

The Monitor

RAISING THE BAR BY MONITORING THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

As Illinois' energy demand surges, the state must balance growth, reliability, and sustainability in a rapidly changing power landscape

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

POWERING ILLINOIS: BALANCING ENERGY DEMAND, GROWTH, AND THE DIGITAL BOOM

Illinois sits at the center of a shifting national energy landscape. The state is the fifth-largest electricity producer in the country and, thanks to its diverse energy mix, it typically generates more power than it consumes and exports excess to neighboring states (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2025). Yet, even with this advantage, Illinois faces mounting challenges as energy demand grows—driven not only by traditional residential, commercial, and industrial needs but also by the rapid expansion of data centers and artificial intelligence.

Illinois' generation mix highlights both its strengths and its importance in this new era. The state relies heavily on nuclear energy, which provides more than half of its total electricity and anchors the grid with a stable, carbon-free baseload (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2025). Six nuclear plants and 11 reactors make Illinois the nation's leader in nuclear generation (Nuclear Energy Institute, 2024). Fossil fuels, primarily natural gas and coal, account for nearly one-third of supply, while renewables—mainly wind and solar—provide about 13% (Clean Energy Illinois, 2025). This balanced mix demonstrates why all sources of energy remain critical. Nuclear offers reliability, natural gas provides flexibility, coal contributes to baseload stability, and renewables drive innovation and diversification.

Energy consumption patterns are shifting rapidly as new technologies emerge and industries evolve. Electric vehicles, manufacturing electrification, and the growth of data centers are increasing overall demand on the grid. Utilities across Illinois are investing in transmission and substation upgrades to prepare for this surge. These projects are essential not only to meet growing demand but also to maintain reliability

during times of peak usage or extreme weather.

One of the largest drivers of new energy demand is the rapid rise of data centers. This critical infrastructure powers everything from cloud computing and logistics to e-commerce and artificial intelligence. Illinois, and particularly the Chicago region, has become a major national hub for these facilities thanks to its strong infrastructure, skilled workforce, and access to reliable power. Their continued growth underscores the need for a resilient and expanded energy system capable of supporting large industrial users while also keeping power affordable for homes and businesses.

Across the country, similar trends are reshaping how energy is produced and consumed. Grid operators and policymakers are evaluating how to balance reliability, affordability, and sustainability as demand climbs. Illinois' strength lies in its diverse energy portfolio—nuclear, natural gas, coal, and renewables—each providing unique benefits that together ensure the grid can adapt to changing needs.

Meeting Illinois' future energy demand will require not only maintaining existing generation but also investing in new capacity and modern infrastructure. Transmission improvements will enable the efficient delivery of electricity across regions, while energy storage technologies will help manage peaks in demand. Natural gas will continue to play a vital role in providing quick, dispatchable power when renewable output is low, while nuclear generation ensures around-the-clock reliability. Coal, with advances in carbon reduction technologies, remains a stabilizing force in the energy mix. Together, these sources create a system that can withstand disruptions and continue to power the state's homes, industries, and digital economy.

Partnerships between industry, utilities, and government will also be key to supporting this growth. Major companies are increasingly seeking long-term power



Marc Poulos
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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supply agreements that provide reliability and predictability. For example, Meta's 20-year power deal with the Clinton nuclear plant highlights how collaboration can secure low-carbon, stable energy while strengthening local economies and sustaining good-paying union jobs (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2025).

The larger lesson is clear: no single source can meet Illinois' energy needs alone. Every form of energy—nuclear, gas, coal, renewables, and storage—plays an essential role in keeping the lights on and the economy moving. Illinois' energy future depends on maintaining balance, investing in infrastructure, and ensuring that the grid can meet rising demand without compromising reliability or affordability.

For Illinois, the stakes are high. The state has an opportunity to remain a national leader in both energy production and technological growth. By embracing an all-of-the-above energy strategy and continuing to invest in modern infrastructure, Illinois can power the next generation of innovation.

Ultimately, Illinois' energy story underscores a universal truth: we will always need energy, no matter the source. As demand grows, the challenge is not choosing between clean, nuclear, or fossil fuels—it is ensuring that all sources, and the skilled workers who support them, work together in a reliable, affordable, and sustainable system capable of powering the future.



