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The following is a general overview of the legislative activity occurring during the Illinois General Assembly's 2000 veto session. Reports also include detailed information about legislative activities of direct interest to each client.

**CLIENT REPORT FOR 2000 VETO SESSION**

The 2000 veto session concluded on Thursday, November 30, with relatively little legislative activity having occurred. The 91<sup>st</sup> General Assembly will reconvene to conclude its business on January 8 and 9, 2001. The 92<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly will be inaugurated and commence its business on January 10, 2001, at which point all legislative measures currently pending before the 91<sup>st</sup> General Assembly will be dead. This veto session was probably more significant for what measures did not pass rather than those that did. This letter reports on: (1) the major issues of general interest which occurred during the veto session; and (2) issues of specific interest to you.

**I. SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

***A. Chicago Bears Soldier Field Proposal***

In what was the only major action taken by the General Assembly during the fall veto session, legislators approved a \$587 million stadium deal for the Chicago Bears and Soldier Field which calls for \$387 million worth of bonds to be issued by the Illinois

Sports Facility Authority, which was created just over a decade ago to build the new Comiskey Park for the Chicago White Sox. These funds, along with an additional \$200 million from the Chicago Bears (\$100 million of that in the form of a loan from the National Football League), will go towards a complete renovation of Soldier Field. The renovation will leave the historic colonnades on the existing structure and “replace” the interior of the structure with a state-of-the-art stadium facility.

Other amenities included in the stadium package will be 19 acres of new parkland around Soldier Field, new roadwork to upgrade the traffic flow into the stadium area, and \$22 million in future infrastructure upgrades at Comiskey Park. The bonds will be repaid by Chicago’s existing two percent hotel-motel tax, which was originally enacted to provide funding for construction of the new Comiskey Park. If the tax does not generate enough money to pay off the bonds, Chicago -- not the state -- will be liable to make up the difference.

Of note, proposals to provide funding for minor league baseball stadiums around the state, to create a sports authority to lure the St. Louis Cardinals to Illinois, and to allow Meigs Field to stay open were *not* included in the final package. The stadium construction is expected to be completed in time for the 2003 football season, causing the Bears to play elsewhere (already the University of Illinois-Champaign/Urbana, Northwestern University, and the University of Notre Dame are vying to be the interim venue for home Bears games) during the 2002 football season.

### **B. Codification of Pension Benefits for State Employees**

State lawmakers approved additional pension benefits for state employees in accordance with a new four-year contract negotiated last spring between the state and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union Council 31 (“AFSCME”), which represents 44,000 state employees. Legislation which passed both chambers yesterday codifies the “rule of 85” pension benefit which allows long time state employees to retire early without financial penalties. Generally, under the plan, a state employee may opt for early retirement if his or her age plus years on the job equal 85. Not included in this legislation was the codification of other provisions of the contract, including one supported by Senate Republicans requiring “zero-tolerance” for drug use amongst state employees, particularly employees of the Department of Corrections.

### **C. Other Items Of Note**

Of significant note, the fall veto session ended without passage of an extension on the elimination of the five percent state sales tax on gasoline, which looks to be dead as it lacks support from both House Democrats and Governor Ryan due to budgetary concerns. The session also ended with lawmakers rejecting a tax rebate for senior citizens; declining to fund \$1-an-hour raises for workers who care for the developmentally disabled; opting against pumping more money into the state’s

Comprehensive Health Insurance Plan (“CHIP”), a health insurance program for people unable to get it elsewhere; and rejecting proposed rules to protect customers of payday loan companies from spiraling debt.

## **II. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

The fall veto session ended without many major legislative initiatives being considered. For this reason, the House and Senate scheduled extra session days on January 8 and 9, 2001 prior to the inauguration of the 92<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly on January 10, 2001.

As you are aware, following the November elections, the partisan composition of each chamber of the Illinois General Assembly remained unchanged. The House continues with a majority of Democrats, who control 62 seats to the Republican’s 56. In the Senate, Republicans hold a 32-27 edge over Democrats. Additionally, all four legislative caucuses met during the veto session, with each pledging to support their current respective leaders for the upcoming General Assembly. The election of President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, and the respective Minority Leaders will officially take place following the inauguration of the 92<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly on January 10.