

Legislative Priorities are those specific, immediate issues that the Conference pursues either through initiating legislation or through strong advocacy in cooperation with partner organizations. Legislative Priorities are our primary legislative focus as we commence the 99th General Assembly.

REVENUE AND TAXATION

Protect LGDF Revenue

The local portion of state-collected income tax is essential to fund basic municipal services and needs. The state should refrain from freezing, diverting, delaying, or reducing Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) revenue. Additionally, the local portion should be returned to the original share.

Reform Municipal Public Safety Pensions

While awaiting a Supreme Court ruling on the state's pension reform, it is vital that the Legislature acknowledge the growing municipal public safety pension crisis. Of critical and immediate importance, the compliance and penalty provisions of Public Act 96-1495 must be amended. This law requires municipalities to fund pensions by 2015 to a level of 90%, amortized to 2040, or risk having local revenue withheld by the state. If the high cost of current pensions is not addressed, this provision will require some municipalities to immediately increase pension funding to a point that cripples their ability to provide basic services. The penalty provision must not take effect before necessary cost-saving reforms are implemented.

PERSONNEL AND LABOR

Amend the Public Safety Employee Benefits Act

PSEBA was originally created to supply health insurance benefits to public safety employees who suffer catastrophic injuries in the line of duty. However, the system is frequently used to provide duplicative benefits at the expense of taxpayers even when recipients are able to secure alternative, gainful employment with health benefits. The federal definition of "catastrophic injury" must be adopted to ensure that taxpayers are no longer needlessly overcharged.

Amend the Illinois Labor Relations Act to Create a Level Playing Field for Labor Arbitration

Municipalities are at a severe disadvantage during interest arbitration, resulting in significant costs to taxpayers. Arbitrators should be required to take into consideration the interest and welfare of the public and the financial ability of the unit of government to meet costs with current revenue streams. The Act should also be amended to establish additional standards that prevent minor issues and unreasonable positions from being taken to arbitration.

Amend the Workers' Compensation Act

Incremental changes to the Illinois Workers' Compensation system have increased the burden on taxpayers to a level that is both unfair and unsustainable. Four specific reforms are sought at this time.

- **Remove the Burden of Proof for the Cause of Firefighter Injuries from Municipalities**
Statutory rebuttable presumption provisions put the burden of proof on the employer to prove that an injury arose from a cause outside of employment. In certain situations this presumption unfairly shifts the burden to the taxpayer to prove causation, particularly in cases where the public agency does not have access to records from an employee's secondary employer. The Act should be changed to place the same burden of proof on firefighters as is placed on other employees.

- **Require Arbitrators to Adhere to the AMA Disability Rating Guidelines**
The American Medical Association provides guidelines for rating the level of permanent impairment due to injury. However, arbitrators may give little or no consideration to the AMA ratings when provided at hearings, instead awarding greater loss of use, at the expense of taxpayers. State statute should require arbitrators to adhere to the AMA guidelines.
- **Return the Length of Time Compensated to Pre-2006 Levels**
The Act specifies the number of weeks of salary an employee shall receive in compensation for each specific injury. As of February 1, 2006, the number of weeks of compensation was increased by approximately 7%, resulting in additional taxpayers costs. Compensation levels should be returned to those granted through 2005.
- **Overturn the Workers Compensation Commission Case Regarding Shoulder Injuries**
The Commission has ruled that a permanent shoulder injury would be viewed as “man as a whole,” doubling the cost of compensation and also providing duplicative compensation for previous arm injuries. The Act should be amended to overturn the ruling and equate permanent loss of shoulder to loss of use of the arm, which is limited to a total of 253 weeks including previous compensation.

MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY

Remove Barriers of Non-Home Rule Authority

The distinction between home rule and non-home rule communities should be removed to recognize the ability of all municipalities to govern themselves, regardless of population.

- **Amend the Hotel-Motel Tax**
Allow non-home rule municipalities flexibility in how they may spend Hotel-Motel Tax revenues.
- **Allow Crime Free Housing Regulations**
Home rule municipalities are permitted to license landlords and require periodic inspection of dwellings. Legislation should allow non-home rule communities to use this program as well.
- **Allow Freer Expenditure of Sales Tax Revenue**
Allow non-home rule municipalities to spend referendum-approved sales tax revenue on expenses other than infrastructure.

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATIONS

Support Western Access

As the Elgin-O’Hare Expressway expansion project is finalized, the state must consider the project’s impact on local residents and businesses. The state should approve a resolution supporting maximum project benefits by ensuring the new access route is a true western entrance to the airport.

Replace the Official Metric for Measuring Aircraft Noise

The recent expansion of the Chicago-O’Hare International Airport and the reconfiguration of its runways have raised aircraft noise significantly, disrupting nearby residents and negatively impacting their quality of life. The state should amend the Permanent Noise Monitoring Act and adopt the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) as the official metric for measuring aircraft noise in Illinois, thereby providing communities with a more accurate means of documenting the impact of airplane noise.