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IUOE LOCAL 150 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Each year, the IUOE, Local 150 Scholarship Fund, Inc. proudly supports the educational goals of members' children and dependents through its annual scholarship awards. In 2025, the Scholarship Committee selected 29 exceptional recipients from a highly competitive pool of 199 applicants. The quality of applications was outstanding, making this year's selection process particularly challenging.

The IUOE, Local 150 Scholarship Fund, Inc. was established in 2013 to help families of Local 150 members pursue higher education. Since its founding, the Fund has awarded more than \$2 million in scholarships to 234 individual recipients. Scholarships support students attending four-year universities, two-year colleges, and technical or mechanical schools across the country.

All recipients were recognized at the July Gold Card Dinner held before IUOE Local 150's General Membership Meeting, where they enjoyed dinner with their families and received certificates honoring their achievements.

Looking ahead, applications for the 2026–2027 school year are now open and will close on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. For more details about the IUOE Local 150 Scholarship Fund, Inc. and the scholarships available, visit scholarships.local150.org.



FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT SETS STANDARDS WITH RESPONSIBLE BIDDER ORDINANCE

PUBLIC BODY SPOTLIGHT

Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

In 2021, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County took a major step toward strengthening workforce development by adopting a Responsible Bidding Ordinance (RBO). An RBO is a resolution integrated into a public body's procurement code that outlines specific criteria contractors must meet to be determined to be a responsible bidder on public construction projects. The primary goal is to ensure that public projects are awarded to contractors who prioritize quality work, employ skilled tradespeople, uphold strong safety standards, and deliver maximum value for taxpayers. This is achieved in part through language requiring proof of participation in U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL)-approved apprenticeship programs.

In May 2025, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County Board of Commissioners met to discuss and approve authorization of a contract for the Grounds

and Natural Resources Management Maintenance Campus at the Blackwell Forest Preserve Project. According to Kevin Horsfall, the District's Director of Planning and Development, this was "one of the most consequential projects that the District has undertaken."

When the project went out to bid in April 2025, three bids came in within roughly

an 8% range from low to high — making it a highly competitive process. During his presentation to the Board, Horsfall explained the bid acceptance process and outlined the criteria staff used in recommending the award. He stated, "As a public entity in Illinois, the District is charged with protecting and stewarding taxpayer dollars, ensuring that contracts are awarded to the lowest responsible bidder — which does not always mean the lowest bidder. Unfortunately, as with any bid process, there are winners and losers, and not everyone will be happy. But one thing the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County ensures through its due diligence, transparency, and bid administration process is that taxpayers are not the losers."

Through that due diligence and the use of the RBO, the Board determined that the lowest bidder was non-responsive and non-responsible, allowing the District to award the nearly \$37 million project to a responsible contractor committed to delivering the highest quality of work.

The III FFC congratulates the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County on its continued commitment to maintaining the highest standards for public works projects and for its partnership in fostering greater trust, collaboration, and shared success across our communities.



Frank Figueroa
CONSTRUCTION ANALYST

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STARTS WITH HIRING LOCAL CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

There's no question that, when done right, new industry and large-scale developments can bring real benefits to a community. Out-of-state developers and elected officials often tout the economic gains — an increased tax base, new infrastructure, and all the jobs that will come once a project is complete.

But if developers are sincere about creating all those jobs to benefit the community, shouldn't they be doing that from the very beginning of the project? This is especially true when those same developers request and receive economic incentives or tax breaks from local or state government. These incentives can total hundreds of millions of dollars and are ultimately funded by Hoosier taxpayers.

Too often, instead of hiring locally, developers bring in their own traveling workforce. That's not job creation — it's job displacement. When that happens, local construction families, who pay taxes and invest in their communities, lose out.

Frank Manzo IV, an Economist with the Midwest Economic Policy Institute (MEPI), put it best in a recent webinar discussing the benefits of hiring local: *"Infrastructure investments improve Indiana's competitiveness and grow the economy while creating good-paying jobs. However, taxpayers only get the best bang for their buck when construction projects are built by local businesses who employ local workers. That's because local contractors and workers spend their earnings in the regional economy at restaurants and stores. This multiplier effect creates jobs across Indiana and adds to the tax base. When Indiana tax dollars are given to out-of-state, low-wage migratory labor, those contractors contribute minimally to the local economy. Meanwhile, local contractors invest in training the next generation of skilled tradespeople, helping to combat labor shortages in Indiana. Hiring local boosts consumer demand, strengthens the economy, expands apprenticeship training, improves worksite safety, and promotes ladders into the middle class for Indiana's workers."*



Myron Sutton
REGIONAL MANAGER

And don't let a developer tell you they have to bring in a nomadic workforce because of "special requirements" or "unique skills." Indiana's construction workforce is among the most capable in the nation. From steel mills and manufacturing plants to tunneling beneath Lake Michigan, building hospitals, highways, and runways, and maintaining critical infrastructure, Hoosier construction workers have done it all and have done it well.

