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# COOK-WITTER REPORT

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*"Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall." - Larry Wilde, The Merry Book of Christmas*



*The Statehouse rotunda holiday decorations in 1944. Photo courtesy of the Illinois State Archives' Doc Helms Collection.*

## Veto Session Wrap-up

Despite a logistically challenging November veto session in borrowed quarters, lawmakers tackled electricity rates, pay increases for minimum wage earners, and safeguards for pets and service animals.

Because both legislative chambers in the Statehouse are under construction, the Senate met in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and the House met in the Old State Capitol while committee meetings were held in the usual rooms at the Statehouse and Stratton Building. Vans shuttled legislators and staff between the sites.

The House and Senate approved legislation that will increase the state's minimum hourly wage by one dollar, to \$7.50. Under the measure, the minimum hourly wage will rise to \$8.25 in 2010. If the governor approves the measure (which he supported), it will take effect on July 1, 2007.

One of the biggest issues to come before lawmakers during the veto session was whether or not to freeze electric rates for Ameren and Commonwealth Edison customers. Those rates have been frozen for 10 years as a result of deregulation. Some estimates say the prices could increase more than fifty percent once the freeze is removed in January. Electricity companies say the price hikes are needed to stay in business. The House and Senate considered separate



*The House of Representatives met in Springfield's historic Old State Capitol.*

*Photo Courtesy of Jeff Schuette, Illinois House of Representatives photographer.*

measures which offered different methods of addressing the issue. The House measure, which would have maintained the rate freeze for three years, failed in the House. The Senate measure, which would increase the electric rate incrementally, passed only the Senate. Lawmakers may address this issue again in January.

Another issue that arose during veto session was a supplemental appropriations bill. Senate Amendment # 1 to SB 1537 becomes the bill and has passed the Senate. It is now in the House for consideration.

Lawmakers also dealt with an issue that arose because of Hurricane Katrina's devastation. After Katrina, many people lost their pets and service animals, which caused not only heartbreak but health and sanitation problems. As a result, the federal government required states to approve legislation to ensure that won't happen again. Illinois lawmakers approved a bill that requires the Illinois Emergency Management Agency to have a plan for helping disaster victims who own pets or service animals. The bill awaits the governor's approval.

To check on the status of a bill, go to the Illinois General Assembly's Web site, [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov), and search for the bill by number or keyword.



*The Senate met in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Photo Courtesy of Brandy Rees, Office of the Senate President*

# General Election: Official Results

The 2006 General Election on November 7th proved to be a large victory for Democrats. For the first time in 65 years, they swept all constitutional officers' positions. They gained five seats to secure a veto-proof majority in the Senate, while adding one to their majority in the House of Representatives.

The Green Party, a third political party, unsuccessfully ran candidates for every constitutional office, but it made a significant showing. The party received enough votes (more than five percent) to be considered an "established party" under Illinois law. (Rich Whitney, the Green's

gubernatorial candidate, garnered 10 percent of that vote.) This new classification makes it easier for the party to run candidates in future Illinois elections.

At the end of November the Illinois State Board of Elections posted official results from the General Election on its Web site: [www.elections.il.gov](http://www.elections.il.gov). (To view the vote totals, go to: [www.elections.il.gov/ElectionInformation/GetVoteTotals.aspx](http://www.elections.il.gov/ElectionInformation/GetVoteTotals.aspx).) Perhaps the only surprise was the number of write-in candidates for governor -- 17.

Here's a summary of the constitutional officers' vote totals statewide:



## Governor:

Rod R. Blagojevich, Democrat .....	1,736,219
Judy Baar Topinka, Republican .....	1,368,682
Rich Whitney, Green Party .....	361,163
17 write-in candidates .....	20,607

## Attorney General:

Lisa Madigan, Democrat.....	2,520,357
Stewart Umholtz, Republican .....	843,352
David Black, Green Party .....	114,761

## Treasurer:

Alexander Giannoulas, Democrat.....	1,837,634
Christine Radogno, Republican .....	1,404,756
Dan Rodriguez Schlorff, Green Party .....	164,261

## Secretary of State:

Jesse White, Democrat .....	2,204,154
Dan Rutherford, Republican .....	1,158,671
Karen Young Peterson, Green Party .....	145,672

## Comptroller:

Daniel W. Hynes, Democrat.....	2,198,071
Carole Pankau, Republican.....	1,076,913
Alicia Snyder, Green Party .....	145,884

## Transitions

On December 15, **Tammy Duckworth** became the new Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. The Iraqi war veteran and unsuccessful congressional candidate was appointed to the spot by Governor Rod Blagojevich in November. Her predecessor, **Roy L. Dolgos**, is now Deputy Director of Administration with the Illinois Department of Transportation's Division of Highways.

