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Volume 24, Number 75, November 10, 2017

What did Rauner expect on that pension bill?

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

It was a pretty popular bill, [SB 1714](#) was. Briefly, it simply requires consultants hired by pension system boards to tell the boards about their efforts to identify businesses owned by women, minorities or persons with disabilities as potential investments, and to disclose a specific type of conflict of interest.

Filed by [Sen. James Clayborne](#) (D-Belleville) in February, it was approved 10-0 in committee and 56-0 on the floor of the Senate. [Rep. Robert Martwick](#) (D-Chicago) persuaded the House committee to favor it by 12-0, and the bill drew 115 "ayes" votes - and zero "nay" votes - on the floor of the House.

But Gov. Bruce Rauner vetoed the bill ([unnecessary "red tape," he said](#)) despite its approval of every legislator who cast a vote on it in committee or on the floor of the House and Senate - including many who are Republican colleagues. Would loyalty to the party and to Rauner cause all those Republicans to flip on SB 1714?

The answer would be "no." The Senate approved an override motion 52-0 on Tuesday, and the House overrode the veto by a vote of 109-0 on Wednesday. SB 1714 is now known as [Public Act 100-0542](#). And Rauner has maintained his image as a conspicuous loser. You have to wonder, does he have an advisor on these things?

His veto of a substitute teacher fee reimbursement bill met with a similar fate. As amended, [HB 3298](#) would refund the \$50 license fee paid by holder of substitute teaching certificates, if they actually teacher at least 10 days during the year following their payment of that fee. Rauner [didn't think it should be necessary](#).

But that's beside the point. The point here, again, is that the bill was approved unanimously in both House and Senate committees, and 99-1 on the floor of the House (probably a vote button malfunction) and 56-0 in the Senate. If you're the governor, you're well advised to impose vetoes only when they can be sustained.

One more example: Rauner also vetoed [HB 2977](#), a mandate that cursive writing be taught in elementary schools. As amended in the Senate, the bill passed that chamber 41-15; the House concurred, but by only a 62-38 vote, far less than the 71-vote level required to override a veto. So this example is not as clear.

But when Rauner's credibility as The Governor was at stake on this bill, the House voted for the override motion 77-36 and the Senate followed with a strong override vote of 42-12. By this time, of course, Rauner had infuriated Republicans by signing into law a bill preserving abortion rights - a "wedge" issue for the GOP.

In summary, 2017 was a pretty bad year for Rauner as to his vetoes. As my friend Rich Miller noted in his excellent publication [Capitol Fax](#), Rauner overridden just once in the last two years, but this year: 15 of 30 bills he totally vetoed were overridden by the legislators, as were three of his 10 amendatory vetoes.

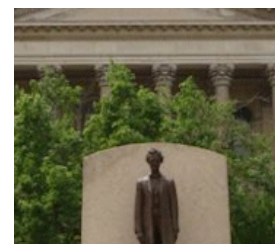
An override that made Rauner look particularly inept caused [HB 3649](#) to become [Public Act 100-0552](#), requiring state agencies to report their fiscal obligations to the Comptroller in a timely manner. [Rauner called the bill](#) just an effort by Comptroller Susana Mendoza to "micromanage" the executive branch.

With overwhelming support from the GOP caucuses, override motions passed 112-0 in the House and 52-3 in the Senate. (Who were the three overly obsequious nay-voters on the Senate override? Minority Leader [Sen. Bill Brady](#), R-Bloomington, [Sen. Jim Oberweis](#), R-North Aurora, and [Sen. Dave Syverson](#), R-Rockford.)

When a governor's own party members help the other party override a veto, it make it just all the easier for them to do it again in the future. Whether this results from over-vetoing or from acts that alienate the governor's party (and Rauner has both problems), it weakens a governor significantly. [Turnaround Agenda](#)? Forget it.

It's easy to vote for a property tax freeze, as the House proved Wednesday in passing [SB 851](#) by a [vote of 75-32](#). But it's also difficult to get the legislature to take any action severely jeopardizing public school districts, as the Senate indicated on Thursday by failing give the House's amendment on the bill a concurrence vote.

The [amendment that is now the bill](#) is pretty complicated. Obviously, it would curtail growth in local funding for school districts and other units of government. As a gesture of relief, it would exempt districts on financial watch or warning lists. But I'm reliably informed that its harm to schools would still be profound.



Why was the bill amended and called for a vote in the House without assurance that the Senate would concur? According to House Republicans - many of whom voted with the more left-leaning Democrats in opposing the bill - the vote was a sham, an act of political posturing with no true intent to see it become law.

My tendency is to agree with those Republicans' assessment of the situation. Elections are coming up in 2018, of course, and for a candidate to be able to truthfully claim to have voted for a property tax freeze would be a political asset. Giving incumbents such an ability is one of the things legislative leaders do.

But what about honesty? It is not a part of the election process. Will HB 851 be considered in the Senate when legislators return for the 2018 session in January? I don't think so. Arguments that Illinois property tax rates are too high have merit, but it's hard to fix that when confidence in state funding is so low.

Education entities were major factors in "floating" the state during the two years when there was no state budget, as reported in a [report by Crain's](#) Chicago Business. As Comptroller Mendoza [began this week funding vouchers](#) from a state bond issue, for example, the Teachers Retirement System was owed \$350.4 million.

The University of Illinois was treated as a lender to the state of \$190 million. More than 150 school districts and community colleges have been owed by the state at least \$1 million - many far more than that. Among private interests outside of healthcare, school vendor NCS Pearson was owed \$15.1 million.

As Rauner has recently conceded, it is very costly for the state to be indebted to other units of government and to private corporations - which requires by law 12% interest per year. Mendoza told Crains that the penalties for that kind of debt have already accumulated to about \$900 million.

But despite its image as a fiscal black hole, the state got a 3.5% rate for its recent \$6 billion bond issue. The proceeds of that issue are targeted mainly to the massive healthcare debt the state has incurred in the last two years. Rauner now says he may seek more such debt-reduction bonding as part of the FY 2019 budget.

Where do we go from here? This is the first time since Rauner became governor that the legislature has been able to adjourn its fall veto session and expect not to have to return to the Capitol until the spring session convenes in January. So lawmakers - and scribblers like me - can think about taking some time off.

I'll stay in touch, of course. And there are some projects I must get moving on. I've recently taken the "under construction" sign off my main web site, but it [still needs a lot of work](#). (All suggestions welcome.) Plus there is invoicing. I can't tell you how many of you have said you want to give me money but you don't know how.

Within the next couple of weeks, you'll know how to pay me.

You'll hear from me with some regularity until about the middle of December. After that, we will be guided by the schedule described in [HJR 88](#), the adjournment resolution that was passed in the Senate on Thursday. Meanwhile, your comments and questions will be responded to, as always. Use the link below.

ISNS archives back through 2015 are available again for subscribers. You remember the process. Go to [this web page](#). Remember, this page location is a secret, just between us insiders, so don't go blabbing it around. Thanks. - Jim

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