This is where local boards and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) should step up. The IEDC was created to promote business growth, job creation, and investment in Indiana and has provided billions in taxpayer-funded incentives to new developments over the years. Yet, these deals often include little to no contractual guarantees that Hoosier workers are hired for construction.

As taxpayers, we should expect better. Any project receiving public economic incentives should be required to hire a Hoosier workforce. Indiana families should reap the benefits of our tax dollars, not out-of-state labor.

Please consider contacting your local officials and the IEDC today. Tell them that true economic development begins at the very start of a project — by putting Hoosiers to work.



UNDERSTANDING ILLINOIS' BIOMETRIC INFORMATION PRIVACY ACT (BIPA)

Illinois' Biometric Information Privacy Act (BIPA), enacted in 2008, remains the nation's most comprehensive and protective biometric privacy law. It governs how private entities collect, store, and use "biometric identifiers" such as fingerprints, facial geometry, retina scans, or voiceprints. The law reflects the General Assembly's recognition that, unlike passwords or ID cards, biometric data is permanent—once compromised, it cannot be replaced.

BIPA applies to any "private entity" that collects or possesses biometric identifiers or biometric information. Before doing so, an entity must:

1. Provide written notice explaining the collection's purpose and duration;
2. Obtain a written release (consent) from the individual; and
3. Adopt and publicly post a written policy detailing retention schedules and destruction timelines.

The law also prohibits the sale or profit of biometric data and requires that it be stored and transmitted securely, using safeguards consistent with or stronger than those used for other confidential information.



Joe Sweeney
COUNSEL

BIPA's impact stems largely from its private right of action, allowing individuals to sue directly for violations. The statute provides for damages of \$1,000 per negligent violation and \$5,000 per reckless or intentional violation.

In *Cothron v. White Castle System, Inc.* (2023), the Illinois Supreme Court held that each separate biometric scan or transmission could constitute a distinct violation, potentially leading to massive cumulative

damages. In response, the Illinois General Assembly passed a 2024 amendment clarifying that damages may be assessed once per person per distinct policy violation, not per scan. The reform curbs extreme liability while maintaining BIPA's strict requirements.

Although BIPA does not apply to state or local government agencies, it does apply to contractors and vendors that use biometric systems while working on public projects. Construction contractors relying on fingerprint-based time clocks, jobsite access gates, or mobile apps for identity verification must ensure full compliance.

Contractors should:

- Audit technologies that capture biometric data;
- Ensure vendors provide compliant notices and consent forms;
- Implement and post a biometric data policy covering retention and destruction schedule;
- Train HR and field managers to collect and store written consents; and
- Review insurance coverage for BIPA-related risks.

As we look ahead, the state is exploring how BIPA could adapt to emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, automated surveillance, and data center operations that process vast amounts of digital information. As Illinois competes for new data center investment, projects that generate substantial construction employment and tax revenue, future amendments may aim to balance privacy protections with economic development priorities.

For now, BIPA compliance remains mandatory and enforceable. Contractors who proactively align their policies with the statute's requirements can protect their workforce, mitigate risk, and position themselves advantageously as the law and technology continues to evolve.

CENTRAL RENT-A-CRANE & ED KOCSIS

CONTRACTOR SPOTLIGHT

CELEBRATING FIVE DECADES OF LEADERSHIP, MENTORSHIP, AND INDUSTRY IMPACT

For more than fifty years, Ed Kocsis has been a steady force in the lifting industry. His leadership helped guide Central Rent-A-Crane, strengthened the ALL Family of Companies, and shaped the industry as a whole. As he steps into retirement, his career stands as proof that hard work, honesty, and a commitment to doing the job right never go out of style.

Ed's story began early, inspired by his grandfathers who were both carpenters. While still in school and newly married, he found his way into the construction equipment business in Indianapolis. What started as a way to support his family quickly grew into a lifelong career. He spent 25 years with his first company before its division was sold. In 2001, he joined Central Rent-A-Crane and over the next 24 years built a distinguished career with the ALL Family of Companies.

