

As people across the United States usher in a new decade, a wave of new laws will bring changes big and small to each state. Every year hundreds of laws are passed by the Illinois Legislature. These laws are the results of actions from citizens, activists, lobbyists, and various state lawmakers. As was stated in the student worktext, both the federal and state lawmakers are passing these laws to improve the everyday life of the residents in the state.

### The Illinois General Assembly at Work

On January 1st, 2020, 255 new laws were added to Illinois' list of statutes. These new laws are reflective of the efforts of the 101st General Assembly. These were laws imposed under current Democratic Governor J.B. Pritzker.

Lawmakers have the discretion to set the effective date of any new law on any date they choose. The constitution, however, says any bill passed after May 31st of a given year cannot take effect until June 1st of the following year unless an earlier date is approved by three-fifths majorities in both the House and Senate. Bills passed before June 1st that do not provide an effective date become law on January 1st of the following year, or on the date the governor signs them, whichever is later.

Here is a sampling of the laws passed by the Illinois General Assembly that took effect on January 1st, 2020. They are listed by their general category. As you will notice, some of the new laws may affect you as a teenager or young adult.

### Public Safety Laws

- Drivers are not allowed to use an electronic device to stream or watch videos while on the road under this new law, with violations punishable by a fine of \$75 for a first offense, \$100 for a second, \$125 for a third and \$150 for a fourth or subsequent offense.
- After three Illinois State Troopers were killed in crashes while on duty in 2019, the state's *Scott's Law* is getting an update. Scott's Law requires drivers to change lanes, slow down, and proceed with caution in approaching emergency vehicles or disabled cars on the side of the highway.
- The fines for illegally passing school buses will double, from \$150 to \$300 for an initial violation and \$500 to \$1,000 for a subsequent violation.
- The maximum penalty for hitting a construction worker in a marked work zone increases from \$10,000 to \$25,000.
- Illinois will remove the statute of limitations on criminal sexual assault, aggravated criminal sexual assault, and aggravated criminal sexual abuse, regardless of the age of the victim.

### Family and Health Laws

- A law outlines the 21 rights of women during pregnancy and childbirth, including the right to receive care consistent with current scientific evidence about benefits and risks, choosing a birth setting, access to certain information, and the right to be treated with respect regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion.
- Starting January 1st, insurers will be required to cover medically necessary epinephrine injectors, "epi-pens," diagnostic mammograms, and skin cancer screenings.
- Under this new measure, insurers are required to cover long-term antibiotic therapy (including doctor visits and testing) for people with tick-borne illnesses like Lyme disease, among others.
- Companies such as Ancestry.com and 23andMe are prohibited from sharing consumers' genetic testing results and other personally identifiable information with any health or life insurance company without the consumer's written consent.

### Animal/Pet Laws

- Brought forth in the wake of an overnight fire at a kennel near West Chicago that killed 31 dogs in January, this measure requires dog and cat kennels to be equipped with a fire sprinkler or alarm system in each building housing animals if the kennel is not staffed at all times.
- Starting in the new year, pet owners are required to have a veterinarian vaccinate their cats older than four months against rabies (with a certificate issued showing the vaccination was completed). Feral cats must also receive a rabies vaccination, but only if they are brought to the vet to be spayed or neutered.
- This measure designates the month of April as "Healthy Pet Month" in Illinois, during which pet owners across the state will be encouraged to review their pets' health needs and arrange for annual exams with their veterinarians to "enhance and extend their pet's quality of life."

### Education-Related Laws

- All Illinois high schoolers with a grade point average in the top 10 percent of their class will be accepted to Northern Illinois University, Eastern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University, and Western Illinois University (provided they meet other requirements and test scores).
- Starting in the 2020-2021 school year, U.S. history classes for K-12 students must include instruction on the history of Illinois.

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- Aimed at expanding access to higher education, this new law creates the Illinois Higher Education Savings Program, in which the state will deposit \$50 into a college savings account for every child born or adopted in Illinois after December 31st, 2020. The funds (plus interest and earnings) can be used for higher education expenses like tuition, fees, books and more if parents or guardians claim the funds by the child’s 10th birthday, the child has completed secondary education or turned 18 and is an Illinois resident.

## Business-Related Laws

- For the first time since 2010, Illinois’ minimum wage is going up in the new year. Beginning January 1st, the minimum wage will jump from \$8.25 to \$9.25 statewide, with the minimum wage for tipped workers and employees under 18 (only those working part-time) increasing proportionally as well. Then in July, it will increase again to \$10, then \$11 beginning on January 1, 2021. It will keep climbing until it reaches \$15 per hour, beginning on January 1st, 2025.
- Employers must obtain consent from potential employees being interviewed for openings if the interview uses artificial intelligence analysis.
- Under a new law, companies that collect personal information about Illinois residents will be required to report any data breaches impacting more than 500 Illinois residents to the state attorney general, as well as steps taken or plans related to the incident. The attorney general can then publish information about the breach to help give consumers protect themselves even in the wake of relatively smaller-scale incidents.
- The Illinois Wage Payment and Collection Act stipulates that gratuities and tips to employees are property of the employees and cannot be retained by the employer.

## Cannabis

- The most-discussed and highest-profile of the laws going into effect in the new year is likely the legalization of recreational cannabis. Illinois will become the 11th state to legalize marijuana. Adults 21 and over may legally purchase recreational marijuana from a state-regulated recreational dispensary.
- This measure allows a trained school nurse or administrator to administer or supervise the self-administration of cannabis-infused products to a student who is part of the state’s medical marijuana program, with the written permission of a parent or guardian as well as proof of the student’s participation in the program in the form of the registry ID card.

## Gender and Bathrooms

- This law requires all single-occupancy restroom in a public place to be identified as for use by all genders, with a sign indicating it is for no more than one person at a time (unless for family or assisted-use) and not designating it for any specific gender.
- A new law requires every public place to have at least one “safe, sanitary, convenient, and publicly accessible” baby diaper changing station accessible to either both men and women or in both the men’s and women’s restrooms.
- This new law requires the Illinois secretary of state to allow applicants for a driver’s license or state identification card to choose from “male,” “female” or “non-binary” when designating sex – but it may not take effect until the secretary of state’s office updates its license and ID issuance system.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many days are allowed for a governor to sign or veto a bill? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What happens if the governor does not take action? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What law described above do you favor the most, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Is there a law described above that you disagree with, if so, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. As we have learned, there are about 255 new Illinois laws in 2020. Identify and describe another new law NOT listed above.  
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