



COUNTY

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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THE 2026 SPRING
SESSION IS UNDERWAY

A Message from the Executive Director

By: Joe McCoy, Executive Director

As we look ahead to a promising new year, I'm pleased to share the January edition of the *County Quarterly*. This issue offers timely updates, practical insights and important dates to help county leaders prepare for the year ahead.

We begin with a comprehensive overview of the 2025 Veto Session, including key actions taken by the General Assembly and issues ISACo is monitoring. To help counties plan their legislative engagement, we also include the newly released 2026 House and Senate spring session calendars.

This edition features a leadership-focused article exploring applied Stoicism—a philosophy that offers valuable guidance for navigating the challenges of public service with clarity, resilience, and purpose. I hope you find the reflections and practical applications both relevant and empowering.

You will also find early details about the ISACo/UCCI 2026 Legislative Conference, along with information about NACo's 2026 Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Both events offer important opportunities to elevate county priorities, connect with colleagues, and influence state and federal policy.

Additionally, we highlight ISACo's *Counties Count! Podcast*, where we continue discussing the issues that matter most to counties across Illinois. This issue also offers an opportunity to recognize and thank ISACo's corporate partners for their continued support. Their commitment strengthens our work and enhances our ability to serve Illinois counties effectively.



County officials and staff are encouraged to become active members of ISACo's policy committees, which play a vital role in shaping our advocacy efforts and ensuring county voices are heard in Springfield and Washington. Whether your interests lie in community and economic development, environmental and energy issues, public health, justice and public safety, or transportation, there is a committee where your expertise and perspective can make a meaningful difference. Participation offers an opportunity to engage directly in policy discussions, help identify emerging challenges, and contribute to well-informed positions that strengthen counties across Illinois. Your involvement is essential to advancing thoughtful, effective policies that support our residents and enhance local governance.

I want to extend my warmest wishes to you, your families, and your communities in this new year. May 2026 bring health, prosperity, and meaningful progress for the counties we proudly represent. It remains a pleasure to be of service to you and your county.

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Leadership Insights:

Stoicism for Public Service in a Contentious Age

We live and work in a political climate defined by polarization, distrust, and an endless stream of information and opinion. For elected officials, this environment can create a daily cycle of urgency, frustration, criticism, and emotional fatigue. Stoicism—an ancient philosophy now enjoying a modern resurgence—offers meaningful, practical tools for leadership amid this turbulence. Its core lessons help leaders remain grounded, resilient, effective, and principled even when the world around them feels chaotic.

Who are the Stoics?

The Stoic tradition is rooted in the teachings of several thinkers whose lives and writings have shaped the philosophy for more than two thousand years. Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism, began the school around 300 BC after losing his fortune in a shipwreck—a reversal that led him to explore deeper questions about control, virtue, and resilience. His insights formed the foundation of a worldview that sought strength not in external circumstances, but in inner discipline. Epictetus, born a slave in the Roman Empire, later became one of Stoicism's most influential teachers. His lectures, recorded by his students, emphasize the central Stoic principle that while we cannot control the world around us, we always retain control over our judgments and choices. His work remains a cornerstone for anyone seeking calm and agency in turbulent environments.

Seneca, a statesman and advisor to Emperor Nero, contributed a wealth of practical guidance on navigating hardship, managing time, and maintaining perspective. His letters and

essays reveal a deep understanding of human behavior and the mental traps—fear, expectation, resentment—that undermine clarity.

Finally, Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor and author of *Meditations*, offers a uniquely powerful example of applied Stoicism in political life. Writing privately to himself during wars, political upheaval, and personal loss, he explored how leaders can remain just, patient, and principled amid constant pressure. Together, these figures form a lineage of thinkers who faced immense external challenges yet preserved their inner steadiness—making their lessons especially relevant for public officials today.

Why Stoicism Matters Today

Stoicism was developed as an antidote to uncertainty, anxiety, and social upheaval—conditions that certainly resonate today. The philosophy teaches that “our perception of things – rather than the things themselves – cause most of our problems.”