Central Rent-A-Crane has been part of the ALL Family since 1977. Today, with 29 branches east of the Mississippi, the company is a trusted partner to contractors and clients across the Midwest. Its growth has come through acquisitions as well as steady investment in people and equipment. The company now employs 1,600 people and maintains one of the largest fleets, with 3,600

pieces of lift equipment. In Northwest Indiana, Central's work has long been tied to the region's industrial core, serving steel mills, refineries, and contractors.

What sets Central apart, Ed explained, is a simple philosophy: deliver on your promises. The ALL Family has built one of the largest transportation fleets in the crane rental industry and continues to invest in technicians, parts, and support. "If it doesn't run, it's not productive," he said. "Our job is to eliminate roadblocks and keep projects moving." That commitment has earned Central its reputation as a reliable partner on some of the region's most demanding projects.

Ed has played a key role in many of those projects. He recalls a large local refinery job in Whiting that required 100 cranes and 200 operators, the West Lake Corridor and South Shore Line expansion, and the modernization of I-65/I-70 in Indianapolis, which involved more than 50 bridges. "Those projects were challenging, but they also showed what our people and equipment could do," he said.

Beyond his work with Central, Ed has been a strong advocate for the industry. He served on the Northwest Indiana Building Trades negotiating team and on the IIR FFC Board of Directors, always working to build trust between

*Ed Kocsis built his career
on one simple principle:
deliver what you promise
— and do it with integrity.*



"The truth is the foundation of any good business. You have to tell the end user the reality, not just what they want to hear. It can be tough in the moment, but it builds trust that lasts."

-Ed Kocsis, Central Rent-A-Crane

labor and management. "It comes down to delivering what you promise," he said. "That's what creates lasting partnerships."

As retirement approaches, Ed looks forward to spending more time with his two sons, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. "I've been fortunate to learn from great mentors and to pass that knowledge along," he reflected. "Now I'm ready to shut off the phone and enjoy family time."

When asked what advice he would give to the next generation of leaders in the lifting industry, Ed didn't hesitate. "The truth is the foundation of any good business. You have to tell the end user the reality, not just what they want to hear. It can be tough in the moment, but it builds trust that lasts."

Ed's impact on Central Rent-A-Crane and the III FFC Board has been lasting. His legacy is one of honesty, mentorship, and service — and his career stands as a model for the leaders who will follow.

Ed Kocsis
General Manager at
Central Rent-A-Crane



RESPONSIBILITY TO THE LABOR COMMUNITY: A CITIZEN'S DUTY IN ILLINOIS

In Illinois, labor history runs deep. Being a responsible citizen means standing with — and being committed to — the working people who build our state. This commitment is reflected in our daily choices as neighbors, consumers, business owners, and community members. Every decision we make has an impact, and when we make those decisions with empathy, we help shape that impact for the better.

When we support fair wages, safe working conditions, and the rights of workers to organize and advocate for themselves, we show empathy for every individual person's unique situation and are doing our best at supporting each unique situation and we use empathy as a tool to build a strong labor community. In other words, refusing to accept "good enough" as an assumption that it is "good for everyone" and making efforts to ensure that the good for everyone truly exists.

Empathy, however, does not stand alone — it must be reinforced by strong laws. Illinois has become a national leader in labor protections, turning values into action through legislation. In 2022, voters approved the Workers' Rights Amendment, guaranteeing the right to unionize and collectively bargain while banning "right-to-work" laws. Recent updates to the Illinois Prevailing Wage Act have strengthened transparency and accountability on public works projects by requiring better recordkeeping and stronger enforcement mechanisms to ensure workers are paid fairly for publicly funded labor.

Illinois has also taken major steps to protect workers' individual voices. The Worker Freedom of Speech Act, passed in 2023, prohibits employers from forcing employees to attend mandatory political or religious meetings, also known as "captive audience" meetings. This law safeguards workers' rights to express their beliefs freely and engage in organizing efforts without fear of coercion or retaliation. And the Paid Leave for All Workers

Act, passed in 2024, guarantees nearly all employees the right to earn paid time off.

These reforms do not just protect individuals. They strengthen families, communities, and the state's economy as a whole. However, strong protections make the most difference when they are enforced, and that enforcement, in many ways, relies on citizen engagement.