On December 1, former **Senator Miguel del Valle** became Chicago's new City Clerk after resigning from the Senate. He is completing the term of **James Laski** who resigned as City Clerk. Former **Representative William "Willie" Delgado** was appointed to take del Valle's Senate seat and Luis Arroyo will replace Delgado in the House of Representatives.

On November 17, **Erwin McEwen** was named acting director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. He was formerly the Department's Deputy Director for Monitoring and Quality Assurance. Former DCFS Director **Bryan Samuels** resigned.



# 2007 Tentative Session Calendar House and Senate

(ALL Session dates and deadlines are subject to change at ANY time!)

## January

January 7 thru 9 – 94th General Assembly Session  
 January 10 – 95th General Assembly sworn in at Noon  
 January 11 – Senate Session  
 January 15 – **Martin Luther King Jr. Day- State Holiday**  
 January 22 – House Perfunctory  
 January 24 – Senate Perfunctory  
 January 26 – House Perfunctory  
 January 29 – House Perfunctory  
 January 31 – House Session; Senate Perfunctory

## February

February 1 – (House DEADLINE\* for LRB Requests)  
 February 5 – House Perfunctory  
 February 6 thru 8 – House & Senate Session  
 February 9 – Senate Session (Senate Intro of SBs DEADLINE\*)  
 February 12 – **Lincoln’s Birthday – State Holiday**  
 February 14 thru 16 – House Session  
 February 19 – **President’s Day – State Holiday**  
 February 21 – Governor’s Budget Address  
 February 21 thru 23 – House & Senate Session  
 February 26 – House Perfunctory  
 February 27 – House Perfunctory (House intro of HBs DEADLINE\*);  
 Consolidated Primary Election  
 February 28 – House & Senate Session

## March

March 1 thru 2 – House & Senate Session  
 March 6 thru 8 – House & Senate Session  
 March 11 – Daylight Savings Time  
 March 13 thru 15 – House & Senate Session  
 March 15 – (Senate SBs from Committee DEADLINE\*)  
 March 17 – St. Patrick’s Day  
 March 20 thru 23 – House & Senate Session  
 March 23 – (House HBs from Committee DEADLINE\*)

March 27 thru 29 – House & Senate Session  
 March 30 – Senate Session (Senate - SBs 3rd Reading DEADLINE\*)

## April

April 1 – Palm Sunday  
 April 3 – Passover  
 April 6 – Good Friday  
 April 8 – Easter  
 April 9 – House Perfunctory  
 April 17 – House Session; Consolidated Election  
 April 18 thru 20 – House & Senate Session  
 April 23 – House Session  
 April 24 thru 26 – House & Senate Session  
 April 27 – House Session; (House- HBs 3rd Reading DEADLINE\*)

## May

May 1 thru 3 – House & Senate Session  
 May 7 – House Perfunctory  
 May 8 thru 10 – House & Senate Session  
 May 10 – (Senate DEADLINE\* for HBs from Committee)  
 May 13 – Mother’s Day  
 May 14 – Senate Session  
 May 15 thru 18 – House & Senate Session  
 May 18 – (House DEADLINE\* for SBs from Committee)  
 May 19 – Armed Forces Day  
 May 21 thru 31 – House & Senate Session  
 May 25 – (Senate DEADLINE\* for HBs 3rd Reading)  
 May 28 – Memorial Day Observed House & Senate Session  
 May 31 – (House DEADLINE\* for SBs 3rd Reading)  
 May 31 – (Constitutional DEADLINE for passage of bills with simple majority vote)  
 May 31 – TENTATIVE Adjournment

*\*All House & Senate Deadlines are for SUBSTANTIVE (Non-Appropriation) BILLS only.*

