



Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry State Legislative Agenda 2026

The Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry was incorporated in 1914 to serve as the collective voice force initiating action for the betterment of the entire community. The Mission of the Chamber today reflects these same goals: “to advance the interests of business, professional and service organizations in the Joliet Region, acting as their voice in governmental and social affairs, communicating and servicing their needs, and thereby enhancing the business environment and the local quality of life.”

Small businesses are the backbone of local economies across Illinois, creating jobs, delivering essential services, and fostering opportunities. When Main Street thrives, so does the entire state.

Beyond economic contributions, small businesses are deeply embedded in their communities, driving local growth and strengthening neighborhood connections.

Small business owners, deeply invested in their communities, take significant risks to operate and grow their businesses. They commit their time, capital, and reputations—working tirelessly to secure the next sale, land new contracts, and develop innovative products.

As this session moves forward, we remain committed to addressing the following priorities and are open to further discussions on these matters. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us with any inquiries or input you may have.

Energy

Reliable, affordable energy is essential to sustain economic growth. Policymakers should prioritize an approach that preserves energy choice, supports a strong and skilled workforce, and advances an “all of the above” strategy. This includes recognizing the long-term implications of recent energy legislation and ensuring those policies are implemented with a clear focus on reliability and cost stability.

As the state continues to carry out the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), it is critical to assess how Illinois will meet rising energy demand with adequate, dependable supply—without placing undue cost burdens on businesses or consumers. Ongoing evaluation will be key to balancing environmental goals with economic competitiveness.

We support these targeted legislative proposals, including an energy workforce retention tax credit and the creation of a commission to examine the private sector’s response to long-term, CEJA-driven energy source phaseouts.

HB 5194 (Walsh) / SB 3665 (Belt) – Tax Credit for Energy Workforce Retention

HB 5195 (Walsh) / SB 3664 (Belt) - Creates the Illinois Future of Energy Choice and Economic Impact Commission

SB 3929 (Joyce) – Extend the Clean Energy Timeline from 2050 to 2060

Housing Availability and Affordability

Housing availability has become a central economic issue for Illinois communities. A persistent shortage of attainable, workforce-ready housing is constraining growth, limiting business expansion, and shrinking local labor pools as workers struggle to live near their jobs. Employers increasingly view housing costs and availability as a deciding factor in where to locate or grow, placing added urgency on addressing supply challenges.

We support coordinated state and local efforts to expand the housing pipeline across a range of price points. This includes encouraging innovative development models—such as mixed-use projects, higher-density infill, and adaptive reuse of underutilized properties—that can bring new units online more efficiently. Strategic, modest tax incentives can play a key role in closing financing gaps and making otherwise unworkable projects viable, particularly in communities where construction costs outpace market returns.

In addition, policymakers should examine regulatory barriers that slow development, including zoning constraints, permitting delays, and infrastructure limitations. Streamlining these processes, while maintaining community standards, can accelerate project timelines and reduce costs. Expanding housing supply in a thoughtful, market-responsive way will strengthen local economies, improve workforce stability, and support long-term regional competitiveness.

Childcare, Early Education and Workplace Incentives

Access to affordable, reliable childcare remains a decisive factor in workforce participation and employee retention across Illinois. Employers consistently identify childcare challenges as a barrier to hiring and keeping talent, underscoring the need for policies that treat childcare and flexible benefits as core workplace incentives. Strengthening these supports can help businesses remain competitive while enabling more individuals to enter and stay in the workforce.

Recent federal changes under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA) enhanced the Employer-Provided Child Care Credit, significantly increasing its value—particularly for small businesses. These updates create an opportunity for Illinois to build on federal policy and further incentivize employer investment in childcare solutions. To that end, we support reforms to the Illinois Employer-Provided Childcare Tax Credit Program.

HB 5080 (Canty) / SB 3420 (Cervantes) - Provides that the tax credit for employee child care shall be 30% of the start-up costs expended by the corporate taxpayer to provide a child care facility for the children of its employees and 10% (currently, 5%) of the annual amount paid by the corporate taxpayer in providing the child care facility for the children of its employees. Creates an income tax credit for corporate taxpayers that are qualified small businesses in an amount equal to 10% of the federal tax credit claimed by the taxpayer for the taxable year for qualified childcare expenditures.

HB 4945 (Mason) / SB 3492 (Preston) – Support innovative workplace guidance at the K to 12 level that considers the needs of employers both today and in the future and prepares students for new and emerging technologies such as AI and quantum, shaping the workforce of the future.

We applaud funding increases proposed in the Governor’s budget for the following priorities which we anticipate moving forward through the Illinois Department of Early Childhood.

- Early Intervention – Reducing the lengthy service delays for physical, speech, and other critical therapies for infants.
- Childcare Assistance Program – Increase in aid for the kids of struggling, working parents would help our state handle a growing caseload. Further investment would be needed to further improve service access and affordability, including bolstering reimbursement rates for many childcare providers.

We also appreciate the interest in preserving resources for other key priorities:

- Smart Start / Early Childhood Workforce Grants – Aid to help shore-up the chronic low compensation of childcare teachers.
- Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity – Boost training and credentials of early learning staff, a quality improvement component in programs serving our youngest learners.
- Early Childhood Block Grant – Supports pre-K for three and four year olds as well as prevention initiative help for the parents of even younger children.