In a time when public officials face nonstop scrutiny, rapid news cycles, and emotionally charged issues, this distinction matters. Stoicism teaches that although we cannot control external events, public opinion, media narratives, or even legislative outcomes, we can always control two things:

1. How we think about these events, and
2. How we choose to respond.

This control–no-control distinction is the foundation of the Stoic “inner citadel”—the mental fortress that protects one’s peace and integrity amid external pressure.

Stoic Virtues as Public-Service Virtues

Stoicism emphasizes four primary virtues: Wisdom, Courage, Justice, and Self-Control.

Each maps naturally onto the demands of public office:

- Wisdom: the ability to discern what is real, what matters, and what is within your power to influence.
- Courage: standing firm in your principles when criticism or conflict is loud.
- Justice: doing right by constituents, colleagues, and the institution you serve.
- Self-Control: staying steady in the face of provocation, misinformation, or disappointment.

In a culture of outrage, these virtues become competitive advantages in leadership.

Core Stoic Lessons for Modern Public Officials

Below are key Stoic principles reframed specifically for public-sector leadership, with practical guidance for applying each.

1. Focus on What You Can Control

Epictetus wrote:

"Some things are in our control, while others are not...We control our opinion, choice, desire...We don't control our body, property, reputation, position..."

Relevance to politics:

Elected officials can't control headlines, votes they don't have, or the reactions of critics. But they can control their preparation, tone, principles, and decisions.

How to apply it:

- Begin meetings or legislative sessions by mentally listing what is within your control.
- When facing criticism, separate the factual issue from your emotional response.
- Treat setbacks as data, not defeats.

2. Treat Obstacles as Opportunities

Marcus Aurelius wrote: "The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way."

Relevance to politics:

A failed bill, a difficult committee member, or an unexpected problem doesn't block your work—it defines the next step.

How to apply it:

- When you encounter resistance, ask: "How can this help me refine the idea?"
- Use setbacks to strengthen coalition-building and improve your strategy.
- Reframe obstacles as catalysts for growth.

3. Reframe Your Interpretation of Events

"External things are not the problem. It's your assessment of them." (Marcus Aurelius)

Relevance to politics:

Political life is full of misunderstandings, misattributions, and emotionally charged exchanges. Stoicism teaches leaders to respond thoughtfully.

How to apply it:

- When anger arises, ask yourself: "Is there another way to interpret this?"
- Assume good intentions first—this stabilizes difficult relationships.
- Use Epictetus's "two handles" metaphor: choose the mental handle that lets you "lift" the situation rather than be weighed down by it.

4. Expect Difficult People—Don't Be Surprised By Them

Marcus Aurelius advised beginning each day with the expectation that you will encounter people who are "meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous and surly."

Relevance to politics:

Some colleagues will grandstand, delay, attack, or misrepresent intentions. Anticipating this prevents needless frustration.

How to apply it:

- Begin your day with a simple reminder: "Difficult personalities are part of the job."
- See disruptive behavior as weather—not a personal attack.
- Respond with sincerity and firm kindness.

5. Guard Your Time

Seneca warned against postponing work and living "as if destined to live forever."

Relevance to politics:

Delaying tasks invites complications, especially in crowded and unpredictable schedules.

How to apply it:

- Do small tasks immediately—don't leave them for tomorrow.
- Block time for concentration and strategic thinking.
- Recognize that future time is not guaranteed—be proactive rather than reactive.

6. Stay Flexible and Ego-Light

Marcus Aurelius wrote: "If anyone can refute me... I'll gladly change. It's the truth I'm after."

Relevance to politics:

Flexibility enhances credibility. Rigid certainty often creates unnecessary conflict.

How to apply it:

- Leave yourself a small margin of uncertainty—your views can evolve.
- Detach your identity from your policy positions.
- Treat changing your mind as a strength.

7. Choose Your Battles and Avoid Pointless Confrontation

Epictetus taught that wise people "neither fight with anyone, nor, as much as they are able, permit others to fight."

