



DUPAGE MAYORS AND MANAGERS CONFERENCE

an association of municipalities representing over 1,000,000 people

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DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference Publishes 2009 Legislative Action Program

The DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference has published its 2009 Legislative Action Program (LAP) that outlines the Conference's legislative priorities and positions for the year. The document was formally adopted by the Conference's membership on January 21.

This year, the Conference identified five priorities that are specific, important issues that the Conference pursues either through drafting and sponsoring legislation, or through strong advocacy in cooperation with other municipal organizations. These are the primary focus of our legislative efforts. The five priorities are:

- Public Safety Pension Reforms;
- State Capital Funding for Infrastructure;
- Streamlined Sales Tax;
- Amend the Public Safety Employee Benefits Act; and
- Funding for Mitigation of Increased Railroad Traffic.

Public Safety Pension Reforms represent needed improvements in the police and fire pension systems. They will protect the pension systems and the obligations to police officers and firefighters, while recognizing the growing stress these pensions place on municipalities and their residents. The reforms being recommended this year are:

- *Remove Pension Levies from Tax Cap* so that municipalities can fund state-mandated pension increases without diverting revenues from other municipal services;
- *Municipal Right-of-Intervention in Pension Board Matters* to provide information and evidence to make sure correct decisions are made. That right was taken away by the courts, and the legislature needs to restore that authority;
- *Authority to Invest Funds in IMRF* because IMRF is professionally managed and subject to fewer investment restrictions, potentially earning greater investment returns;

- *Blended Salary Average for Pension Calculations* that would bring police and fire pension funds into line with most public pension systems in Illinois. NOTE – this would only be applicable to police officers and firefighters hired after the effective date of the new law.

Capital Funding for Infrastructure is important for both municipalities and the state. It has been almost ten years since the last state capital plan, and the need to maintain and improve roads, transit, freight rail systems, water-treatment facilities, schools and open space are great.

Streamlined Sales Tax has been a long-standing priority of the Conference. The state must change its sales tax statutes in order to participate in the Streamlined Sales Tax Project and give municipalities (and the state) the ability to collect sales taxes for catalog and internet purchases. This is fair, to ensure a level playing field between Main Street businesses and internet or catalog retailers; and it is necessary to ensure the continued funding of municipal services used by these out-of-state merchants.

Amend the Public Safety Employee Benefits Act (PSEBA) is necessary to restore the original purpose of this important employee benefit. PSEBA was enacted in 1997 and provides that municipal public safety employees who have been killed or sustain a “catastrophic injury” in the line-of-duty receive health insurance benefits for life from the municipality. These benefits include the employee’s family. Initially, the definition used in the federal legislation, upon which PSEBA is based, was used in Illinois to define catastrophic injury as “consequences of an injury that permanently **prevent an individual from performing any gainful work**” (emphasis added). In 2003, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that any police or fire employee who receives a line-of-duty disability pension is catastrophically injured and entitled to municipally-funded health insurance. The Conference simply wants to return to the original definition of catastrophic injury and to provide the original promised benefit, which will assure funds will be available to meet the employee needs.

Funding for Mitigation of Increased Railroad Traffic has become a significant problem in DuPage, contributing to traffic congestion and delays, public safety issues with the delay of emergency vehicles for rail crossings, and increased noise pollution. While the state provides funding to improve crossings, and Congress has recently allocated some funds, it is not enough. It is time for the railroads, beneficiaries of the increased commerce, to step forward and contribute funds to mitigate their contributions to congestion and pollution.

In addition to the five Legislative Priorities, the LAP includes 40 policy statements on issues that have been proposed in previous years. It also includes Legislative Principles – our core values which are the basis for the priorities and policies adopted by the Conference.

Founded in 1962, the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference is a council of municipal governments representing over 1,000,000 people. A coalition of cities and villages, the Conference works to voice municipal concerns on local, regional, state and national issues. It also serves its members and region by fostering intergovernmental cooperation. The Conference is a not-for-profit organization supported by membership dues and grants.

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