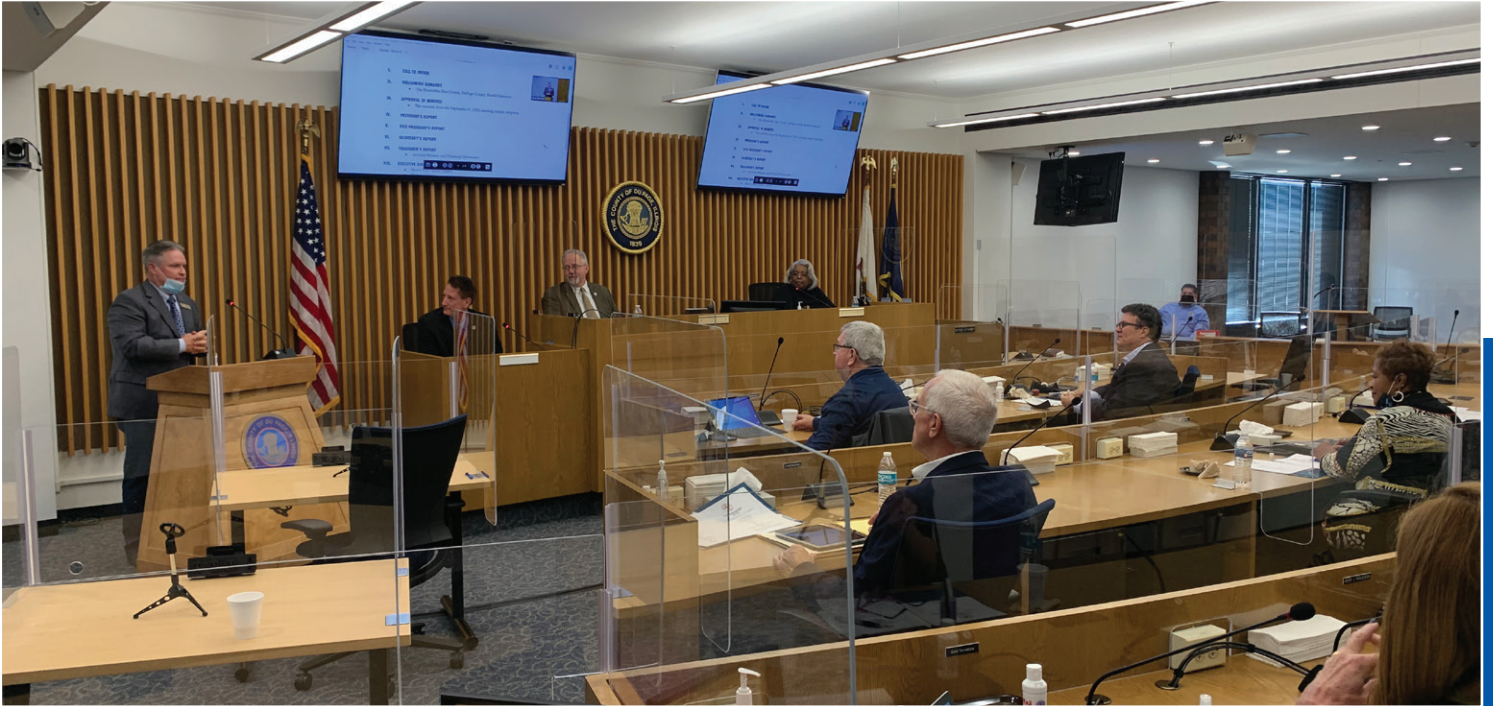




ISACo ANNUAL REPORT

Overview of ISACo Activities - 2020

2020



December 31, 2020

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Overview of ISACo Activities - 2020

The year 2020 marked ISACo’s second full year of existence and compelled the Association to adapt to the unusual dynamics created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these pandemic-related challenges, ISACo continued to thrive by moving forward with our legislative program, expanding our membership, providing timely communications with our member counties, offering support for the successful campaign of an ISACo Board member elected to a prestigious leadership role with the National Association of Counties (NACo) and laying the groundwork for future growth and success with the development of a more sophisticated website and a move to a new office that will more readily allow for future expansion.