Relevance to politics:

Not every inaccurate comment needs a rebuttal. Not every rumor deserves a response.

How to apply it:

- Before engaging, ask: "Will this matter next week or next year?"
- Prioritize long-term relationships over short-term wins.
- Let some things go—you conserve political capital and peace of mind.

8. Maintain Perspective Through Memento Mori and Amor Fati

Memento Mori reminds us that life is finite. Amor Fati encourages embracing challenges rather than resisting them.

Relevance to politics:

These concepts help clarify priorities and strengthen resilience.

How to apply it:

- When facing adversity, ask: "How can this make me better?"
- Let mortality sharpen your focus on what truly matters.
- Embrace challenges as opportunities to practice virtue.

Conclusion: Stoicism as a Daily Leadership Discipline

Stoicism is not abstract philosophy—it is a practical toolkit for navigating modern political life with clarity, steadiness, and purpose. It helps public officials stay grounded amid noise, to lead with virtue rather than reaction, and to exercise influence without being consumed by what lies beyond their control.

In a polarized era, Stoicism helps leaders protect their peace, elevate their service, and face each day—difficult personalities, unexpected obstacles, and shifting circumstances—with strength, humility, and a clear mind.



SAVE THE DATE: Illinois County Lobby Day 2026

ISACo and the United Counties Council of Illinois (UCCI) are pleased to announce that **Illinois County Lobby Day will take place April 14–15, 2026**, in Springfield, IL.

County officials from across the state are invited to join us for legislative engagement, policy discussion, and opportunities to advocate for county priorities at the Capitol.

Additional details — including the full schedule, event registration, and coordinated activities — will be shared in the coming months. Please note that all ISACo events will occur on April 14th.

Please stay tuned, as lodging in the Springfield area fills up quickly during this time.

We look forward to seeing Illinois counties well-represented in 2026!



Transit Energy Public Official Safety Immigrants Economic Tax Relief Development Clean Slate

2025

Veto Session Update

By ISACo Staff

The 2025 Veto Session produced significant movement on several major bills. ISACo staff were present and engaged at the Statehouse throughout. What follows is a summary of key measures approved by lawmakers that directly impact—or are of notable interest to—counties.

General Assembly Approves Sweeping Transit Overhaul and Funding Package (SB 2111)

Illinois lawmakers approved a far-reaching transit bill that restructures Chicago-area transit governance and provides a \$1.5 billion annual funding package to address severe budget challenges facing CTA, Metra, and Pace. The legislation creates the Northern Illinois Transit Authority to replace the RTA, redirects state motor-fuel tax and road-fund interest revenue to stabilize transit service, and authorizes both a regional sales tax increase and higher Illinois Tollway rates.

The bill also incorporates the People Over Parking Act, limiting local authority to impose minimum parking requirements near transit. While supporters argue that the measure is critical to preventing painful service cuts, the diversion of road-funding sources and restrictions on local land-use powers have prompted concern among downstate and rural counties. Chicago-area counties are poised to benefit from transit stabilization and development tools, while many downstate officials warn of reduced infrastructure dollars and minimal

direct benefits. Several collar counties may also raise concerns about altered representation and the decision-making structure under the new authority. The new law is P.A. 104-0457.

Omnibus Energy Bill Approved (SB 25)

Both chambers approved the omnibus energy bill, which now awaits consideration by Governor Pritzker. The legislation follows extensive debate over battery-storage costs, the scope of local siting authority, and expanded regulatory powers for the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). A subject-matter hearing in the Senate highlighted divisions among stakeholders, particularly regarding costs and local oversight. The new law is P.A. 104-0458.

Illinois Bivens Act and Immigrant Access Protections Passed (HB 1312)

The General Assembly approved legislation establishing new state-level protections for individuals interacting with courts, hospitals, schools, and child-care centers during civil immigration enforcement activities. The measure creates private rights of action for constitutional violations, restricts civil-immigration-related arrests of individuals attending court proceedings, and requires hospitals and higher-education institutions to adopt policies governing interactions with law enforcement.