This means reporting labor violations, staying informed about workplace conditions, and ensuring both public agencies and private employers follow Illinois labor standards. It means getting involved: educating others about the value of collective bargaining, volunteering to support organizing efforts, or voting for leaders who prioritize workplace equity and economic fairness.

When protections feel secure and conditions seem fair, it's easy to think the work is done. But Illinois' labor legacy reminds us that rights not actively defended can slowly erode over time. The fight for fairness does not end with legislative victories — it requires vigilance and ongoing participation. Complacency is an easy trap but resisting the belief that "things are as good as they'll ever be" is part of our collective responsibility.

While it is essential to protect the rights of today's workers, it is equally important to safeguard those of future generations. Every opportunity to strengthen labor protections should be taken — not just for ourselves, but for those who will follow.

So, as citizens, we must ask ourselves: What am I doing today to advance fairness and justice in the workplace? How can I elevate the voices of those fighting for fair treatment? Where can I show up, not just when urgency demands it, but when persistence is what's needed?

Illinois' labor legacy reminds us: rights not actively defended can slowly erode. The fight for fairness never ends.

In Illinois, we've built something worth protecting. Let's not wait until it is threatened to act. Let's lead with empathy, uphold our legal responsibilities, and continue building a future where every worker is valued.



Jodi Frailey
REGIONAL MANAGER



Devereaux Johnson
CONSTRUCTION ANALYST

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

JAKE PARKER

Indiana Construction Analyst

Jake Parker joined the III FFC in 2024 as a Construction Analyst in Indiana and continues a proud family tradition. His father Don Parker served in the same role from 2007 to 2016.

Before joining III FFC, Jake spent 22 years with the Schererville Police Department. He served as a patrolman, worked on the Indiana State Police interdiction team, and was part of the state's Homeland Security strike team. His career took him across the country, including deployments to North Dakota during the Keystone pipeline project and to Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina. In 2017, Jake became a K9 handler and worked alongside his dog Bosco until they both retired in 2024. Today Bosco enjoys a well-deserved retirement with Jake and his family in Lowell, Indiana.

In his current role, Jake monitors and collects project data, attends town and county commissioner meetings, and makes sure bids are awarded to responsive and responsible contractors. He is also a newly licensed drone operator and uses that skill to monitor jobsites from the air. One of his proudest moments at III FFC was documenting a project in Newton County where he uncovered unsafe trenching practices that put workers at risk and led to major OSHA violations.

Jake credits his years in law enforcement with preparing him for this work—especially in surveillance, report writing, and building relationships with people from all walks of life. He enjoys getting out in the field, meeting contractors and local officials, and seeing firsthand how much infrastructure work is being done across the region.



Looking ahead, he hopes to expand III FFC's use of drone technology and deepen his knowledge of Davis-Bacon requirements on federal projects.

Beyond work, Jake continues his family's tradition of service through the Marine Toys for Tots program each holiday season. He organizes collection boxes, gathers donations, and helps distribute toys to families in need.

From his years in public safety to his role at III FFC, Jake Parker has always been dedicated to protecting and serving others. Today he is proud to bring that commitment to ensuring fair and safe contracting practices across Indiana.



Jake Parker with his retired police dog, Bosco.

ILLINOIS TRANSIT:

FROM FISCAL CLIFF TO STRUCTURAL REFORM

Senate Bill 2111 marks a structural shift in how Illinois funds, governs, and prioritizes public transit. Passed by the General Assembly in October 2025, SB2111 provides \$1.5 billion in annual transit support—averting a fiscal cliff for the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) region—while dissolving that very agency in favor of a new governance framework.

Governance Overhaul: From RTA to NITA

SB2111 dismantles the RTA and establishes the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA) to oversee CTA, Metra, and Pace. Unlike RTA's limited role, NITA wields comprehensive oversight: it will approve agency budgets, service plans, and capital projects, and implement a unified fare system across all systems.

The 20-member NITA board balances representation between Chicago, suburban Cook, the five collar counties, and the Governor. More than half of the boards of the Service Boards are made up of NITA board members to guarantee improved coordination and a regional vision across all boards. NITA must be fully operational by September 2026.

Funding Shift: Existing Revenues, Regional Responsibility

To fund operations, SB2111 redirects approximately \$860 million annually in state sales tax on motor fuel from the Road Fund to transit, with 15% dedicated to downstate transit providers. Additionally, the RTA is given the authority to take a vote to increase the RTA sales tax by

0.25%, with the bill requiring a vote to be taken within 60 days of the effective date of the bill. It also supplements this with approximately \$200 million in annual Road Fund interest for capital projects, with 10% distributed to downstate transit capital projects. Importantly, the law lowers the farebox recovery ratio from 50% to 25%, aligning with national standards and protecting agencies from ridership volatility.

