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First thing, Senate overrides anti-union veto

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Without a word of floor debate Tuesday, the Senate voted to override Gov. Bruce Rauner's veto of [SB 1905](#), a bill to bar counties and municipalities from enacting or enforcing laws or rules "that restrict the use of union security agreements between an employer and a labor organization."

Rauner's "Illinois Turnaround" agenda has had, as a key proposal, the creation of "right to work" zones throughout the state, areas in which union membership could not be required as a condition of employment.

As Sen. [Don Harmon \(D-Oak Park\)](#) explained to constituents visiting his web site, SB 1905 simply says that any such labor law would have to come from the state legislature - or not at all. Which means, of course, not at all.

But, what the hey, the Senate has a veto-proof majority of Democrats. Why shouldn't that chamber override a Rauner veto? You're right, they do have a 37-22 Democrat majority, and an override takes just 36 votes. But 42 senators voted to override this veto - and [seven of them were Republicans](#).

You might say that, without those seven GOP votes the override motion on SB 1905 would have fallen short. You might say that, but you'd be mistaken; there were Democratic votes ready to be counted if they were needed. The vote manipulation was meant as a "message" for the governor: Illinois is not a right-to-work state.

Of course, the Senate does not have the last word on SB 1905. All vetoes are first responded to by the chamber of a bill's origin, in this case the Senate. The override vote must be replicated in the House or the bill will die as Rauner hopes. And the House vote passing the bill [was four votes shy](#) of the override level.

Where will the other four House votes come from? From the same place votes came from in the Senate to boost the total that passed the bill (36) to the total that overrode Rauner's veto (42) - from Republicans who are not happy with Rauner, who blame him for the damage caused by the two-year budgetlessness fiasco.

Rauner also committed a Republican's mortal sin by siding with Democrats on a "wedge issue" (a bill on a topic forcing a legislator to cast votes based on party affiliation, without regard to the policymaker's personal opinion on the subject). In signing [HB 40](#) into law, Rauner protected the abortion rights even of poor women.

There are many Republicans in the House for whom an anti-labor vote carries some political risk. There are others (maybe some overlap) who are angry about HB 40 and [want Rauner to fail](#), maybe lose in the GOP primary. Votes to override the Rauner veto of SB 1905 will come from such disaffected House Republicans.

But SB 1905 veto was far from the only bill acted upon by the legislators Tuesday. [There were many others](#). What will those bills do? Many of them are a mystery. The House Executive Committee turned about a dozen Senate bills into shell bills, vehicles for any trip they want to take, in one partisan roll call.

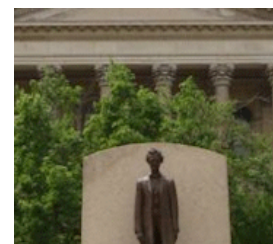
A shell bill, you are reminded, is one that contains no new policy; it exists just to be amended into a bill doing who knows what? Here's what an [amendment that turns a bill into a shell](#) looks like. (Strike-throughs remove words from current law; underlined words are inserted into law.) Shell bills proliferated Tuesday.

New substantive bills were also filed. [HB 4130](#), for example, says that a school district that received at least 13% of its revenue from the Personal Property Tax Replacement Fund in FY 2016 should receive more from the PPTRF this fiscal year. [HB 4134](#) is a sexual harrassment training mandate. (More on this one below.)

As [Education Week has reported](#), states are making it easier for teachers from other states to get certified. An amendment is pending that would turn SB 863 into [a bill to do that in Illinois](#). (As it passed the Senate, the bill would require that a member of the State Board of Education be an actual educator.)

That bill is scheduled for a hearing in the PK-12 [committee on licensure](#) at 8:30 today. The PK-12 committee on curriculum is to meet at 2 p.m. to consider an [amendment to HB 1262](#), requiring legislative approval of any mandate waiver requests relating to property tax provisions of the School Code.

What's the deal on the sexual harrassment training bill? As you may have heard - because it is sensational - that Illinois was identified in a [Washington, D.C. blog](#) this week as a state in which a "culture" of sexual harrassment exists at the state



Capitol, that women are victimized routinely in a variety of disgusting ways.

The linkage came from a woman lobbyist who related Springfield experiences she has endured in this regard, and she said she is not alone. "It's probably hard to find a woman in Springfield who doesn't have a story about what's happened to them." She also confirmed her story in an [interview with Crain's](#).

Apparently the salacious and disturbing reports about Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein have caused women around the country - especially at state capitols, [even in South Dakota](#) - to come forward and tell their stories. Is what the lobbyist said about the Springfield environment true? It's shocking, but I don't doubt her.

A [letter attributable to Illinois women](#) legislators and others, describing typical harrassment circumstances, has been circulated. A "[Me, too](#)" form, asserting that it is "time to demand No More in Illinois" has been posted as a way that other women can come forward, tell their stories, bring harrassment to an end.

My sense is that the more victims who join the efforts to bring such behavior to the surface the better. It's more than just "locker room talk," after all. And passing [HB 4134](#), sponsored by [Rep. Letisa Wallace](#) (D-Rockford) also seems to be a good idea. The bill is thoughtfully drafted and should have a powerfully beneficial effect.

Odds and ends ...

About evidence-based funding: [NPR's Dusty Rhodes checked into](#) why ISBE has not started to distribute the \$350 million appropriated for this year for the schools that need it most. ISBE says, reasonably, that it must gather the "evidence" first. Distributions in future years will not be delayed for so long.

The state's unpaid bill backlog is [still nearly \\$16 billion](#). How could that be, with taxes raised and all? The problem is that state agencies under Rauner's purview keep coming up with obligations that Comptroller Susana Mendoza has not been told about. There's a bill that would require more timely reporting. But Rauner vetoed [HB 3649](#). His [reasons for doing so](#) are lame. It should be easy for the House and Senate to override that one.

More about concussions: The [Journalist's Resource](#) web site has posted an objective discussion of the risks taken by young athletes, particularly those playing tackle football. The page also includes links to nine credible sources of research on this subject. Eventually, it seems likely that brain-preservation will prevail.

Speaking of brains, [National Public Radio reported](#) on an interesting study in which two different approaches to memory training were compared and evaluated. Both resulted in improved short-term memory for the participants, but one of the methods was calculated to be twice as effective as the other.

School closures are controversial, always. In Chicago, we often hear from community schools advocates that the district in that city tends to close mostly schools attended by poor and minority children, and to transfer them to schools that are no better - or even worse - academically. [Recent research says](#) that's the trend.

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