



MCH

MCHENRY COUNTY • IL

**2025
STATE & FEDERAL
LEGISLATIVE
PROGRAM**

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ABOUT MCHENRY COUNTY

Founded in 1836, McHenry County began as an agricultural community, which grew substantially in the 1990s in 2000s to become the sixth largest county in the State of Illinois. Today, the county is comprised of a patchwork of rural and urban communities in the northwest region of the Chicago metropolitan area, and it boasts a population of approximately 312,800 residents.

Property taxes in McHenry County remain high, and the County Board is committed to lessening its burden on residents by encouraging smart, sustainable development that expands the tax base. The County Board recognizes that a strong, vibrant economy also is dependent upon the preservation and protection of the county's natural, agricultural, and cultural resources, as the county's rural character and natural areas attract visitors, new residents and businesses to the county.

Unfunded mandates and added regulations from both the State and the Federal Government have increased the cost of county operations, and they threaten the county's fiscal strength and opportunities for tax relief.

Partnerships with federal and state legislators are essential for enabling the county to provide high-quality services in a fiscally responsible manner. The 2025 Legislative Program was developed in coordination with the full County Board, county departments and regional stakeholders. The Program includes legislative priorities to sponsor and priorities to support. Sponsored priorities are those sponsored by McHenry County. Supported priorities are those sponsored by other partner organizations. Each priority contains a brief description and proposed legislative action in accordance with the McHenry County Legislative Tenets.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

McHenry County begins the development of the legislative program prior to the Illinois General Assembly's Veto Session. The Law & Government/Liquor (LGL) Committee seeks input from county elected officials as well as department heads, partner agencies, and state elected officials for legislation ideas that directly impact the county government and services.

The LGL Committee reviews proposed ideas and begins the vetting process for possible inclusion into the proposed program. This process may include, but is not limited to, consultation with other impacted elected offices, units of government and standing committees with subject matter expertise.

The LGL Committee then develops and approves a proposed legislative program for the consideration of the full County Board.

Once the County Board approves the program, it is distributed to McHenry County's legislative advocates and its delegation to Springfield and Washington D.C. After the conclusion of the General Assembly's Spring Session, the LGL Committee evaluates the success of the program and begins the legislative process again.

Given the fast-paced environment of the Illinois General Assembly, the County Board Chair, the County Administrator, and their delegates are permitted to file witness slips on behalf of the McHenry County Board on issues where the Board's position is clearly stated by the Legislative Program, the County's Legislative Tenets, or by resolution. Should the County Board's position be ambiguous or unknown, the Chair may submit a witness slip under the Office of the County Board Chair. Where practicable, the County Board may issue a resolution declaring its position on policy. County Board Members are empowered to file witness slips in their own personal capacities.

Legislative Positions: the County may **sponsor** or initiate legislation, **support** the initiatives other organizations or **oppose** initiatives violating its legislative tenets. **2**

2025 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATES

2025 LEGISLATIVE TENETS



Established in 1976 and formalized in 2001, the McHenry County Council of Governments is a cohesive network of governmental

bodies who seek to foster cooperation between all levels of government. The purpose of the McHenry County Council of Governments is to uphold and advocate for principles of effective local government, facilitate solutions to regional issues, and otherwise lessen the burdens of government.



The Illinois State Association of Counties (ISACo) is a statewide association whose mission is to empower county officials to provide excellent service to their residents. ISACo member counties are comprised of forward-thinking public servants who recognize that the challenges confronting county governments require new and innovative ideas, collaborative solutions

and collective advocacy at the state and federal levels of government.



The National Association of Counties (NACo) represents the interests of America's counties, serving as a powerful voice in federal policymaking and a vital part of our nation's intergovernmental system.

With a membership of over 1,500 county elected and professional officials, NACo brings together leaders from across the country to shape national policies, share best practices and strengthen counties for a stronger America.

