

Game-changing laws for 2014

Life is full of changes, and so is the law. What changes in the law in 2013 are going to have the most influence on your personal lives this New Year 2014?

I will share with you my top list. What's yours?

Spoonful of Sugar

By Richard A. Sugar:
Serving tastings of
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in the law, as flaws, far more serious than computer bugs, are exposed. In the meantime, we all need and use health insurance and doctors, and those relationships are sure to evolve in unpredictable ways.

1. Illinois Pension Reform: Long in coming, the Illinois legislature finally addressed the crushing burden of debt weighing on us and our children and grandchildren. Hopefully this momentum carries forward to correct the many other fiscal challenges the state faces. The state must reduce its debt, which crowds out other vital services (like emergency responders, education, social services, and highway/bridge maintenance). The delayed action revealed the corrosive effect of dominance of the machinery of government by one powerful group over a long period, an effect our Founding Fathers sought to prevent at the federal level by creating a constitutional balance of power in the U.S. Constitution.

2. Illinois Gay Marriage and the Windsor U.S. Supreme Court case: Significant legislative and judicial pronouncements were made in 2013, safeguarding the same status for same sex couples as opposite sex couples. The change will invigorate a part of society that has in the past been treated as second class, and generate new businesses, new merchandising, new media, and new social trends.

3. Affordable Care Act (Obamacare): Although the laws themselves were enacted in 2010, it wasn't until 2013 that rules started to have a widespread effect, resulting in the disastrous rollout of the website for insurance exchanges. Undoubtedly, changes will be made

4. Genes Patentable? Will the U.S. Supreme Court decision this year, rendering genes not patentable, impede research into new medical remedies, because no drug company will invest millions of dollars without the protection of a patent? Will the decision adversely affect our future health and healing possibilities? Mason Cole, a Chicago patent attorney, congratulated the Court by striking the correct balance between DNA found purely in nature which is not patentable, from synthetic DNA which remains patentable. So scientists can freely exchange natural genes, in trying to develop synthetic genes for the newest miracle remedies.

5. Illinois Appellate Court Fifield decision: As a result of this ruling, it now becomes harder for employers to prevent at-will employees, who quit or are fired, from competing with their former employers. The court said, generally, an employee must be employed for at least two years before a non-compete clause in an employment agreement can be enforced. This both frees employees from restraints on being able to get new jobs, and imposes hardships on employers who try to protect their companies.

• *Submit your questions to RAS.sugar1898@gmail.com and he may address the topic of your questions in a future column. This column is for general education, and is not to be construed as legal, tax, or financial advice relative to any particular circumstances.*