Licensed day-care centers are prohibited from disclosing immigration-status information except when required by law. Counties may face new training, policy, and courthouse-security obligations to ensure adherence to these protections and mitigate potential liability. The new law is P.A. 104-0440.

Clean Slate Act Passes Both Chambers; Expands Record Sealing and County Responsibilities (HB 1836)

Lawmakers approved the Clean Slate Act, which significantly modernizes Illinois' criminal record-sealing system and expands automatic sealing for certain offenses. The measure is aimed at increasing second-chance opportunities but will also impose new administrative, technology, and reporting requirements on county courts and law-enforcement agencies. Counties should anticipate workload increases, system updates, and additional coordination with state agencies if this legislation is enacted. The new law is P.A. 104-0459.

Omnibus Legislative Clean-Up Bill Approved (HB 1437)

A comprehensive omnibus bill was approved to update, extend, or restore numerous statutory provisions, including those related to elections, procurement, criminal enforcement, tax programs, and public-infrastructure authorities. The legislation corrects sunset dates, reinstates provisions that unintentionally lapsed, and makes a variety of technical and timing adjustments.

The measure continues COVID-era transit farebox flexibility and adjusts filing timelines and vacancy procedures for certain local offices. Several provisions affect county operations, including those related to election administration, regional superintendent vacancies, and Menard County's quick-take eminent domain authority. The new law is P.A. 104-0434.

Senior Property Tax Relief Expansion and County Flexibility Measures Approved (SB 642)

Both chambers approved legislation expanding senior property tax relief and granting new flexibility to counties in administering property tax payments. The Senior Freeze Property Tax Exemption income threshold for homeowners 65 and older will increase to \$75,000 for taxes owed in 2027, rising to \$77,000 in 2028 and \$79,000 in subsequent years.

The bill also clarifies delinquency dates and interest rates for first-installment 2025 property taxes in Cook County. County clerks may also offer payment plans and waive interest penalties

for qualifying seniors in the Senior Deferral program. While the changes may temporarily slow some collections and reduce penalty revenue, taxing districts will ultimately receive full underlying revenues. The legislation aligns income thresholds for the Senior Deferral program, which allows eligible seniors to borrow against their taxes and repay upon sale of the home or the owner's death. The new law is P.A. 104-0452.

Economic Development Financing Tool Approved; Film and Tax Provisions Updated (SB 1911)

Lawmakers approved legislation authorizing counties and municipalities to use Sales Tax and Revenue (STAR) bonds for major tourism, entertainment, and retail projects, subject to approval by the Governor and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

The bill also extends the state's pass-through entity tax election, updates bonus-depreciation conformity, and modifies the film production tax credit through changes to eligible wage categories, payroll withholding rules, and a new 2039 sunset for awarding credits. Additional provisions include fund transfers to support state audit expenses. STAR bond authority positions counties to pursue large-scale economic development projects in partnership with the state. The new law is P.A. 104-0453.

Public Official Safety and Privacy Act Approved (HB 576)

Both chambers approved legislation creating the Public Official Safety and Privacy Act, which prohibits posting or displaying a public official's personal information online after a request for privacy protection is made. The measure also permits redaction of home addresses from election filings, public records, and identification documents, and allows public officials to use work addresses on state IDs and vehicle registrations. The proposal addresses concerns about online harassment and threats and would take effect immediately upon becoming law. The new law is P.A. 104-0443.

ISACo will continue monitoring these measures as they move to the Governor for consideration and will provide updates regarding implementation timelines, guidance, and any administrative requirements affecting county governments.

Federal Legislative Outlook: Key Updates Impacting Counties

Federal Legislative Outlook: Key Updates Impacting Counties

Information for this update was provided by the National Association of Counties (NACo). ISACo is grateful for our strong partnership with NACo and its ongoing leadership in shaping federal policy for the benefit of counties.

Counties across the nation continue to navigate a dynamic federal landscape marked by major funding decisions, regulatory changes and important policy debates with direct implications for local governments. The following update summarizes recent activity in Congress and federal agencies, highlighting issues that matter most to county officials.