The Tollway's New Role

To backfill road dollars lost to transit, SB2111 authorizes significant toll increases: an average of 45 cents for passenger vehicles and 30% for commercial trucks. These funds, projected to raise approximately \$1 billion annually, will support a new Illinois Tollway capital program. A biennial inflationary increase will begin 2 years after the toll increase is implemented.

Labor Implications

SB2111 is a victory for both transit workers and the construction trades. By preventing deep service cuts, the bill secures over 15,000 transit jobs. Labor protections in the statute ensure existing employee rights are preserved through the NITA transition.

Meanwhile, resistance from construction unions to diverting road funds was mitigated by toll increases to support a new Illinois Tollway capital program. This agreement was critical in keeping construction jobs secure and ensuring the state's transportation investments stay strong across every mode. SB2111 is transformative for all forms of transportation in the Chicago region. It stabilizes transit funding, consolidates oversight under a new regional authority, and authorizes toll increase to secure a new Tollway capital program. The result is a more coordinated, performance-driven system that strengthens transit without undercutting road investment or labor protections.



Mary Tyler
POLICY COORDINATOR



Dan Weksler
POLICY ANALYST



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STRENGTHENING OUR REGION THROUGH SMART INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

As we look toward the future across Western Illinois and Eastern Iowa, the roar of heavy machinery signals more than just road repairs — it represents a generational investment in our region's future. From the Quad Cities to Rockford, Illinois, and Keokuk, Iowa, large-scale construction projects are moving from blueprints to reality, fueled by state infrastructure investments like the *Rebuild Illinois* capital program and major federal funding from the bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* championed under President Joe Biden.

These projects are critical to our economy and public safety, but just as importantly, they are creating thousands of highly skilled, good-paying construction jobs that support working families and strengthen local communities.

In the Quad Cities, one of the most transformative efforts underway is the long-awaited Interstate 80 Bridge replacement. This \$441.5 million project will replace a vital artery over the Mississippi River, ensuring the safe and efficient movement of people and goods for decades to come. Meanwhile, the 85-year-old Centennial Bridge has entered a crucial study and engineering phase, funded by *Rebuild Illinois*, to determine its long-term future. Combined with major resurfacing on I-280 and I-80, this pipeline of projects provides a stable outlook for our local construction workforce.

That same momentum extends north to Winnebago County, Illinois, where the Interstate 39 corridor is undergoing a massive \$302 million multiyear transformation. A key component of the \$44.2 million reconstruction project is the I-39 and U.S. 20 interchange, which is already underway and tackling one of the area's most notorious bottlenecks. Looking ahead, a \$102 million reconstruction of I-39 from U.S. 20 to Harrison Avenue is scheduled for 2026.

It's not just the mega-projects driving progress. In communities like Keokuk, Iowa, critical efforts such as the \$21 million Lock 19 bulkhead and nose pier replacement are creating good local jobs while enhancing navigation and safety along the Mississippi River. Projects like these play a vital role in supporting regional commerce and ensuring that communities can move safely and efficiently.

These projects are the very definition of public investment, and we must remain vigilant in protecting their value. Their true worth lies not only in the bridges and roads completed, but in the family-sustaining careers they create. These jobs demand the skill and dedication of numerous trades such as operating engineers, laborers, ironworkers, and electricians—the men and women who quite literally build our communities from the ground up.

That's why it is critical to protect wage and benefit standards like the Davis-Bacon Act. Weakening these laws turns career-building jobs into a race to the bottom, jeopardizes quality, rewards irresponsible contractors, and robs local communities of the economic opportunity these investments are meant to deliver.

At the Indiana, Illinois, Iowa Foundation for Fair Contracting (III FFC), we monitor these projects to ensure a level playing field for all contractors. This historic investment must be built by skilled professionals earning fair wages—because when we invest in people as much as in projects, we build stronger, safer communities for generations to come.



Andrew Waeyaert
REGIONAL MANAGER

III FFC HOSTS SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION SEMINAR WITH OVER 100 ATTENDEES

On Tuesday, September 16, the Indiana, Illinois, Iowa Foundation for Fair Contracting (III FFC) hosted its Fall Public Construction Seminar at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Downers Grove. The event brought together more than 100 attendees—including public officials, contractors, and labor representatives—for a full day of education, discussion, and collaboration around best practices in public construction.