As we look toward 2021, we recognize that uncertainty abounds as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will move forward with confidence, however, based upon our past successes and clear vision of our future contributions to Illinois counties.

It remains an honor to be of service to Illinois county officials. ISACo looks forward to working on behalf of our counties during the coming year.

Joe McCoy,
Executive Director



LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

The 2020 spring session stood in stark contrast to the 2019 spring session. The 2019 spring legislative session will be remembered as extraordinarily eventful, with the General Assembly approving noteworthy legislation including a capital infrastructure program, cannabis legalization, internet sales taxation, a minimum wage increase and legislative enactments to lay the groundwork for a possible graduated income tax.

Far less was accomplished during the 2020 spring session in large part because the session was cut short because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While always unlikely to see as many big ticket items approved as in 2019, few would have predicted there would be such an absence of activity.

ISACo's 2020 Legislative Agenda

ISACo is a county association *predicated on taking action*. We're not here to simply tell you what happened, but to *make things happen*.

In furtherance of this ambition, ISACo developed our first legislative agenda during the summer and fall of 2019 and introduced several bills for consideration by the General Assembly in 2020.

Our agenda, known as the Illinois County Action Program (ICAP), consisted of 13 bills. Sponsors were found for each bill and most of the bills were assigned to substantive committees before the pandemic truncated the legislative session.

While ISACo is disappointed that these bills did not advance to the Governor in light of the General Assembly not convening for a full session, we will reintroduce these and other bills for consideration by the General Assembly in 2021.

Despite the lack of a traditional legislative session, ISACo **continued to advocate in support of issues important to counties** at both the state and federal level. A summary of our efforts is available below:



On March 18, 2020, ISACo contacted the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to inquire about the plan and timetable for releasing federal funds intended for local governments that would first pass through the agency. The funds in question were part of the initial \$8.3 billion package approved by Congress and signed into law by President Trump on March 6, 2020.



On March 23, 2020, ISACo issued an *Action Alert* to Illinois county officials requesting that they contact Senators Durbin and Duckworth to encourage support for the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. ISACo also engaged our federal lobbyists to communicate our support to the Senators' staffs. The CARES Act includes provisions providing financial assistance to local governments.



On March 25, 2020, ISACo sent a letter to Illinois State Comptroller Susana Mendoza urging that the distribution of revenue collected by the state on behalf of counties be prioritized during the inevitable decline in state and local revenues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. On May 13, 2020, ISACo had a virtual meeting with the Comptroller's Office to further discuss this issue and was assured that fund distributions to counties would occur on the usual schedule. Furthermore, ISACo was informed that the Comptroller's Office would be flexible in forgiving late filings of reports required to be submitted by local governments that result from operational changes during the pandemic. ISACo appreciates the cooperation we have received from the Comptroller's Office.



On April 1, 2020, ISACo sent a letter to each member of Illinois' Congressional delegation requesting that Congress include direct financial assistance to counties with 500,000 and fewer residents for costs incurred because of the COVID-19 public health emergency. This letter was sent following enactment of the CARES Act that included a provision limiting direct financial assistance to only those local governments with more than 500,000 residents.



ISACo shared some of our legislative priorities intended to provide financial relief to counties with the Illinois House and Senate at their request. On Wednesday April 29, 2020, ISACo met remotely with the House Local Government Working Group. On Thursday, May 7, 2020, ISACo met remotely with the Senate Local Government Working Group. Our specific requests were included in an April 9, 2020, letter we sent to working group members. In addition to the issues outlined in the letter, ISACo requested that the Open Meetings Act (OMA) be amended to allow for the occurrence of remote meetings during emergency situations and advocated for an amendment to the property tax code to provide additional clarification that counties have permissive authority to waive penalties and fees for late property tax payments under specified circumstances. **Both the OMA provision authorizing remote meetings and the property tax penalty waiver authority clarification requested by ISACo were approved by the General Assembly during the May 20-23 special session.**



On Friday, May 15, 2020, ISACo sent a letter to the Governor and legislative leaders requesting the distribution of CARES Act funds to the 97 counties that did not receive direct funding from the United States Treasury Department. Our contract lobbyists were also advocating with the Governor's Office for counties to receive a share of the State's CARES Act funds in accordance with the letter. **ISACo is pleased that the General Assembly included within its approved state budget a distribution of these CARES Act funds.**

It remains uncertain whether there will be a traditional legislative session in 2021. ISACo is prepared to champion county issues during any opportunity presented.