End of the Federal Government Shutdown

Congress has passed legislation ending the federal government shutdown and restoring operations across most federal agencies. The measure provides full-year funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Military Construction, while extending funding for all other agencies through January 30, 2026. The action follows a joint appeal from the Big Seven state and local government organizations, including NACo.

The legislation includes several provisions of particular importance to counties. It extends SNAP and WIC funding through September 2026, replenishes contingency reserves, and continues the state and local cybersecurity grant program. It prevents sequestration cuts to the Social Service Block Grant and Promoting Safe and Stable Families programs, ensures continued support for the Essential Air Service program in rural communities, and reauthorizes key federal health programs, including delaying scheduled reductions to Disproportionate Share Hospital payments. The bill also extends the Farm Bill authorization to September 2026.

Congress has also agreed to develop a framework to reimburse state and local governments that used their own funds to maintain federal services during the shutdown.

Upcoming Revisions to the Federal Web Accessibility Rule

The Department of Justice plans to revisit its 2024 web accessibility rule, which currently requires local government websites and digital tools to meet WCAG Level AA standards. Counties expressed concerns over the high projected implementation cost—estimated at \$1 billion nationwide—and DOJ is expected to propose changes to lower these burdens.

NACo supports the effort to streamline compliance requirements while preserving accessibility for residents. County officials can expect continued updates, technical assistance and regulatory guidance as the rulemaking process moves forward.

Surface Transportation Reauthorization: County Priorities

With the current surface transportation authorization set to expire on September 30, 2026, NACo and partners in the Local Officials in Transportation Coalition have outlined key priorities for congressional leaders. Counties and municipalities manage 75 percent of the nation's public road miles but receive only 15 percent of federal formula funding.

Local governments are urging Congress to increase the share of Highway Trust Fund dollars sub-allocated to counties and municipalities, and to expand federal resources for rural transportation planning. NACo will continue its advocacy campaign and maintain its surface transportation hub as a resource for members.

Advancement of the Fix Our Forests Act

The Senate Agriculture Committee has advanced the bipartisan Fix Our Forests Act on an 18–5 vote. The legislation seeks to strengthen active forest management practices and reduce wildfire risks, an increasingly urgent concern for many counties.

Key components of the bill include streamlined environmental reviews, the creation of a fire shed center that engages local officials, enhancements to Good Neighbor Authority that allow counties to reinvest project revenues, and incentives for treatment projects on areas up to 10,000 acres. The measure now awaits consideration by the full Senate before reconciliation with the House version.

Gray Wolf Recovery Plan Determination

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced it will not develop a national gray wolf recovery plan, concluding that such a plan is no longer necessary. This determination aligns with previous assessments indicating the species no longer warrants endangered or threatened status.

If federal protections are ultimately removed, management authority for gray wolf populations would shift to states and counties. This transition would enable more flexible, locally driven approaches to wildlife management and conflict mitigation.

104th General Assembly Calendar

Illinois House Of Representatives - 2026 Spring Session

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	31	1	2	3	
			1 New Years Day STATE HOLIDAY			
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 PERFUNCTORIY SESSION	15	16 HOUSE/SENATE BILL REQUEST DEADLINE LBS BLACKOUT NIGHTS	17
18	19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day STATE HOLIDAY	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
			SESSION	SESSION	SESSION	

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
					INTRODUCTION OF HOUSE/SENATE BILLS DEADLINE	
8	9	10	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday STATE HOLIDAY	13	14 Valentine's Day
15	16 President's Day STATE HOLIDAY	17 Session begins	18 Adj. Wednesday GOVERNOR'S BUDGET ADDRESS	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
		SESSION	SESSION	SESSION	SESSION	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day Election Day	18	19 Easter Sunday Remedial End	20 Easter After	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 HB COMMITTEE DEADLINE	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
		SESSION	SESSION	SESSION	SESSION	

