



Statements on new Illinois House Speaker

January 13 2021 12:54 PM

SPRINGFIELD – State Rep. Chris Welch is poised to become the next Illinois House Speaker today. This marks the end of an era under House Speaker Mike Madigan, coinciding with Madigan's 50th anniversary in the Statehouse. Prior to today, a total of three Democratic state representatives had cast their vote against his speakership. Matt Paprocki, president of the Illinois Policy Institute, offered the following statement:

"This is a historic day for the General Assembly. For the first time in nearly four decades, Speaker Madigan was not voted into power by members of his own party.

"No state gives their House speaker as much power as Illinois. Under Madigan's 36 years as speaker, Illinois' finances deteriorated from a perfect credit rating and just under \$6 billion in unfunded pension debt to the lowest credit rating in the nation and over \$144 billion in pension debt. And the state's notoriety for public corruption has been backed up by 1,978 public corruption convictions since Madigan first became speaker, more than any other state and over one a week.

"This vote must become a catalyst for lasting, meaningful change. Illinois can only reverse its culture of corruption and recurring financial crises by dismantling the system that has allowed for one person to control so much power, starting with the House Rules. For the first time in nearly four decades, state lawmakers have an opportunity to change this power structure and finally put an end to the endless cycle of debt and corruption. This moment in Illinois state politics should not be just about a new face, but about a new way of doing the people's business."

Illinois AFL-CIO Statement:

"The Illinois AFL-CIO, representing nearly 1 million working families across the state, today offers a hearty congratulations to new Illinois House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch. Speaker Welch has a proven track record of fighting for working families, and we are eager to work with him, Senate President Harmon and Gov. Pritzker to address the significant challenges facing the state of Illinois as we begin 2021."

Illinois Federation of Teachers Statement:

“Today, the Illinois House of Representatives made history by electing its first Black Speaker, Representative Emanuel “Chris” Welch. On behalf of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, I congratulate Speaker Welch on his momentous victory. As a state representative, Speaker Welch has been a friend and ally in protecting middle-class families from devastating cuts to public services and healthcare and an ardent supporter of public education. I have stood with him as he organized grassroots support for the safety of school children. Chris is a true public servant and will make an excellent Speaker.

“We look forward to working with Speaker Welch to protect collective bargaining for all workers and to strengthen public education for all children and educators of Illinois.”