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## Lawmakers vote to tax strip clubs, loosen campaign finance rules

By Alissa Groeninger — Chicago Tribune  
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(MCT) — A strip club tax, campaign finance adjustment and miniature horse measure were among the wide-ranging issues state lawmakers addressed Thursday on the final day of spring session.

The House sent Gov. Pat Quinn legislation charging a new tax on strip clubs that sell booze or let people drink alcoholic beverages. The money would go to support rape crisis centers.

Strip club owners could charge a \$3 admission fee or pay taxes based on how much money they take in. An owner making more than \$2 million per year would pay a \$25,000 tax. Those making \$500,000 to \$2 million would pay \$15,000 annually. Operators making less than \$500,000 a year would pay a \$5,000 tax.

Rep. Anthony DeLuca, D-Chicago Heights, asked why the adult entertainment industry was being singled out and questioned whether the government should be "picking losers and winners" when it decides whom to tax. He voted "present."

Sponsoring Rep. Sara Feigenholtz countered funding for rape crisis counseling centers has been cut significantly in recent Illinois budgets.

"I feel as though we have found a creative way to help these victims," said Feigenholtz, D-Chicago.

### **Donation limits lifted**

State limits on campaign donations to candidates would be lifted if wealthy super political action committees pour money into legislative or statewide political races under a measure the Senate approved.

The restrictions would go away if a super PAC spends \$100,000 or more on a local race and \$250,000 or more on a statewide race. Current campaign law limits individuals to \$10,000, businesses and unions to \$20,000 and traditional PACs to \$50,000.

A super PAC spends money to influence the outcome of an election without coordinating its activities with a political candidate. They are an outgrowth of a U.S. Supreme Court decision. In Illinois, a court has struck down language that had limited so-called independent expenditure committees, allowing super PACs to get involved in state campaigns.

Sen. Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, dismissed Republican criticism of lifting the limits, saying the legislation is an attempt to rebuild after courts blew a hole into campaign finance reform. The measure went to the governor on a 39-26 vote.

### **Emanuel gang bill approved**

The House voted 93-18 to give state's attorneys more power in targeting gang leaders.

The bill, which was pushed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, is a state version of the federal racketeering statutes. It will make it easier to prosecute people who organize illegal activities but solicit others to commit the actual crimes.

### **Mini-horses OK'd as helpers**

The House also sent the governor a measure to add miniature horses to the list of service animals allowed in schools, stores and other public facilities. Federal law allows miniature horses as service animals. They assist people who have vision, hearing, psychiatric and other disabilities. The vote was 117-1.