- 1. Support legislation granting additional permissive authorities for counties.**
- 2. Support legislation allowing counties to expand non-property tax revenue sources.**
- 3. Oppose unfunded mandates imposed by the state or federal government.***
- 4. Oppose legislation that would reduce the existing authority of county government.**
- 5. Oppose legislation that erodes the existing County revenue base.**
- 6. Support legislation that benefits the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of McHenry County.**

***Legislators are encouraged to approve sound legislation regardless of funding source so long as reasonable attempts to provide non-local funding have been made.**

STATE PRIORITIES TO SPONSOR

INCLUDE THE MCHENRY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE IN THE CO-RESPONDER PILOT PROGRAM

Issue: The General Assembly created the Co-Responder Pilot Program in May of 2022. The law stated that the police departments of East St. Louis, Peoria, Springfield, and Waukegan shall develop a co-responder unit, a unit of police social workers to conduct follow-up visits for individuals that may benefit from mental or behavioral health services. The General Assembly also appropriated \$10 million in funding for these programs, yet participating communities have only budgeted for approximately \$7.3 million in 2024. The McHenry County Sheriff's Office has successfully launched its county-wide Police Social Work Program in June of 2022, and already employs several social workers who are making a difference in the lives of McHenry County residents.

Recommendation: McHenry County seeks the inclusion of the McHenry County Sheriff's Office in the Co-Responder Pilot Program legislation and an allocation of funding to help support this program as it is now a template for local governments across the State of Illinois.

PERMIT INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS ETHICS REQUIREMENTS

Issue: The State Officials and Employees Act requires local governments to pass ordinances prohibiting certain gifts, political activities, and sexual harassment. The Illinois Attorney General's Office recommended the development of an ethics commission to hear ethics complaints, but many local governments do not have the resources to maintain one.

Recommendation: McHenry County seeks authority for local governments with an executed agreement to authorize another government's ethics commission to hear its ethics complaints.

SAVE THE REGIONAL TRANSIT SYSTEM AND MAKE IMPROVEMENTS BENEFITING MCHENRY COUNTY

Issue: Transit ridership declines stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an annual system operating budget deficit of over \$730 million starting in 2026. Without new State funding support, the transit system in Northeastern Illinois (Pace, Metra, CTA) will be forced to dramatically cut service and increase fares, resulting in what is known as a transit "death spiral" in which fewer riders will necessitate further cuts and fare increases. Some state legislators have demanded that new revenues must come with transit system governance reforms. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) developed a Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) report which recommended two possible changes to governance of regional transit. The first was integrating the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Pace, and Metra into one regional entity, and the second was empowering the RTA with new authority, while maintaining the CTA, Pace, and Metra in their roles as operating agencies.

Recommendation: McHenry County supports an increase of \$1.5 billion in operating revenue flowing to the regional transit system. This level of funding will allow the transit agencies to make targeted improvements to service such as the implementation of Regional Rail (Metra) and new routes as proposed in the ReVision Plan (Pace). McHenry County also seeks the implementation of a stronger RTA with the CTA, Pace, Metra continuing their roles as operating agencies. This empowered RTA must maintain a supermajority voting requirement that protects the interests of Collar County residents. New capital funding that may accompany any transit legislation must fully fund the construction of a new Metra rail yard northwest of Woodstock.

STATE PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT

PROMOTE WIND AND SOLAR SITING CHANGES

Issue: On January 27, 2023, Governor JB Pritzker signed P.A. 102-1123 into law. The law preempts county authority to enact local ordinances that prohibit wind and solar projects. ISACo created a Wind and Solar Facility Task Force to focus on wind and solar siting and zoning issues. The intention of the Wind and Solar Task Force is not to work toward repealing P.A. 102-1123, but to discuss and collect policy recommendations to provide counties with more flexibility when complying with the law.

Recommendation: Amend existing laws to enhance the regulation of renewable energy projects. Key proposals include requiring county or drainage district approval of farmland drainage plans, increasing the initial Financial Assurance for decommissioning costs with reevaluations every five years, and allowing its use for public safety or emergency repairs. The recommendations also include streamlining siting decisions within 60 days of public hearings, requiring NPDES permits for projects disturbing over one acre, and permitting counties to mandate earth perms for solar farms. Additionally, the proposal clarifies zoning rules, allows counties to deny special use permits in residential development areas, and requires commercial solar projects near municipalities to follow municipal zoning regulations.

PRESERVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DOLLARS

Issue: The Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) is a state fund that is used to distribute a portion of state income tax to counties and municipalities for local services. It has been in place since 1969 as a way to reduce dependence on property taxes. Until 2011, 10% of income tax revenue received was deposited into the LGDF for distribution, but it has gradually been reduced.

Recommendation: McHenry County supports LGDF dollars being returned to local governments in the fullest amount possible, and requests that LGDF distributions increase to 8% in 2025. McHenry County calls for the elimination of the administrative fee on taxes returned to local governments and urges the legislature to prioritize self-determination when considering legislation that imposes unfunded or underfunded obligations on local governments.

INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKFORCE HOUSING

Issue: Both federal and state governments recognize the importance of workforce housing. Many workers in McHenry County are struggling to find housing that is priced at less than 33% of their gross income. Workforce housing initiatives can take upwards of five years to implement, which disincentivizes developers, local governments, and other agencies from partnering on their construction.

Recommendation: McHenry County seeks increased funding from the State of Illinois and the Federal Government for workforce housing initiatives as well as the streamlining of the application process through the Illinois Housing and **5** Development Agency.

STATE PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT

INVEST IN PASSENGER RAIL FOR MARENGO & HUNTLEY

Issue: The State of Illinois has allocated approximately \$275 million for the extension of passenger rail service from Chicago to Rockford with stops in Elgin, Huntley, Belvidere, and Rockford. The rail line runs through the City of Marengo's downtown area and passenger rail service has long been coveted. Since the State of Illinois selected Metra to be the rail line's operator, there is a unique opportunity to provide this service to residents of the southwest portion of the County.

Recommendation: McHenry County seeks the State's commitment to passenger rail stations in Marengo and Huntley with accompanying State funding to help offset the cost of station construction.

ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND THEIR FAIR CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL ROAD MAINTENANCE

Issue: Following the State of Illinois' policies to transition to clean energy, there has been a rapid proliferation of electric vehicle usage. The transition to electric vehicles has created fairness questions for the financing of local road maintenance because electric vehicle owners do not pay the Motor Fuel Tax.

Recommendation: McHenry County supports initiatives that will ensure electric vehicle owners contribute their fair share to the funding of local transportation projects as their registration fees only fund State transportation initiatives. The County supports reforming distributions from the State EV registration fee to share EV revenue with Counties and other local governments.

IMPROVE PERSONAL PROPERTY REPLACEMENT TAX FUNDING

Issue: Each year the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) distributes Personal Property Replacement Tax (PPRT) funds to local taxing districts to compensate for their loss of revenue when the State took away their authority to impose personal property taxes on corporations, partnerships, and other business entities in 1979. Cook County and local governments in its jurisdiction automatically receive 51.65% of the revenue, which is then divided amongst themselves in proportion to the personal property tax collections for the 1976 tax year. The remaining 48.35% is divided amongst local governments in the rest of Illinois in proportion to the personal property tax collections for the 1977 tax year. Prior to State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2009, IDOR could only divert PPRT funds to pay costs for administering and distributing the revenues. In SFY 2025, the State diverted over \$370 million from local governments' PPRT funds.

Recommendation: McHenry County supports the return of PPRT revenue to local governments.

STATE PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT

PERMIT THE PUBLICATION OF NOTICES ON GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

Issue: Every four years, county assessments offices must publish all assessments in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in addition to other statutorily required notices. All are at great cost to the taxpayer.

Recommendation: Given the decrease in newspaper readership, the increase in the use of the internet, and the cost of publication to counties and other governments, McHenry County requests that the legislature pass a bill allowing counties to publish notices on their websites.

ENCOURAGE THE EFFICIENT LOCATION OF UTILITIES AT THE ROUTE 23 & I-90 INTERCHANGE

Issue: The first full interchange in McHenry County was built on State Route 23 and Interstate 90 in 2019, but the extension of utilities in the surrounding area has been slow to progress.

