



Laborers' International Union of North America

Midwest Regional Office

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Illinois Legislative Update

March 31, 2017

Wind Energy Fix Clears Way for More Jobs

Last year's legislation preventing the closure of nuclear power plants in Clinton and the Quad Cities also made changes to the law designed to free up money for clean energy projects. However, at the last minute, lawmakers added a provision requiring the installers of wind and solar projects to undergo certification. The process of creating this certification could take until December 2018.

Given that Laborers have already performed millions of hours of work on wind projects in Illinois over the last decade, utilizing skills they developed at our training schools, these undefined training standards are unnecessary. Waiting for these standards will not only delay the creation of construction jobs, it may prevent some projects from ever breaking ground due to dwindling federal tax incentives.

Senate Bill 71, sponsored by **Sen. Don Harmon (D-Oak Park)**, removes utility-scale wind energy projects from the training requirements for Renewable Portfolio Standard financing, which will allow more wind energy construction projects to begin sooner. SB 71 passed out of committee unanimously despite opposition from nuclear and coal energy companies.

State Workers' Compensation Insurance Company Would Save Employers Money

Significant changes made in 2011 to Illinois' workers' compensation law, including cutting coverage and benefits for injured workers and reducing fees paid to medical providers, have cut costs for insurance companies by 28% and increased their profits by nearly 30%. Not surprisingly, Illinois employers are still complaining about workers' compensation costs and calling for further benefit reductions and eliminating coverage for more injuries.

House Bill 2622, sponsored by **Rep. Laura Fine (D-Glenview)**, would offer employers an alternative option when shopping for workers' compensation insurance. This legislation creates a private, not-for-profit workers' compensation insurance company (with state oversight) that would compete with existing workers' compensation insurance companies. This company would also monitor and make recommendations to policyholders on safety standards and improvements in order to reduce risk and cost.

This proven concept saves employers money in the 27 other states where it is already in place. LIUNA is working hard to pass HB 2622 and others like it to force insurance companies to pass savings on to Illinois employers and avoid further cuts for injured workers.

Other legislation we are following includes...

Prevailing Wage

PW Act Repeal - SB 1359 (Sen. Rooney, R-Palatine)

Eliminates the Illinois Prevailing Wage Act.

Status: Held in committee.

Laborers' position: Oppose.

Rauner's Property Tax Freeze: Local PW Repeal/Limit Bargaining Rights - HB 3675 (Rep. Sosnowski, R-Rockford)

Ties a property tax freeze to both a repeal of the Prevailing Wage Act for local projects, and allowing local governments to refuse to bargain over pay, health benefits, staffing, etc. Part of Gov. Rauner's anti-union agenda.

Status: Held in subcommittee.

Laborers' position: Oppose.

PW Threshold: \$1 Million - SB 1360 (Sen. Rooney, R-Palatine)

Sets a \$1 million threshold for the Prevailing Wage Act.

Status: Held in committee.

Laborers' position: Oppose.

PW Threshold: \$20,000 - HB 3101 (Rep. Stewart, R-Freeport)

Allows local governments to request that IDOL waive Prevailing Wage requirements on projects under \$20,000.

Status: Held in subcommittee.

Laborers' position: Oppose.

PW Rate Freeze - SB 957 (Rep. Barickman, R-Bloomington)

Freezes the prevailing wage rate at the time of the contract award for the duration of the project.

Status: Held in subcommittee.

Laborers' position: Oppose.

PW Calculation: Union Rate - HB 2495 (Rep. Hoffman, D-Belleville)

Establishes union rate as Prevailing Wage rate unless it is proven that fewer than 30% of workers in a county are covered by a union contract.

Status: Passed out of committee; pending floor vote.

Laborers' position: Support.

PW Rate Posting - HB 3044 (Rep. Hoffman, D-Belleville) and SB 1904 (Sen. Silverstein, D-Chicago)

Requires the Illinois Department of Labor to post prevailing wage rates ascertained in June by July 15.

Status: HB 3044 passed out of committee; pending floor vote.

SB 1904 passed out of committee; pending floor vote.

Laborers' position: Support.

Statewide Responsible Bidder - HB 2493 (Rep. Hoffman, D-Belleville)

Requires contractors performing any Prevailing Wage projects to have apprenticeship programs.

Status: Passed out of committee; pending floor vote.

Laborers' position: Support.

Right-to-Work (for Less)

Local Government Right-to-Work (for Less) – HB 672 (Rep. Skillicorn, R-Crystal Lake)

Creates Right-to-Work (for Less) law for non-school public employees.

Status: Held in subcommittee.

Laborers' position: Oppose.

Local Government Right-to-Work (for less): Modified - HB 673 (Rep. Skillicorn, R-Crystal Lake)

Creates Right-to-Work (for Less) law for non-school public employees and removes unions' duty to represent non-members.

Status: Held in subcommittee.

Laborers' position: Oppose.

Workers' Compensation

House Democrats' Workers' Compensation Package - HB 2525 (Rep. Hoffman, D-Belleville)

Seeks to reduce workers' compensation costs for Illinois employers by regulating insurance company premiums and creating incentives for "return to work" and safety programs.

Status: Passed out of committee; pending floor vote.

Laborers' position: Support.

Senate "Grand Bargain" Workers' Compensation Package - SB 12 (Sen. Radogno, R-Lemont)

Requires injured workers to be out of work longer to qualify for wage replacement benefits; cuts all permanent partial disability (PPD) awards and freezes PPD maximum benefits for four years; cuts fees for doctors and hospitals by an additional 20-30% (medical fees were cut 30% in 2011.) This will limit the number of doctors willing to provide treatment to injured workers. Contains no insurance industry regulation. Part of the Senate's attempt to negotiate a bipartisan budget deal by including non-budgetary issues, as Gov. Rauner has demanded.

Status: Held on the Senate floor.

Laborers' position: Oppose.

Public Employees

Privatization of School Staff - HB 2444 (Rep. Bennett, R-Pontiac)

Makes privatization of non-education school staff easier by eliminating requirements that private sector workers be paid similar wages and benefits.

Status: Held in subcommittee.

Laborers' position: Oppose.

School Bus Seat Belts - HB 3377 (Rep. Lang, D-Skokie)

Requires new school buses to have seat belts. Sponsor has agreed to amend the bill to exempt school bus drivers and monitors from liability if a passenger doesn't wear a seat belt.

Status: HB 3377 passed out of committee; pending floor vote.

Laborers' position: Neutral with amendment.

Safety

Work Zone Speeding Penalty Reduction - HB 3423 (Rep. Welter, R-Morris)

Reduces license suspension period to 60 days for repeated work zone speeding violations in one year. Current law requires a 90-day suspension for repeated violations within two years.

Status: Held in committee.

Laborers' position: Oppose.