ETHICS AND LOBBYING REFORM HEARING

On Wednesday, January 15, 2020, ISACo Executive Director Joe McCoy participated in a hearing of the Joint Commission on Ethics and Lobbying Reform in Chicago.

The Commission is gathering information to learn what local governments are doing with respect to registering lobbyists seeking to influence local decisions. ISACo provided an overview of what some counties are currently doing in this regard. The work of this Commission is ongoing.

ISACo is appreciative that we are increasingly being sought out by the General Assembly to provide input on policies that affect counties. Previous examples included our work in support of gaining the existing county taxing authority on recreational cannabis sales and our input on property tax reform. In all cases, ISACo's input was sought by state policymakers.



ISACo COMMUNICATIONS

In lieu of the need for regular communications about legislative issues as a result of the General Assembly cancelling most session days, ISACo issued 24 e-mail memorandums with information specifically relevant to counties concerning the pandemic emergency response and created a resource page dedicated to information about COVID-19.

ISACo issued more than 35 of our "News and Views" e-newsletters in 2020. We have also published four editions of our *County Quarterly Newsletter* in 2020. This publication is sent through standard mail. ISACo will continue to prioritize useful and timely communications with county officials.



MEMBERSHIPS

ISACo added 13 new member counties in 2020. This doubled ISACo's membership from where it stood at the end of 2019.



ISACo EVENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented several planned in-person meeting opportunities in 2020. The following meetings and events were held in-person or remotely:

ISACo hosted a luncheon for Illinois county officials during NACo's Legislative Conference in March 2020. The event was attended by approximately 80 people. This is double the number of people who attended a similar event during the 2019 NACo Legislative Conference.

The ISACo Board of Directors met 5 times in 2020. All but two of the meetings were held via teleconference.

ISACo held a virtual Annual Meeting on December 18, 2020, to evaluate a series of policy resolutions and discuss the state of the association.



PARTNERSHIPS

ISACo continued our relationships with 6 corporate partners and entered into a relationship with another company in 2020. The association now has 7 corporate partners helping to advance the mission of the Association.



WEBSITE

ISACo developed and launched a new website with additional features. The website includes a special “tracked bill” page that will be a tremendous resource for ISACo members seeking information about legislation that would impact counties.



SOCIAL MEDIA

ISACo ran a social media campaign that spotlighted information about our member counties.



STAFF GROWTH

ISACo added a third member to our office staff through the University of Illinois Graduate Public Service Internship Program. Our intern is focused on assisting with public policy issues and our legislative program.

ISACo Board Member Elected NACo 2ND Vice President

On July 20, 2020, ISACo Board of Directors member Denise Winfrey (Will County Board) was elected by her peers to become NACo 2nd Vice President.

ISACo rendered assistance during her successful national campaign.

As NACo 2nd Vice President, Denise Winfrey joins the top NACo leadership team and will become a high-profile ambassador working toward the betterment of counties nationwide. She is also on track to serve as NACo President in 2022 where she will bring a national spotlight to Will County and the State of Illinois.

The following Illinois county officials and staff are serving on the NACo Board of Directors in 2020/2021:

Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle

Washington County Board Chairman David Meyer (ISACo Board Member)

Lake County Board Member Angelo Kyle (NACo Past President)

Peoria County Administrator Scott Sorrel

Will County Board Member Denise Winfrey (NACo Second Vice President)



ISACo Co-Founder Jim Healy Retires From County Board Service

Along with Cook County Commissioner and ISACo President Deborah Sims, Jim Healy was instrumental in the creation of ISACo and is an ardent champion of county government. Jim retired from county board service in 2020 following a decision not to seek re-election. During ISACo’s October 16, 2020, Board of Directors meeting, Jim was conferred lifetime member status within ISACo in accordance with the Association’s by-laws. ISACo owes a debt of gratitude to Jim for his tireless devotion to the cause of county government and ISACo.