Recommendation: McHenry County welcomes efforts to encourage the efficient location of utilities at the Route 23 and I-90 interchange to spur nodal commercial and industrial development and the larger regional economy.

DRIVE OUR TRAFFIC FATALITIES DOWN TO ZERO

Issue: McHenry County is finalizing its Safety Action Plan (SAP), which has a goal of eliminating traffic fatalities by the year 2050. To accomplish this goal, changes to the Illinois Motor Vehicle Code will be necessary.

Recommendation: McHenry County seeks the following state actions to help local governments improve traffic safety:

1. Modify the Illinois Motor Vehicle Code to permit reduced speed limits in urban and residential areas and provide further guidance to municipalities that wish to reduce municipal speed limits by ordinance.
2. Pilot new approaches to roadway design that reduce travel demand, encourage slower operation speeds, and support compliance with speed limits.
3. Improve existing design guidance and standards to support compliance with speed limits.
4. Authorize a pilot program for automated speed enforcement at high-crash locations.
5. Update driver education curricula appropriately to explain the risks of speeding. Expand school-based education programs on traffic safety.

STATE & FEDERAL PRIORITIES

FEDERAL PRIORITIES TO SPONSOR

INVEST IN THE WOODSTOCK RAIL YARD PROJECT

Issue: Metra is embarking upon a \$150 million project to build a new rail yard in the City of Woodstock. This would alleviate locomotive idling in downtown Crystal Lake, increase the quantity of Metra service for the residents of McHenry County, and enhance the economic vitality of the region. McHenry County has partnered with Metra and the City of Woodstock and will help facilitate the necessary acquisition of property and engineering contracts which will cost approximately \$20 million.

Recommendation: McHenry County seeks assistance with the funding for the acquisition of property, engineering contracts, and construction of the Woodstock Rail Yard Project.

ASSIST WITH RENOVATION FUNDING FOR THE POLICE SOCIAL WORK HEADQUARTERS IN THE MCHENRY COUNTY REGIONAL TRAINING CENTER

Issue: The cutting-edge McHenry County Police Social Work Program has been temporarily housed at the Community Foundation of McHenry County since its inception last year, but it must find a new home to continue providing critically needed services in the community.

McHenry County acquired the old Cary Village Hall and police department building for \$1. Renovations for the old village hall are complete, but the police department portion of the facility remains in poor condition and unsuitable for use.

Recommendation: McHenry County seeks Community Project Funding of approximately \$3 million to renovate the police department portion of the old Cary Village Hall and house the successful McHenry County Police Social Work Program, a DUI testing center, the workspace for MIAT, and an emergency operations center.

FEDERAL PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT

FUND COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS

Issue: The number of veteran suicides nationwide continues to rise, and approximately 14 of the 20 veterans who die by suicide each day are not under Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) care. This national public health crisis requires a national approach that meets veterans where they're located. County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) are often the first point of contact in the community for veteran's services and they provide assistance on a range of benefits, including service-connected benefits, enrollment in VA health care, VA home loans, education benefits, and available job placement assistance. Veterans are not always aware of the available benefits, and CVSOs are often the first to inform them about their eligibility. CVSOs are nationally accredited by the VA to prepare, present, and prosecute VA claims, but there is currently no federal funding directly available for CVSOs.

Recommendation: Support legislation that provides federal funding to support CVSOs or similar local entities.

INCREASE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDING

Issue: The Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG) was created under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 and provides Americans with infrastructure; safe, affordable and accessible housing; and quality jobs assisted through financing new and expanding businesses. Despite the success of CDBG programs across the United States, CDBG funding has declined by 55% since 2000 which has severely hampered local governments' ability to foster sustainable and economically resilient communities. Moreover, communities such as McHenry County are further hindered by the CDBG formulas which are not as favorable to counties with urban, exurban, and rural areas.

Recommendation: McHenry County seeks an increase in CDBG funding from \$3.3 billion in FY 2024 to \$4.2 billion in FY 2025 as well as the creation of a funding formula that would assist communities with a combination of urban, exurban and rural areas.

The logo features the letters 'MCH' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A small yellow horizontal bar is positioned under the letter 'H'.

MCH

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