

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Legislative Committee
CHAIRPERSON: John Lang, Chairperson
DATE/TIME January 21, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.
PRESENT:

☒ John Lang	☒ LaDon Trost	☒ Peggy Bastian (E)	☒ Don Zillig
☒ Lynn Gallagher (E)	☒ John Schultz	☐ Michael Dittmar	

A quorum was established.

Other Board Members: Dianne Allendorf and Joseph Heitkamp. Daisha Boehm appeared electronically.

Others: Angela Kaiser, Senator Andrew Chesney and Citizen Gerald Podraza.

1. **Call to Order:** Committee Chairperson John Lang called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. **Minutes Approval:**
 - a) Minutes of the December 12, 2024 Legislative Committee meeting – **Schultz made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2024 Legislative Committee meeting. Seconded by Zillig and motion passed.**
3. **Citizens' Comments:** Gerald Podraza, Galena, spoke. Podraza addressed couple of issues related to Senator Andrew Chesney's Legislative Record.
4. **Unfinished Business:**
 - a) FY2023/FY2024 Strategic Goals and Plans – The goals and plans were briefly reviewed. Senator Andrew Chesney updated the Committee on the 1% tax for EMS services. That specific bill is getting no traction, according to the Senator.
5. **New Business:**
 - a) A welcome to guest speaker State Senator Andrew Chesney – The Committee welcomed guest speaker, Senator Andrew Chesney.
 - b) Possible topics of discussion:
 - i. Anything of significance that came out of the Override Session? – Senator Chesney said there were some term changes; the term 'prostitution' was replaced with 'commercial sex worker'. He stated that he did not want to frustrate anyone; however, he feels they should be spending a substantial amount of their time trying to improve the economic situation in the state and maybe lower some taxes rather than focusing on terms and such. Chesney also discussed a hemp bill that would affect residents. The hemp stores mirroring cannabis are problematic and they have many of the same effects of cannabis, however, they are not regulated and taxed the way cannabis is. Chesney said there are improvements that are technical in nature, being made on the Safe-T Act. There have been State's Attorneys who have reached out to the Attorney General's office to clean up the language on that. There was more discussion.
 - ii. Lame Duck – Based upon statements from Governor Pritzker and Mayor Johnson, the Sessions were going to be about Trump-Proofing Illinois – What changed? – Chesney explained he would be cautious from a County perspective and be mindful of the implications that Governor Pritzker is causing by his interactions

with the President. Regardless if you are a Democrat or Republican, it is of no advantage when you have an Executive picking a fight with another Executive with a bigger pot of money that you rely on. Pritzker should be interacting with the current President as he would with any President, which is bipartisan. That is what is best for the people. There are many federally funded programs for the State of Illinois and those could potentially be under great review if the Governor refuses to be cooperative.

- iii. Two (2) Legislative items the People of Jo Daviess County support are UTV's on Public Roads and a 1% Service Tax to help support EMS Services – Senator Chesney described that a lot of the issues with UTV's on Public roads are predicated on the Secretary of State's office. The Senator has spoken to him personally a multitude of times and the SOS does not believe this to be a priority. Chesney understands it would be great for tourism; however, the issue really needs a state fix. The opposition makes it very challenging. The associations that Counties belong to have shown support of these issues, but there does not seem to be a coalition that is willing to take on the massive issue of UTV's on Public roads.
- iv. What are your Legislative priorities this coming Session and what can we do to help? – Senator Chesney referred to the Republican Party in Illinois as the Opposition party to the majority parties' viewpoints. He views his role as trying to stop, oppose or change toxic policies that hurt our communities. The Senator said that 90% of the bills passed are bipartisan. There is a lot of work they are doing that is bipartisan and in agreement; however, the biggest issue in 2025 will be the over \$3 billion budget shortfall in Illinois.
- v. What do you expect the Majority Parties' priorities to be this Session? – One of the bills filed by Senator Chesney was to allow more time to protest property taxes. Another bill introduced, would allow a tow truck company to transport someone with a disability, as opposed to creating an unsafe situation on the side of the road when an individual's vehicle breaks down. He informed the Committee on some other bills he recently filed.
- vi. There were three (3) Advisory Questions on the November Ballot – Do you expect any action to be taken on them? – The Senator explained there are only three advisory questions that can go on a ballot at one time. Those questions are there to lock out another group's question. Chesney gave an example of a group that was circulating petitions regarding the state dictating what was being taught to their children, and they came close with the amount of signatures needed, so the legislation put three questions on to stop the group from adding theirs.
- vii. Right now, there are projections – Illinois is facing a \$3.2 billion budget deficit – How do you expect this to be addressed? – Senator Chesney stated that the majority party works on the budget. He has asked to be at the table and they have allowed Senate Republicans to have some input. He explained that there is a good section of the budget that he would support. Chesney believes they will ask for Republican support on this budget for the first time in over five years – but that is only to cover them because of the large deficit.

- c) Article on people leaving Illinois – The Senator confirmed the out-migration of people from the state. He said that we are backfilling the population with people that want services and are attracted to an entitlement mentality. He went on to explain that the death tax and the way family farms have to re-mortgage and purchase land that has already been taxed, is very problematic. For those not in the farming community that have a large net worth, when they pass away, they are losing 16% right off the top. Those individuals put money into our communities, and they are leaving the state.

6. **Legislative issues Committee members or County Officials want the Committee to be aware of and take action on at another meeting:** Trost spoke about prevailing wage and how it affected the Courthouse Renovation Project. There was also mention of the hiring of in-state workers and iPass changes.
7. **Citizens' Comments:** Senator Chesney mentioned Kim Scace that runs his District office and thanked her. Judy Chiarelli, Chair of the Jo Daviess County Democratic Party, spoke. She considered Senator Chesney's comments regarding Democrats, Democratic policies and the Democratic legislation coming out of Springfield, to be biased and divisive. Chiarelli believes it is not a productive stance for us to take in this county when there are so many problems to deal with. In the City of Galena, Democrats are the majority. She feels it would be best to have a stance conducive to Democrats and Republicans working together. Citizen Logan Now of East Dubuque spoke next. He commented that he was very off-put at what he had seen during the meeting. He said that the nods in agreement from the Committee members seated at the table were what concerned him the most. Mr. Now said he knows many young people in the county and that the board members do not represent that group. One of his concerns was the two-gender idea. Another was that there was misinformation given on many issues discussed. He informed the Committee that his intention is to run for a seat on the County Board.
8. **Board Member Concerns:** Zillig said that Senator Chesney's job is Jo Daviess County and it is what is best for the County and not what is best for either party. Trost thanked Senator Chesney for attending. Lang agreed and said that we are fortunate to have Chesney as our Senator.
9. Next regular meeting – Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.
10. Meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m. following a motion made by Schultz. Seconded by Zillig and motion carried by voice vote.