



2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA), an intergovernmental agency representing 45 municipalities and over 700,000 residents, is committed to advancing equitable and inclusive growth within its member communities, our Southland region, and the State of Illinois. Of our south suburban Cook and northeast Will County members, a two-thirds majority are federally recognized as Environmental Justice or “EJ” communities. This federal designation identifies disadvantaged, marginalized, historically overburdened and underserved populations and areas that have faced systemic barriers and significant economic challenges.

To turn the tide and chart a course to a brighter future, the State of Illinois must address the disproportionately high and adverse human health, environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts on disadvantaged communities like ours in the Southland, as well as the economic challenges of such impacts to help put us on the road to recovery.

Thus, we seek to partner with our Southland Delegation and others to return our communities to centers of commerce and thriving environments where families choose to live, work, play, worship and recreate. The State is needed now more than ever to act as our vital partner to spur equity and recovery, and to jump start a new era of inclusive, transformative economic growth in the Southland.

SSMMA LEGISLATIVE AGENDA:

1. PROTECT AND EXPAND PROMISED REVENUES

Restore Local Government Distributive Funds (LGDF) to 10%. South suburban communities should receive the 10% local share of state income tax dollars that were pledged to them decades ago. These resources could have gone to reduce property tax pressures on local businesses and residents or been invested in long-delayed infrastructure projects that could have improved local quality of life and kept hard hit communities from falling farther behind. Utilizing LGDF funds to pay down pensions, maintain public services, or tackle needed projects like lead service line replacement, clean water systems upgrades, sewers, sidewalks, transportation infrastructure, broadband, parks, and other unmet needs will allow struggling communities to begin to catch up on projects without having to rely on overburdened local taxpayers or doing without.

2. STABILIZE PENSION COSTS AND RESTRICT UNFUNDED MANDATES

Forestall Tier II Pension Expansion. Governor Pritzker and lawmakers took steps to stabilize downstate public safety pension systems starting with pension boards and investment consolidation. After much delay, promised savings are just starting to be realized. Now, proponents are pushing an ill-conceived proposal to expand Tier II benefits which immediately undermine any gains and are unsustainable—and they will raise costs on local governments in perpetuity and set at-risk communities on the path to insolvency. Holding the line on any increases to Tier II downstate public safety pension fund obligations and extending the amortization date to FY 2050 is a must to permit communities to catch up on pension payments. State decision-makers should also resume discussion about ways to further stabilize and ensure long-term pension sustainability.

3. REALIZE SOUTHLAND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PROJECTS

Accelerate Investment in the Region by Advancing Capital Infrastructure Projects. Adequate State resources should be provided to eligible communities that have a backlog of critical infrastructure projects that are long needed for the well-being of the community. Addressing Southland communities' economic malaise and environmental justice concerns requires prioritizing key capital improvement investments in areas such as clean water remediation, expanded high-speed broadband infrastructure, critical transportation infrastructure, and more. The deteriorating infrastructure across our region presents an escalating crisis of environmental injustice, with system failures always imminent. The State should prioritize resources to address the backlog of critical local and regional infrastructure projects within the Southland and expedite progress on major initiatives like the opportunity for a South Suburban Airport as a state of the art “green” cargo airport and other job-creating projects that foster inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economic growth.

4. EXCEMPT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FROM “PAID LEAVE ACT FOR ALL WORKERS ACT” (PLAWA)

Tailor Legislation to Consider Southland Safety and Public Health Concerns. Local governments have an obligation to provide for public health and safety to their community. However, due to the PLAWA, they now might face inadequate staffing levels on shifts should police, fire, EMS, public works personnel or even crossing guards request leave. Municipalities also face a unique challenge that is not shared by private employers in that the cost of implementing this mandate cannot be simply incorporated into the cost of doing business but instead is borne by local taxpayers. As Southland communities do everything they can to hold the line on increasing property taxes on businesses and residents, we ask that municipalities be exempted from this law, much like other levels of local government, including schools and park districts with similar issues and constraints, which were exempted from the Act.

5. MODERNIZE ILLINOIS’ INTERNET SALES TAX MODEL

Reassess Internet Sales Tax to Reflect Post-Pandemic Realities and Promote Fairness. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift from brick-and-mortar stores to online retail, a trend the State attempted to regulate with the Leveling the Playing Field for Illinois Retail Act. However, this Act has fallen short of addressing the surge in online sales and the sheer volume of activity routed through distribution and fulfillment centers. The Department of Revenue should update its Internet Sales Tax Distribution processes to reflect current realities, while also readjusting to embody the intent of federal law—which centers on local jurisdictions as a benefactor from local point of sale activity.

The SSMMA looks forward to working with Governor J.B. Pritzker and General Assembly members this year to advance the needs of the Southland. Our Legislative Program reflects the collective consideration and position of our member municipalities. Together, we are confident that we can promote the wholesale enhancement of our communities and make headway on the equitable and just recovery of the Southland.

Please contact President Ronald J. Gardiner, Legislative Chairman Richard Reinbold, Executive Director Kristi DeLaurentiis, or Environmental Justice Policy Specialist David Clay II if you have questions about SSMMA’s 2024 Legislative Priorities or SSMMA communities’ needs.

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SSMMA represents the communities of Alsip, Beecher, Blue Island, Burnham, Calumet City, Calumet Park, Chicago Heights, Country Club Hills, Crestwood, Crete, Dixmoor, Dolton, East Hazel Crest, Flossmoor, Ford Heights, Glenwood, Harvey, Hazel Crest, Homewood, Lansing, Lynwood, Markham, Matteson, Midlothian, Mokena, Monee, Oak Forest, Olympia Fields, Orland Hills, Orland Park, Park Forest, Peotone, Phoenix, Posen, Richton Park, Riverdale, Robbins, Sauk Village, South Chicago Heights, South Holland, Steger, Thornton, Tinley Park, University Park, and Worth.