



# Jil's Statehouse Report

News from Springfield from State Rep. Jil Tracy  
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## *Spring Legislation introduced by Jil*

**HB4179-** Provides that the Senior Citizens Homestead Exemption and the Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption continue if the taxpayer becomes a resident of a facility licensed under the Assisted Living and Shared Housing Act. Prior law only allowed the continuance of this exemption to those who entered a nursing home facility. This discrepancy in the law was brought to my attention by a constituent who had entered an Assisted Living facility. Although the constituent maintained her home ownership, she no longer received the same senior property tax benefits as before. HB4179 eliminates the discrepancy and allows seniors who enter either a nursing home facility or assisted living facility to retain the full tax breaks as intended.

**HB4388-** Creates an income tax credit for employers who pay wages to one or more net new employees. This would provide a credit of 50% of the Illinois income taxes withheld by the taxpayer with respect to the net new employee or provide a credit of 75% of Illinois income taxes withheld by the taxpayers with respect to the net new employee if the taxpayer provides health and retirement benefits to the net new employee. The credit may not be carried forward or back and may not reduce the taxpayer's liability to less than zero. The legislation creates an incentive for Illinois businesses to hire additional employees helping to reduce unemployment in Illinois at a time when the state economy is lagging.

**HB4561-** Increases the maximum speed limit outside an urban district for **any** vehicle on interstate highways to 65 miles per hour with the exception of Cook, Dupage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will Counties. A recent study conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety indicated that a uniform 65 M.P.H. speed limit does not cause an unusual increase in highway fatalities or injuries in states where it is current law. Furthermore, this bill will make Illinois trucking speed limits more consistent with speed limits in surrounding states. Illinois is one of the few states in the nation that restricts commercial trucks to the lower speed limit on interstate highways.

**HB4841-** Creates the offense of copper burglary. A person commits the offense when he or she knowingly enters a property with the intent to steal, remove or attempt to remove any copper or copper alloy. The first offense is a Class A misdemeanor, a second offense is a Class 4 felony and any third or subsequent offense is a Class 3 felony. As the monetary value of copper rose dramatically in the last few years copper thefts followed the same trend. Public utilities, construction sites and abandoned homes have become frequent victims of copper theft and it is my intention that this law, if enacted, will help to reduce these thefts and give law enforcement an additional tool in prosecuting the perpetrators.

**HB5289-** The bill would amend the Code of Civil Procedure in regards to proper venue of a court case. For state residents, venue would lie in the county of the plaintiff's residence or where the cause of action arose. If no defendants are residents of the State, action can only be commenced in the county where the transaction or part of the transaction took place. In addition, a corporation, partnership or unincorporated associations are only residents of a county where its registered office or other office is located. If no defendants are residents of Illinois, and the transaction did not occur in the state, the cause of action must be dismissed

for lack of proper venue. Illinois has some of the worst counties in the country with regards to the number of lawsuits filed. This practice is driving businesses out of the state, as the cost of operating in Illinois is becoming too expensive. Lawsuits that have little to no nexus with the county where the suit is filed are often filed in Illinois because of liberal venue provisions. If this were to become law it would help to curb that trend.

**HB5544-** Allow the Department of Natural Resources to issue an additional antlerless only deer permit to each licensed deer hunter in counties DNR considers overpopulated.

**HB5901-** Will include anhydrous ammonia in the definition of "methamphetamine precursor" with possession punishable by a Class 1 Felony. Exempts farmers or a representative of a farmer engaged in agricultural activities from violations including possession, procurement, transportation, storage or delivery of anhydrous ammonia. The legislation will ensure those who are caught using anhydrous ammonia for the production of meth will face severe penalties.

**HB5942-** Appropriates \$250,000 from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Agriculture for grants through the Anhydrous Ammonia Security Grant Program. This will give storage locations of anhydrous ammonia additional revenue to ensure their facilities have adequate security measures in place. This program was begun in 2005 has had complete success in halting thefts where the security measures are in place. The original funding is almost depleted.

**HB5945-** Beginning in fiscal year 2009 the legislation would prohibit Road Fund moneys from being appropriated to the Department of Central Management Services, the Department of Employment Security, the Secretary of State (until fiscal year 2011), the Department of Revenue, the Court of Claims or any other State agency (other than the Department of State Police and the Department of Transportation) for the purposes of the provisions concerning appropriations from the Road Fund. This legislation is suggested to restore the Road Fund to its original intent, the construction and maintenance of Illinois's highways and roads. Over the years, "diversions" have been allowed from the Road Fund to state agencies for non-construction related projects further neglecting our roads and infrastructure.

**HB5953-** Requires the Department of Public Health to develop, publish and disseminate a brochure to educate the general public about telemedicine. According to The Joint Task Force on Rural Health and Medically Underserved Areas, the region of the State located south of Springfield lacks a sufficient number of qualified mental health professionals. As a result, individuals in the Southern part of the State are unable to find mental health providers. This brochure would inform individuals of options other than traveling that would allow them to see an in-state professional.

The House and Senate are busy trying to get their bills through the committee hearing process with the deadline set for March 13<sup>th</sup>. Last year the deadline was extended in the House. However, the Speaker has given no indication if this will happen this year, so this last week of deadline should be fast and furious.