



Op-Ed: Rep. Elik's January 2022 Legislative Update

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This is my eighth update to the citizens of the 111th district, as your State Representative. This week I celebrated one year since my inauguration into the General Assembly. I am proud to report that over the last year my district office has handled 292+ constituent cases, and I attended over 200 meetings/visits/tours, held six traveling office hours, two town halls, and one open house. I have done virtual and in-person press conferences on pressing topics, communicated through the mail, media and social media, and written eight of these Op-ed articles. I say all of this to let you know, I am committed to communicating with you, to assisting you in dealing with state agencies, and to keeping you informed on what is happening in Springfield with legislation and governance of this state.

2022 is shaping up to be different than 2021 already. Since it's an election year, and with the primaries being in June (instead of March), our legislative session is planned to start and end earlier than usual. We were scheduled to start January 4th, and planned to be in Springfield for at least three days each week until adjournment on April 8th. However, last week we were only in session one day and this week and next week, session was cancelled, due to Covid concerns. We started our virtual committee hearings, and those meetings will continue whether we are in Springfield or in the district. All of the legislation that we previously filed that was not acted upon last session is still active, and I am filing some new legislation as well. The volume of bills that will be heard and passed is expected to be less than last year.

The legislative redistricting map lawsuit that started last spring was finally decided just after Christmas. The federal court ruled that the Democrats' map passed in September can stand. In the decision handed down by the federal court, the court found numerous examples of political gerrymandering, including requests by Democrat incumbents to rig the map to assure their own re-election. Unfortunately, the federal court found that was not a basis to reject the map.

The decision on the legislative map apparently emboldened the Democrats to go one step further, to gerrymander circuit court districts throughout the state, including here in Madison County. Late on January 3rd, Democrats published a new map which changes the subcircuit borders in many areas of the state. In Madison County, we have never had subcircuits, but this map splits the county into three subcircuits. Voters can now only vote for judges within their subcircuit, rather than voting for judges countywide. The method of allocating seats to the subcircuits in Madison County is different than every other county in Illinois. The actual bill was filed at around 11:15am on January 5th. There was a brief hearing on the bill which began at around 1pm that day. Later in the evening, a house bill was amended in the Senate, HB3138, to pass this new map in the Senate. Then it passed the House, strictly on partisan lines, at around 10:30pm that night. The Governor quickly signed the bill on January 7th. No Republicans supported

this gerrymandered map drawn for political purposes. I spoke out against this bill on the House floor, because this is an unprecedented overreach into our judicial system, especially here in Madison County, where voters have chosen to make the judiciary more balanced in recent years. Madison County was also singled out to have an immediate effective date, whereas other counties' maps are not effective until 2024. Every citizen should be concerned anytime that legislative actions are taken to influence the court system.

Currently the Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is in contempt of court because the Department has failed for months to properly place two youth in care of the state in appropriate settings, instead, keeping them in psychiatric care well after they were ready to be placed with a family. In addition, a DCFS worker was brutally killed last week during a home visit. The problems with DCFS are expected to be a topic of committee hearings this spring.

We also expect that public safety legislation will be debated, because of the rampant increase in crime in Illinois and nationally. This will be a major issue in 2022, and I look forward to honest solutions that allow law enforcement, states attorneys, and the court system to do their jobs to keep our communities safe.

Please contact my office at 618-433-8046 if we can help you in any way, or visit my website at RepElik.com.

State Representative Amy Elik, 111th District