995.

“The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress.”

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1965
Address to Illinois AFL-CIO, Springfield, IL*

**The Illinois AFL-CIO office will be closed
Monday, January 18, 2021
in observance of
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday**

Robert “Bob” Simpson Leaves Legacy of Union and Community Activism

The Illinois AFL-CIO lost a true friend and a strong voice for working families on January 6, 2021. Robert “Bob” Simpson, Teamsters Local 743 member and longtime leader of the Chicago Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), provided a lifetime of dedicated service and commitment to union development and progressive causes.

Bob’s career began in the City of Chicago as a Montgomery Ward Catalog employee in 1952. In 1953 he began actively organizing employees at Montgomery Ward, served as Union Steward, became a member of the negotiating team and eventually became the Director of Organizing for Local 743. In 1972, he was elected President of the Chicago Chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and Corresponding Secretary of the Executive Council of the International CBTU.

In 1988 Simpson was elected president of Teamsters Local 743 and later served as Trustee. He was a National Board Member of Operation Push and Board Member of the Teamsters Black Caucus, Little City Foundation, NAACP, A. Philip Randolph Institute and Coalition of Labor Union Women.

Since 1952, Bob has been actively involved and engaged in many labor and injustice issues. He was a pillar in the CBTU and in the Chicago labor community for decades.

He organized community assistance, testified before legislative and public bodies, walked pickets for justice and was involved in actions such as Black Friday, Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter.

Bob Simpson’s legacy of union and community activism resulted with improved lives for future generations. A celebration of his life is scheduled for January 15, 2021. Cards and condolences can be sent to: The Simpson Family, 252 Cove Drive, Flossmoor, IL 60422.



ROBERT “BOB” SIMPSON



“The two most dynamic movements that reshaped the nation during the past three decades are the labor and civil rights movements.”

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1965
Address to Illinois AFL-CIO in Springfield, IL*

Consolidated Primary & Election Timeline for 2021

Consolidated Primary - February 23, 2021

- Jan. 14** - Early voting starts
- Jan. 14** - First day vote by mail ballots sent out
- Feb. 18** - Last day for election authority to receive via mail a vote by mail application
- Feb. 23** - Consolidated Primary Election Day

Consolidated Election - April 6, 2021

- Jan. 6** - First day for voter to make application by mail or in-person for ballot
- Feb. 25** - First day to vote early at election authority
- Feb. 25** - First day vote by mail ballots sent out
- Mar. 12** - First day to vote early or by mail if primary was held
- Apr. 6** - Consolidated Election Day