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
			Passover begins	Holy Thursday	Good Friday	
5	6	7	8	9 Passover Ends	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17 HB 2-H READING DEADLINE	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
		SESSION	SESSION	SESSION	SESSION	
26	27	28	29	30	1	2

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8 HB COMMITTEE DEADLINE	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22 HB 2-H READING DEADLINE	23
24	25 Removal Day	26	27	28	29	30
29	SESSION END/RECESS	1	2	3	4	5

104th General Assembly Calendar

Illinois Senate - 2026 Spring Session

IL Senate - January 2026						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 NEW YEAR'S DAY STATE HOLIDAY	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13 SESSION	14 SESSION	15 SESSION	16 DEADLINE House & Senate LRB Requests / LRB Black Out Period Begins	17
18	19 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY STATE HOLIDAY	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
IMPORTANT DATES						
January 16 - DEADLINE - House & Senate LRB Requests / LRB Black Out Period Begins (No requests accepted)						

IL Senate - February 2026						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3 SESSION	4 SESSION	5 SESSION	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 SESSION	18 SESSION	19 SESSION	20 DEADLINE Introduction of Senate and House Bills	21
22	23	24 SESSION	25 SESSION	26 SESSION	27	28
IMPORTANT DATES						
February 6 - DEADLINE - Introduction of Senate and House Bills / LRB Amendment Requests Begin						
February 18 - Governor's Budget & State of the State Address						

IL Senate - March 2026						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3 SESSION	4 SESSION	5 SESSION	6	7
8	9	10 SESSION	11 SESSION	12 SESSION	13 SESSION	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 DEADLINE Substantive Senate Bills Out of Committee	21
22	23	24 SESSION	25 SESSION	26 SESSION	27	28
29	30	31				
IMPORTANT DATES						
March 13 - DEADLINE - Substantive Senate Bills Out of Committee						

IL Senate - April 2026						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
			PASSEOVER BEGINS		GOOD FRIDAY	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
EASTER SUNDAY						
12	13	14 SESSION	15 SESSION	16 SESSION	17 SESSION	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28 SESSION	29 SESSION	30 SESSION		
IMPORTANT DATES						
April 17 - DEADLINE - Third Reading Substantive Senate Bills						

IL Senate - May 2026						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2		
3	4	5 SESSION	6 SESSION	7 SESSION	8 SESSION	9
10	11	12 SESSION	13 SESSION	14 SESSION	15 DEADLINE Substantive House Bills Out of Committee	16
17	18 PM SESSION	19 SESSION	20 SESSION	21 SESSION	22 SESSION	23
24	25 MEMORIAL DAY STATE HOLIDAY	26 SESSION	27 SESSION	28 SESSION	29 SESSION	30 SESSION
31 SESSION						
ADJOURNMENT						
IMPORTANT DATES						
May 8 - DEADLINE - Substantive House Bills Out of Committee						
May 22 - DEADLINE - Third Reading Substantive House Bills						
May 31 - Adjournment						

The 2026 NACo Legislative Conference:

A Landmark Year for Illinois Counties

By: ISACo Staff

The 2026 NACo Legislative Conference, scheduled for February 21–24, 2026, is shaping up to be one of the most important opportunities in recent years for Illinois county officials to engage directly with federal policymakers in Washington, D.C. Whether you attend annually or have been considering making the trip, this is a year you do not want to miss being part of the Illinois delegation.

Federal decisions continue to shape county budgets, operations, and long-term planning. The Legislative Conference provides:

- ☑ Direct engagement with members of Congress, federal agencies, and national policy leaders
- ☑ Timely federal policy briefings on issues affecting counties, from transportation and infrastructure to public safety, health, and economic development
- ☑ Networking with county leaders nationwide, strengthening relationships that inform innovation and best practices back home
- ☑ A unified advocacy platform, ensuring Illinois' priorities remain visible and influential at the national level

Why 2026 Matters for Illinois

Illinois is poised to have an especially meaningful presence at the 2026 conference. With significant policy changes anticipated at the national level, this is an ideal moment for Illinois county officials demonstrate unity, and in advocating for county priorities at the federal level. It is clear that Illinois has a unique opportunity to help shape national county leadership via NACo during this conference cycle.

