

August 3, 2012

To the Honorable Members
of the 97th General Assembly,

Today I sign into law Senate Bill 2958, which makes significant changes to the State's procurement process. This bill strengthens our ongoing efforts to improve the State's workers' compensation system by bringing in a third-party, private vendor to help administer workers' compensation.

I take this action to continue the reforms to the State's procurement process, ensure an open and transparent process, and continue to strengthen Illinois' business climate. With the participation of various members of the business community, the General Assembly, the State's Chief Procurement Officers, and several members of the executive branch, Senate Bill 2958 is the product of a bi-partisan effort to address the needs of the citizens of Illinois and the State's business partners. Our intention is to facilitate a timely and cost-effective procurement process, while also ensuring ethics and integrity in this process. Efficient procurement is essential for the State, its citizens and the partners with whom the State conducts business.

The procurement reforms made by this law reinforce my resolve to accomplish other necessary reforms to the State's procurement process. Additional reform legislation can improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the State in procuring goods and services, while fostering competition and encouraging innovative ideas for Illinois. We must also continue to improve our procurement process to overcome barriers to many businesses that seek contracting opportunities with the State. We should continue to prioritize and focus on improving contract opportunities for minority-and female-owned businesses, people with disabilities, veterans, and small businesses. I remain committed to working in a bi-partisan way to pursue additional reforms in the next General Assembly.

While I endorse bringing in a third-party, private vendor to help administer the State's worker's compensation process, I note that Senate Bill 2958 contains a provision providing that the Chief Procurement Officer shall procure that private vendor. Under current law, the Department of Central Management Services would ordinarily procure under the oversight of the Chief Procurement Officer and could only enter into a contract with the approval of the Chief Procurement Officer.

In signing this law, I regret that the General Assembly decided to include this new provision in the final version of the bill, which is unnecessary and deviates from normal, statutory process. As a matter of appropriate checks and balances, best practices, and the intent of 2009's statutory overhaul of procurement, the Chief Procurement Officer should not wear the two hats of both the procurer and the regulator of that procurement. Such deviations from the normal, statutory procurement process and best practices should be avoided in the future.

Having raised these concerns, I am committed to working with the General Assembly to assure that any third-party, private vendor is adequately funded and ensure that those entities who are currently, successfully administering workers' compensation outside of the Department of Central Management Services —namely the Illinois Tollway Authority and the University of Illinois—may continue to do so.

Sincerely,

PAT QUINN
Governor