Business Licensing and Permitting

Businesses across the state consistently express frustration with lengthy and unpredictable licensing and permitting processes. We encourage Illinois state agencies to move toward a “24-hour state” model using modern, interactive online systems to improve customer service and reduce unnecessary delays that hinder business development. Following this strong national model could also improve taxpayer transparency and the state’s business image.

HB 5180 (Gill) / SB 3768 (Villivalam) – Comprehensive business licensing and permitting reform that embraces technology, transparency, and customer service in the states internal and interagency processes.

Insurance Cost

Establishing an Insurance Cost Advisory Task Force would provide a proactive, fact-based forum for industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to identify and analyze the underlying drivers of rising insurance costs in Illinois. A comprehensive review would support a more informed and balanced legislative dialogue around rates, market conditions, and potential policy responses.

Industry data and public reporting have consistently pointed to several measurable factors contributing to premium increases—many of which are often mischaracterized. These include sustained claims costs that exceed premiums collected in certain lines, the ongoing effects of inflation on materials and labor, and increasingly severe and unpredictable weather patterns across Illinois, including heightened wind, hail, and tornado activity. Together, these pressures have significantly impacted insurers’ cost structures and risk calculations.

A dedicated task force would help separate perception from reality by examining these trends in detail, improving transparency, and fostering a clearer understanding of market dynamics. This approach would enable policymakers to craft solutions that are responsive to actual cost drivers while avoiding unintended consequences, such as reduced market competition or limited coverage availability. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure a stable, competitive insurance market that remains accessible and sustainable for consumers and businesses alike.

We support the following:

- HB 5392 (Avelar) / SB 3843 (Joyce) – Common sense reform to sales tax policy regimes that are unfairly impacting the innovation economy and creating instances of double taxation.
- HB 910 – Amendment 1: “Megaprojects”
- HB 5237 (DeLuca) - Provides that neither a county nor a municipality may impose a tax on businesses calculated based on the number of employees of the business.
- HB 5128 (Ugaste) / SB 3622 (Lewis) – Reasonable modifications to the state’s Paid Leave for All Workers Act that creates additional flexibility to key industries and small businesses.
- HB 2838 (Ugaste) / SB 3122 (Balkema) – Continued efforts to reform BIPA law the continues to stifle innovation & overly burdensome regulations on certain industries.
- HB 744 HA#1 (Canty) – APR for All Small Business Financing Transparency Act
- SB 3619 (Balkema) – Small Business Health Insurance Tax Credit
- HB 1819 (Tarver) / SB 1505 (Preston) – Small Business Job Creation Tax Credit
- HB 5191 (Croke) – Pass-thru Entity Tax Election

- SB 3275 (Joyce) - Requires the Department of Transportation to create an expedited process for municipalities or counties to submit a request for an expedited review for intersections on State roads.
- HB 4943 (Hoffman) / SB 3593 (Sims) – Telecommunications Theft
- HB 1818 (Tarver) – Property Tax Transparency
- HB 4513 (Mayfield) - Provides that the research and development credit applies on a permanent basis

We oppose the following

- HJRCA 21 (Manley) – “Millionaire Tax”: Provides that an additional income tax shall be imposed on individuals in an amount equal to 3% of the portion of the individual's net income that is greater than \$1,000,000 for the taxable year. Provides that, of the revenue collected pursuant to those provisions, 50% shall be used to provide property tax relief and 50% shall be distributed to school districts solely on a per pupil basis.
- HB 4894 (Hernandez) – Digital Advertising Tax Act. Imposes a tax on the portion of a person's annual gross revenue that is derived from digital advertising services in the State if the person's total revenue derived from digital advertising in the State exceeds \$150,000,000. Provides that the tax is imposed at the rate of 10% of the annual gross revenues derived from digital advertising services in the State.
- HB 3249 (Jimenez) - Provides that an employer shall provide a suitable seat to an employee when the nature of the employee's work reasonably allows for seated work. Provides that on and after the effective date of the Act, an employer shall not design a work space to require standing if the work space could reasonably be designed to allow seated work.
- HB 3762 (Gonzalez) - Provides that the Director of Labor shall adopt rules to establish excessive heat and excessive cold standards. Sets forth temporary excessive heat and excessive cold standards.
- HB 5147 (Canty) – Equal Pay Workforce Management Reporting: Provides that, no later than 2 years after the effective date of the amendatory Act, the Department of Labor shall adopt rules that require specified employers doing business in the State to file an annual report, that will be made available to the public on a dedicated page of the Department's website, regarding workforce management policies, practices, and performance with respect to the employer.

Monitoring

- HB 4263 – Provides that the regulation of allowances for gratuities as part of the hourly wage rate is an exclusive power and function of the State. Provides that a home rule unit may not regulate allowances for gratuities as part of the hourly wage rate.
- HB 5513 (Gabel) – Data Center Regulation
- SB 2927 (Simmons) – AI Impact Study
- HB 45 HA#1 (Yang Rohr) – Consumer Fraud: Grocery Coupons
- HB 5367 (Hernandez) / SB 3821 (Lightford) – Minimum wage to \$27 by 2032
- HB 4844 (Hoffman) – Juror Pay equivalent to normal wage

**We Thank the Following Companies
for Their Support of our Government Affairs Committee:**

