



Office of the Will County Board

Herbert Brooks, Jr., Speaker

Will County Office Building ↻ 302 N. Chicago Street ↻ Joliet, IL 60432

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CONTACT: Nate Brown and Gary Mack

630-357-7552

Board sets legislative priorities for new year

South Suburban Airport, Illiana Expressway, road projects among agenda items

JOLIET, IL- The Will County Board approved its 2014 state legislative agenda, putting Springfield on notice of its priorities ahead of the spring session of the Illinois General Assembly. The legislative proposals address such issues as funding, regulations and infrastructure needs of the county.

"These legislative priorities would enhance the ability of Will County government agencies to serve its citizens," said Speaker Herb Brooks, Jr. "Our elected officials in Springfield will soon review hundreds of proposals, and it's important for us to provide them with a set of principles to guide their decision making. We look forward to meeting with them in the new year to discuss these and advocate on behalf of our residents."

The board's legislative committee crafted the agenda that was approved by the full board. The agenda requests legislators oppose all unfunded mandates and fully fund programs required by law. In addition, board members oppose any legislation that reduces its authority and erodes existing revenues. Any attempts to divert dedicated revenues including, but not limited to, sales, gasoline, income and RTA taxes, that should come to the county will be fought by the board.

"Two of the biggest issues facing us in 2014 are the potential development of the South Suburban Airport and the Illiana Expressway," said Bob Howard (D-Beecher), chair of the legislative committee. "The board has worked diligently to monitor the progress of these two projects, and we will continue to work collaboratively with the state and the local stakeholders most directly impacted by both. We want to make sure the voices of residents, municipalities, the agricultural community, businesses, and others are heard when critical decisions are made in the months and years to come."

The board recently formed an Airport Committee to act as a clearinghouse in evaluating airport information as well as a link between the Illinois Department of Transportation, eastern Will County officials and residents, and the board. The committee meets the 1st Thursday of every month at 8:30 am in the county board committee room.

"In the not too distant future, Will County will have an estimated population of 1.2 million, and the decisions we make today along with legislation passed in Springfield will have real significance down the road," said Republican chair Jim Moustis (R-Frankfort). "It's important we are proactive in reaching out to our elected officials and sharing our residents' stories with them, so the right path is taken for the sake of our economy, job creation, and the quality of life here."

Other priorities include opposing legislation that allows foreclosure sales to be conducted by private entities instead of the Will County Sheriff's Office. Such legislation would cost the county more than \$1.2 million in lost revenue every year and jeopardize the fairness of the foreclosure process. Also, the county is seeking more

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authority over the siting of cell towers and establishing appropriate setbacks from residential property lines. Probation funding and court facilities fees are also on the board's radar screen along with environmental protection and recycling initiatives.

The board also remains concerned about the dumping of construction and demolition debris in the county's quarries without provisions for groundwater monitoring and rules for protecting citizens and the environment. There are 11 quarries in Will County accepting demolition debris, along with 398 private wells and 43 public wells providing drinking water for 350,000 local residents. Under the current law, contaminated soils are restricted as a special waste for disposal only at a sanitary landfill and numerous environmental protections are in place, but quarries do not face these regulations.

The board's complete state legislative agenda is available on its website at www.willcountyboard.com.

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