A Tradition of Strong Illinois Engagement

ISACo and our respected ally, the United Counties Council of Illinois (UCCI), host memorable gatherings in Washington D.C., including the well-attended Illinois Counties Dinner during previous Legislative Conferences. These events have provided an invaluable space for relationship-building among county leaders. Plans for 2026 are actively underway, and both organizations look forward to continuing this proud tradition of bringing Illinois county officials together in the nation's capital.

Moving Forward Together

As NACo finalizes its agenda—which will include federal briefings, policy committee meetings, Capitol Hill visits, and county-focused workshops—ISACo will continue providing updates, resources, and support to help counties prepare. Whether you are a seasoned attendee or considering joining for the first time, the 2026 Legislative Conference offers a critical platform to advocate for your county, strengthen Illinois' presence, and stay ahead of federal policy developments.

To learn more, visit:

<https://www.naco.org/event/2026-naco-legislative-conference>

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In 2024, ACH saved over \$15.5 million in taxpayer dollars through bill scrubbing. From 2019 to 2024, over 105% of contracted nursing hours were met nationwide and more than 120 patient lives were saved.



ISACo is pleased to announce its new partnership with the National Association of Counties Public Promise Insurance Agency to offer student debt

management services, including compliance for Public Student Loan Forgiveness, and tools for financial savings and planning for Illinois county employees.

NACo's PPI has partnered with SAVI to offer this solution at a significantly discounted rate for Illinois Counties as we recognize that 43.5 million Americans struggle with student debt. This concierge program is available as a voluntary employee cost or as a county-paid benefit. This program can help members of the Illinois county workforce obtain significant monthly payment reductions based on employee discretionary household income. Average users find over \$2,000 a year in savings with Savi, and Savi has found over \$3 billion in projected loan forgiveness.

The online platform assesses an employee's unique repayment options and digitizes all the paperwork to make the process as simple and accessible as possible. Savi can help members with debt for themselves or their children and can be made available to family members.

We believe this solution can help counties recruit and retain top talent as 86% of Americans say they'd commit to a job for five or more years if they received student loan repayment benefits. Yet only 8% of employers offer such a benefit. Through this offering, Illinois counties can add an attractive financial wellness benefit to your employment package.

By sharing the exciting news of this partnership, I encourage you to check out this offering for your county agency.

For more information about this NACo PPI solution, please visit <https://edge.naco.org/public-promise-insurance/>



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- UnitedHealthcare

Counties Count! Podcast —

Your Source for the Latest on Illinois County Government

Stay informed on the most important developments affecting Illinois counties with the Counties Count! Podcast, brought to you by the Illinois State Association of Counties (ISACo). Each episode delivers timely, accessible insights on legislation, policy trends, and issues shaping county government — all designed to fit the busy schedules of county leaders.

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FOOD MATTERS

We invite you to join the
NRDC Food Matters Network

Food waste reduction is a fast, cost-effective way for municipalities to stabilize waste management costs while helping residents save money, ensuring that surplus food reaches community members in need, and building healthier soils.

NRDC's Food Matters initiative hosts a peer-learning network for municipalities working on food waste reduction. Through monthly webinars and group meetings, members can learn from experts and one another, share advice and lessons learned, and access tools like model municipal policies, funding strategies, and food rescue best practices.

NRDC welcomes Illinois municipalities to join this free network. If interested, please contact Anya Obrez (aobrez@nrdc.org) with a brief note on your municipality's food waste reduction efforts.

Additional resources:

- Project overview: <https://www.nrdc.org/food-waste-reduction>
- Model Municipal Policies on Food Waste Reduction:
<https://www.nrdc.org/resources/municipal-model-policies-food-waste-reduction>
- Policy and Program Toolkit: <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/tackling-food-waste-cities-policy-and-program-toolkit>

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Counties Count!



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