



# **Op-Ed: Rep. Elik's October 2021 Legislative Update**

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**News From Illinois State Representative Amy Elik** - This is my sixth update to the citizens of the 111th district, as your State Representative. I hope your fall has been pleasant so far. Mine has included two trips back to Springfield for session days, each one called for specific purposes. We returned on August 31st to vote once again on the state legislative maps. In previous updates, I have discussed that the legislative maps voted on and signed by the Governor in June were challenged in court and that these maps were out of balance in population numbers according to the 2020 census data which was released in mid-August. Because of this, Democrat leadership once again drew new maps behind closed doors, did not release the drafts until after the hastily-called public hearings were over, and then put another new draft out just moments before we had to vote on them. These maps passed on party lines, and the Governor signed those new maps into law in September. The lawsuits over the June maps were amended to include additional complaints regarding these September maps, including claims of voting rights violations that affect Latinos in Chicago as well as Black communities in the Metro East. The federal lawsuits will ultimately decide the outcome and remedy for the legislative maps, and will hopefully be concluded by the end of the year. We still have yet to vote on the Congressional maps, but we will do that during veto session at the end of October.

On September 9th, we were called back to session to vote on a long-awaited energy bill. Early that morning before leaving for Springfield, I toured Alton Steel and visited with management. We discussed the effects that energy prices have on Alton Steel and other local manufacturers who use high amounts of electricity. Low-cost energy is one of the few competitive advantages Illinois has left compared to our surrounding states. The bill that ultimately passed that day is SB2408, I voted NO. This new law contains the largest utility rate hike in Illinois history, paid by customers including our manufacturers. It puts downstate Illinois at a disadvantage, due to the requirements to reduce carbon emissions by an arbitrary date, which will close downstate coal plants. Carbon emission reduction is necessary, but the timeline in this law is not realistic. It results in less energy produced to meet our energy demands, leaving Illinois to import power from out-of-state sources. The bill also dealt with the very real threat by ComEd to close two nuclear plants in upstate Illinois if it didn't receive subsidies to keep them open. Sadly, this threat of job losses was used as a negotiation tactic to get this bill passed. The Governor quickly signed the bill and considers it one of his legislative victories.

While in-person session dates in Springfield are rare this time of year, we continue to hold Zoom committee hearings on legislation and pressing issues. One of my assigned committees has held joint hearings regarding the response by the state's nursing homes to the pandemic, and what needs to be done to improve infection control and care for our seniors. The Inclusive American History commission I am appointed to has also begun its meetings, with the goal of issuing a report by end of the year.

On October 6th, House Republican Leader Jim Durkin visited Wood River for a law enforcement roundtable. We hosted two dozen area police chiefs, sheriff's office officials, State's Attorney Tom Haine, and police association representatives. We had excellent discussions on the legislation passed in the lame-duck session in January, HB3653, and how we can fix this bad law. We also discussed recruiting and retaining police officers in this climate, and how the provisions in the legislation are driving people away from a career in law enforcement. We will be back in Springfield for veto session from October 19-21, and October 26-28, and I am hopeful that Democrat leaders in the House and Senate will hear these concerns during that time. Also, this week, Leader Durkin appointed me to the new Public Safety and Violence Prevention Task Force. I look forward to using what we learned from our roundtable discussion for better policy related to crime and violence in Illinois.

In August I began hosting mobile office hours throughout the district, visiting Nameoki Township, Hartford, Fosterburg, and Bethalto. Upcoming dates include Elsah, as well as evening hours at my office in Alton. Please call my office for the details at 618-433-8046. I want to be accessible to you, so if the office hours dates don't work for your schedule, we can meet or talk at another time convenient for you. Please don't hesitate to contact my office if we can help you in any way.

State Representative Amy Elik, 111<sup>th</sup> District