



January 2014

A New Year is a chance to look back at the previous year's accomplishments and look forward to the possibilities for accomplishments in the upcoming year. Building on the work of many and with the support of many, we had many significant achievements in 2013. A summary of some General Assembly legislation that became law on January 1, 2014: <http://www.lashawnkford.com/download/press-release/2013/98th%20General%20Assembly%20Legislation%202013.pdf>.

Press releases for 2013 outline some accomplishments of our office:

<http://www.lashawnkford.com/press-office-archive-2013/>.

The photo gallery for 2013 shows some of the events that took place:

<http://www.lashawnkford.com/photo-gallery-2013/>.

We have much to do this spring, and I see several priorities. We must put people back to work - the November 2013 Illinois unemployment rate was 8.7%, and this does not include those who have stopped looking for work, ex-offenders who have more problems and take much more time to find work, or recent college graduates who are looking for work but are not counted in the unemployment numbers. We need to continue to pay the state's unpaid bills and we need to continue to reduce the \$100 billion+ pension liability. We need to improve health care access and quality, and we need to increase funding for mental health care. Tax payers must benefit from their hard work and from their contribution of hard-earned tax dollars!

I want to thank Speaker Michael J. Madigan for his commitment to the Democrats and his dedicated Chief of Staff Tim Mapes and the entire staff for helping to make the first half of the 98th General Assembly a success for Illinois. I look forward to doing my part to continue the success!

With the passing of 2013, I am now focused on making sure that each law that I passed will be fully implemented in Illinois. I am looking forward to returning to Springfield on January 29, 2014 to attend Governor Quinn's State of the State address and to continue to work on the 2014 agenda.

Here is the General Assembly Spring Session Calendar:

http://ilga.gov/house/schedules/2014_SPRING_SESSION_CALENDAR.pdf.

Here are the Spring Session's legislative deadlines:

http://www.ilga.gov/house/schedules/Deadlines_2014.pdf

Important dates include January 29 - the State of the State address, and February 19 - the Budget address. You can listen on-line by visiting www.ilga.gov.

Legislation introduced by me and supported by members of the General Assembly in 2013 which will become law in Illinois:

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

- Creation of the **Distressed Counties and Communities Task Force** to find and create innovative means to address and meet the numerous needs of those who receive State social services and develop a legislative and administrative agenda that can serve as a national model for developing a successful **anti-poverty agenda** (HR 0095-98th GA)
- Established Right to Privacy in the School Setting Act, which makes it **unlawful** for school officials to request or **obtain from their students their social media passwords** unless there is reasonable cause to believe that a student's account on a social networking website contains evidence that the student has violated a school disciplinary rule or policy (Public Act 98-0129)

EXPANDING JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Established the **Small Business Empowerment and Workforce Development Task Force**, with the President of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees as Chair (Public Act 98-0515)
- Introduced the State Employment Application Act (**Ban the Box**) in the last 4 General Assemblies stipulating that an application for state employment may not ask if the applicant had been convicted of a non-violent criminal offense - Governor signed Administrative Order on October 3, 2013 accomplishing the intent of this legislation, and the new application is now in use.
- Expansion of **sealing of criminal records** for certain Class 3 and 4 non-violent offenses to expand job opportunities (Public Act 98-0142)
- Chief House Sponsor of the **Criminal Identification Act** that requires ethnic and racial data be gathered at many points when a person encounters the criminal justice system (Public Act 98-0528)

IMPROVING HEALTH

- Law protecting the privacy of students who have HIV by **repealing** a 20 year old law which required public health departments **to notify the principal if a student has HIV** (Public Act 98-0353)
- Established the **Violence Prevention Task Force**, with the Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health as Chair (Public Act 98-0194)

IMPROVING EDUCATION

- Chief House Sponsor the law **lowering the compulsory school age to 6** years, from 7 (Public Act 98-0544)

Legislation introduced by me that has passed the House, now pending in the Senate:

- To **ban trans fats** in foods served by food facilities (HB77)
- To **assist victims of domestic or sexual violence** complete their secondary school education (HB2213)
- **Prisoner Census Adjustment Act** - for purposes of creating election districts and redistricting, requires that State and local governmental bodies use census figures adjusted to reflect the pre-incarceration addresses of persons imprisoned in State or federal facilities in Illinois (HB62)

Additional Legislation I Recently Introduced in the 98th General Assembly:

- Improves the Illinois Public Aid Code, the Unified Code of Corrections, and the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act for **child support cases**. (HB2330)
- Amends the Illinois Parentage Act of 1984 - Provides that **a man may use DNA testing to show that he is not a child's father**, even after the man has signed an unrescinded acknowledgment of parentage. (SB1867)
- **Rental Car Refueling Charges** - Amends the Illinois Vehicle Code. Provides that a person renting a motor vehicle to another must provide a full tank of fuel or else the renter may not be charged for refueling the vehicle upon its return. (HB3704)
- **Home Confinement for Convicted Juveniles** - Minors found guilty of a non-violent crime shall first be considered for home confinement or an alternative sentence instead of: (i) incarceration in a facility of the Department of Juvenile Justice or (ii) confinement in a juvenile detention home. (HB3743)
- **Alternative and Charter Schools and Vocational Academies** - Requires alternative schools and charter schools to establish vocational academies for students in grades 10 through 12, in partnership with school districts, community colleges, local employers, and community-based organizations. (HB3743)
- **DCFS to Meet with Child's School after Juvenile Arrest** - Provides that within 72 hours after the arrest of a minor, DCFS and the Department of Juvenile Justice shall convene a meeting with representatives of the school district to establish supportive services plans for the person to meet the needs of that person and his or her family. The supportive services plans shall include a behavior health intervention plan, an education plan, a parental support plan, and any other services plans benefiting the person and his or her family. (HB3756)
- **Voluntary Mental Health Income Tax Check-off Box** - to supplement funding for mental health care. (HB4194)
- **Audit of Inmate Telephone Service** - Directs the Auditor General to conduct a management audit of the State's procurement of inmate telephone service vendors for the Department of Corrections' inmate telephone service program. Reducing the rate to call family members. (HR88)
- **Prohibition on Restrictions on Voting** - Proposes to amend the Suffrage and Elections Article of the Illinois Constitution to provide that no voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure related to voting, shall be imposed or applied by the State or any political subdivision in a manner which results in a denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen of the State to vote on account of sex, race, color, or status as a member of a language minority. (HJRCA0034)
- **Superintendent of Early Childhood Education** - the Chicago Board of Education required to appoint. (HB4287)
- **Mandela Road** - honor Nelson Mandela by renaming Illinois Route 50 as Mandela Road, now known as Cicero Avenue. (HB4198)

2014 Goals for the House Committees on which I serve:

****Chairman, Small Business Empowerment & Workforce Development Committee**

GOALS: Work on the newly established Small Business Empowerment and Workforce Development Task Force to grow jobs; Improve access to capital, state procurement policies, and state regulatory policies; Call hearings to bring the stakeholders of Illinois to team together to grow jobs for the unemployed, and grow businesses, including those in renewable energy and green technology; Continue to email daily job leads.

****Chairman, Restorative Justice Committee**

GOALS: With the passage of the Sealing Bill, continue the work with our community partners so people eligible to have their record sealed will receive the assistance needed to achieve sealing.

***Vice-Chairman, Health Care Availability and Accessibility Committee**

GOALS: Continue to improve access to quality healthcare through the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) for all eligible Illinoisans; Work as a member of the Violence Prevention Task Force led by the Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health; Work to pass HB1516 to restore access to more complete dental services for Medicaid recipients; Work to improve and increase HIV screening through HIV Screening Policy Summit meetings.

Member, Appropriations-Human Services Committee

GOALS: Fight to improve funding, awareness, and access to mental health care; Work to pass HB4194 which would establish a voluntary Mental Health Income Tax Check-off Box to supplement funding for mental health care; Work with the Distressed Communities Task Force to appropriately and responsibly fund programs that help improve the welfare of vulnerable Illinoisans.

Member, Veteran's Affairs Committee

GOALS: Continue our Veteran Services Office, staffed by a veteran, to connect veterans, retired and civilian, regardless of discharge type, to services to help meet their needs.

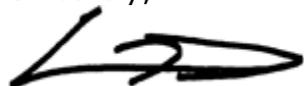
Additional Goals for 2014:

Education - As education is the key to future success and a strong economy, we must work to expand educational opportunities for all students in Illinois and throughout the nation; Have a Town Hall Meeting this spring including the Illinois Board of Education and the Secretary of Education; Work to pass legislation establishing a Chicago Superintendent for Early Childhood Education (HB4287); Work to build a High School in Austin.

Mohandas K. Gandhi once said, "I believe in the essential unity of all people and for that matter of all lives. Therefore, I believe that if one person gains spiritually, the whole world gains, and if one person falls, the whole world falls to that extent."

During these turbulent and difficult times, I believe more strongly than ever in the concept of Social Justice, which will lead to practices in Restorative Justice in our state. I believe in the promise of our nation's founding, in which every member of our society is deserving of equal economic, political and social rights, extending the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to every child, woman and man. I look forward to working with all interested parties to help to achieve these goals.

Sincerely,



La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative – Eighth District