The seminar began with a welcome from Marc Poulos of III FFC, who set the tone for the day by emphasizing the importance of fairness, transparency, and responsibility in public contracting. From there, attendees dove into a plenary panel on Responsibility in Public Contracting, which addressed prevailing wage, project labor agreements, responsible bidder ordinances, and why specific policies at the local level can better ensure responsible contractors are awarded public bids. Panelists included Kevin McGuire and Scott Dietz of the Illinois State Comptroller's Office, Mayor Michael Glotz of Tinley Park, and Frank Manzo IV of the Illinois Economic Policy Institute. They offered practical insights to help public bodies strengthen accountability and ensure quality work for taxpayers.

The morning continued with breakout sessions tailored to the diverse needs of participants. In one session, III FFC's Andy Waeyaert and Jodi Frailey were joined by Mayor Michael Glotz to review RISE Certification and responsible bidder ordinances to equip municipalities with practical tools to strengthen contracting standards. At the same time,

Kara Principe of III FFC and Brian Joanis of the Village of Roselle presented on Home Rule authority and its role in funding public infrastructure, providing examples of how local governments can leverage this tool for long-term investment.



From left to right:
Meghan Moses of MKM
Consultants LLC, Jay
Rowell of HIRE360, and
Justin Williams of the
Metropolitan Planning
Council

In the afternoon, participants explored more timely additional topics that directly impact the public construction industry. Leah Bartelt of the Illinois Attorney General's Office and Michael Duffee of Thompson Coburn LLP led a discussion on FOIAs and prevailing wage compliance. Meanwhile, John Penney of the Winnebago County Board and Sarah Duffy of the Illinois Power Agency explored solar incentive programs and competitive procurements, underscoring how renewable energy incentives are available for public bodies and developers and how they are shaping the future of clean energy construction.



III FFC Executive Director, Marc Poulos

"By bringing together public bodies, contractors, and labor representatives, we create a space where collaboration drives better outcomes for taxpayers, workers, and the future of public construction."

-Marc Poulos, III FFC Executive Director



From left to right: Village of Tinley Park Mayor Michael Glotz, III FFC Illinois Regional Manager Jodi Fraley, and III FFC Executive Director Marc Poulos



Kara Principe, Counsel to III FFC, presenting on Home Rule in Illinois

The seminar concluded with a timely plenary session on Lead Service Line Replacement and Workforce Development, featuring Meghan Moses of MKM Consultants LLC, Jay Rowell of HIRE360, and Justin Williams of the Metropolitan Planning Council. This discussion highlighted both the urgent need to replace aging water infrastructure and the opportunities such projects create for workforce expansion and apprenticeship programs.

Throughout the day, attendees gained direct access to experts, real-world case studies, and practical strategies they could take back to their organizations. Public bodies left better equipped to navigate complex contracting requirements, contractors gained clarity on compliance and procurement opportunities, and labor representatives engaged in meaningful dialogue about workforce needs in a changing industry.

With more than 100 participants and sessions spanning everything from responsible bidding to workforce development, the III FFC Public Construction Seminar once again proved to be a vital resource. By connecting public bodies, contractors, and labor, the event continues to shape a more fair, accountable, and forward-looking future for public construction in the region.



Frank Manzo IV of the Illinois Economic Policy Institute



Sarah Duffy of the Illinois Power Agency



Kevin McGuire with the Illinois Comptroller's Office presenting on the Illinois Prevailing Wage Act



From left to right: III FFC Iowa Regional Manager Andy Waeyaert, III FFC Illinois Regional Manager Jodi Fraley, Village of Tinley Park Mayor Michael Glotz

The Monitor

RAISING THE BAR BY MONITORING
THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY



It's really quite simple. Successful projects happen when Labor and Management share the same priorities. And when the highest priority is having a team of safe, well-trained workers on the jobsite, those projects are completed on time and on budget.

We're the Indiana, Illinois, Iowa Foundation for Fair Contracting (III FFC).

We were established to increase market share for responsible contractors, work opportunities for skilled craftworkers, and value for taxpayers by executing a comprehensive program of procurement oversight, jobsite monitoring, market analysis, and public policy education.



**Indiana, Illinois, Iowa Foundation
for Fair Contracting**

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