

The Illinois General Assembly at Work

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.

On January 1, 2019, 253 new laws will be added to Illinois' list of statutes. These new laws are reflective of the efforts of the 100th General Assembly, which met during the Land of Lincoln's bicentennial year. These were also the final laws imposed under outgoing Republican Governor Bruce Rauner.

Looking ahead, an even busier year could be on the horizon in Springfield with Democratic Governor-elect J.B. Pritzker set to take over January 14. Topics that may appear in the upcoming legislative sessions includes legalizing marijuana and sports betting.

Here is a sampling of the 253 laws passed by the Illinois General Assembly that take effect in 2019. 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

- This new law ensures children are correctly restrained and safe while traveling in cars. You must have children under the age of 2 secured in a rear-facing child-restraint system. Children who weigh more than 40 pounds or are more than 40 inches tall are exempt.
- All synthetic cannabinoids will be illegal in Illinois if they are not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration – or if they're misused. This closes a loophole in which manufacturers could evade the law with slight alterations to their formulas.
- Starting in 2019, stalking laws will be expanded to include social media. This stalking law includes unwanted messages sent and received via social media apps. The law also will allow businesses, places of worship and schools to seek restraining orders against stalkers.
- A new law excuses nursing mothers from jury duty at their request. Previously, exemptions were only available to women living in counties with populations between 75,000 and 3 million. The new law excuses all nursing mothers statewide, regardless of county population size.

Gun Related Laws

- A new law requires a 72-hour waiting period for all gun purchases made in the state, including those made by nonresidents at Illinois State Police-recognized gun shows. Previously, Illinois mandated a 72-hour waiting period for handgun purchases only; assault weapons, including the AR-15, could be obtained following a 24-hour waiting period.
- The so-called red flag law allows relatives of a gun owner to petition a court to grant a form of restraining order should evidence prove that gun ownership is a danger to themselves or others. Police can also petition a judge to grant a lethal order of protection.

If granted, the gun owner's FOID – a firearm owner's identification card – would be suspended and their firearms removed for between 14 days and a maximum of six months.

- Illinois hunters have a new wardrobe option: blaze pink. A new law states hunters may wear blaze pink or blaze orange during the firearm deer season and upland game season.

Animal Laws

- Law enforcement officers may take temporary custody of pets that are suffering from extreme heat, cold or other life-threatening conditions, thanks to a new law. An officer can seek veterinary care for the rescued animal and must attempt to contact the pet's owner, who will be responsible for any associated veterinary costs.
- Thwarting the international elephant and rhinoceros poaching industry is the aim of a new Illinois law. Illinois is now one of nine states that have entirely banned ivory sales, as African elephant and rhinoceros populations continue to dwindle.

Laws for Schools

- All Illinois schools must conduct at least one law enforcement-led active shooter safety drill each year. The drill must be conducted within 90 days of the first day of school and include participation from all school personnel and students present at the time of the drill.
- High school students can take as many dual credit courses as they'd like starting in 2019. A new law removes limits on the number of dual credit courses a student may take and prohibits limits on how many dual credits a student may earn.
- All public universities and community colleges must offer a course that focuses on black history. A new law outlines topics the course should cover, such as history of the African slave trade, slavery in America and the vestiges of slavery in the country.

Business Laws

- If you're required to use your personal phone or computer for work, your boss will be required to have a reimbursement policy starting next year.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What law described above do you favor the most, why?

2. Is there a law described above that you disagree with, if so why? _____
3. As we have learned, there were over 250 new laws for 2019. Identify and describe another new law NOT listed above.

