



Op-Ed: Rep. Elik's August 2021 Legislative Update

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This is my fifth update to the citizens of the 111th district, as your State Representative. This has been a very busy summer!

While the spring legislative session wrapped up on June 1st, the constituent work in the district continues all year long. I have spent the summer doing legislative tours and meetings with local businesses, non-profits, state agencies, and constituents. To date this year, we have done 110 visits/meetings/tours. We also field phone calls and emails every day from people needing help with a wide variety of state issues; most often, it's the FOID and CCL backlog issues, as well as unemployment claims issues. If you have a concern and aren't sure if it's a state issue, give us a call. We can refer people to our federal Congressional offices and other local municipalities, or make that call to other offices on your behalf. We will do whatever we can to get you in touch with the appropriate party that can best solve your issue.

In previous updates, I have mentioned two ongoing issues of importance. First, we have been anxiously awaiting an energy bill all summer, as two nuclear plants in northern Illinois have threatened to close, and are requesting subsidies to remain open. Governor Pritzker and environmental groups are working on clean energy legislation, and are wanting to close coal plants throughout the state prior to the end of their life. Various unions are concerned about the large job losses that occur when plants close. All of the parties taking part in the negotiations had previously come to an impasse, but are now meeting again to work out their concerns.

The second unresolved issue is the legislative maps, which must be redrawn every ten years. The Governor previously signed the Democrat-drawn maps into law, and those maps were quickly challenged in court by Republican leadership and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF). This month the 2020 census numbers were released and input into the legislative district maps, which showed that the range from the lowest populated district to the highest populated district was greater than the ten percent range allowed. In fact, the range was thirty percent, which means the map does not meet constitutional requirements. Democrat leadership has called us back to Springfield for a one-day session on August 31st presumably to vote on yet another new map. However, the federal court handling the lawsuit has continued to set hearing and trial dates and will ultimately decide whether this is proper procedure or if the map should be redrawn by a bipartisan commission. Perhaps my next update will have conclusions to these issues, we shall see!

Over the summer the Governor has been signing the bills that passed both the House and Senate in the spring. Some of the notable bills that passed this session are:

SB539 is an ethics legislation bill, which provides some improvement in ethics requirements for legislators, but falls short on other items, including the work of the

Legislative Inspector General. I voted yes and will continue to work on additional requirements. The Governor has not signed this bill into law as of this writing.

HB562 is the “Fix the FOID” bill, which makes fingerprinting voluntary to get a Firearm Owners ID card, and makes other changes to the FOID process, with the intention of speeding up the process. I do not believe these changes will have any immediate effect on the FOID backlog, and it also puts in place more onerous requirements for law abiding gun owners to transfer firearms, and therefore I voted no. This bill was signed into law as Public Act 102-0237.

HB3443 is the Criminal Justice Trailer bill, which makes changes to the police reform bill that passed in the last hour of the last General Assembly before I was inaugurated in January. I voted yes because any improvements to the bad bill had to be supported, even though I disagreed with the original bill itself. This was signed into law as Public Act 102-0028.

Finally, being a Mom has kept me busy as I sent one back to college and one to high school this year. We are ready to get back to a regular schedule, and I pray for a “normal” year for all the school age kids. I continue to be so grateful and proud to represent the 111th district. Please don’t hesitate to call my office at 618-433-8046 if we can be of help.

State Representative Amy Elik, 111th District