



# Op-Ed: Rep. Elik's March 2023 Legislative Update

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This is my fourteenth update to the citizens of the 111<sup>th</sup> district, as your State Representative. We are about half-way through the 2023 spring legislative session, having already met deadlines for bill introduction, committee passage and House floor passage. We have been in Springfield every week but two since the beginning of January.

During 2021-2022, because of Covid, it was much quieter in the Capitol. Now in 2023 the doors are wide open and groups and associations are bringing people back to Springfield to lobby and advocate for their particular issues. I have had many local residents and students from the 111<sup>th</sup> visit the Capitol, and I always try to make it to the events that groups host to see local constituents. If I don't make it, it's only because a meeting or committee ran long. If you are coming to the Capitol, and would like to meet with me there on a session day, please call my Springfield office and we can find the best time to meet.



My committee assignments for the 103<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly are: General Services Appropriations; Elementary and Secondary Education Appropriations; Elementary and Secondary Education Curriculum and Policies; Energy and Environment; Revenue and

Finance. I have also been appointed to the Legislative Audit Commission which reviews state agencies' financial and compliance audits. I really enjoy this assignment, with my background in auditing and accounting.

The budget appropriation committees usually run very long, so it can make for some long days and evenings. We are starting our detailed review of the budget in working groups. As one of the House Republican budgeteers, I am fully engaged in the budget meetings so I expect the long days to continue until adjournment on May 19<sup>th</sup>.

So far this session, I have passed three bills and am still working on a couple more that will take more time. I'm pleased that our new Senator Erica Harriss will be the Senate sponsor on my bills as they work through the other chamber.

The House finished out the third reading deadline week late Friday evening, and the night ended with some controversy on a bill that a Democrat freshman legislator carried. The speaker would not allow Republicans to speak in opposition to the bill. Since a similar law has been found unconstitutional in another state, we wanted to ask questions of the sponsor and were not allowed. When the vote was called, we requested "verification," which means that if the vote passes, we request that every member voting yes be in their seats and prove they hit their own yes button. We were denied verification, but then quickly referred to the House Rules, which the Democrats wrote. The Rules clearly confirmed that we were allowed to request verification. After twenty minutes of the Democrat speaker and their lawyers pouring over the Rules, they realized we were right and they had to allow the verification.

Once the verification was underway, it was quickly revealed that multiple Democrats had left early and were not in their seats voting their own buttons (staff had pressed the yes button for them.) The bill ultimately failed to pass because only 59 yes votes could be verified, instead of the 60 it takes to pass a bill. Keep in mind that the Democrats hold 78 seats, and can easily pass bills if they want, but only if their members actually show up and do the work. We called them out on it this time, and they lost. I'm sure this freshman legislator will try to pass the bill again at a later date.

During the lame duck session in early January, the Second Amendment rights ban was passed, otherwise known as the "assault weapons ban." I voted no and I oppose this law, as I believe it is unconstitutional based on recent federal Supreme Court rulings. As expected, multiple lawsuits have now been filed and are working their way through both state and federal courts. The federal lawsuits are where the constitutionality of the ban will be decided. The state suits are generally about equal application and the process with which the law was passed. The state suits have been successful in the lower courts for the plaintiffs involved, but there is still question about the applicability of the state suit victories to all of Illinois' citizens.

The state Supreme Court recently heard the oral arguments in the SAFE-T act lawsuit. The implementation of the act is on hold until the case can be decided by the state's highest court. We do not have a timeline for that decision yet, but the court allowed the expedited review, so the decision could be announced in the next couple months.

I recently saw a news article that another local legislator had to cancel an event because of threats she received at her office. I thought I would let you know what happens when legislators or our offices get threats. All state offices have a threat protocol that we have to follow, which includes notification to the state police, and if necessary, we can call 911. I too have had threats or situations which required me to follow the threat protocol. If I am unsure if it's truly a threat or if I'm uncomfortable with something that has happened or was said to me or to my office staff, I can talk it through with my police contacts. I am incredibly grateful to have numerous law enforcement contacts I can call 24/7. Our state, county and municipal police agencies work together in the event of a threat to a state official. Threats can take up a lot of manpower and time for our police agencies, and are taken seriously.

Often our legislative staff takes the brunt of the angry phone calls and emails, and we have security in place to make sure the office is safe for them and for ourselves. Threats are never a good way to advocate for or against legislation or to convince a legislator of your position. Thankfully it does not happen to me often, and in fact, I often get encouraging and kind calls instead, and I thank you for that.

If we can help you navigate state government, please contact my state office at 618-433-8046 or visit my website at [RepElik.com](http://RepElik.com).

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