



**STRONGER BUSINESS
STRONGER ILLINOIS**

BUSINESS LEADER

Volume 5 Number 4 December 2019

LOOKING BACK ON 2019

JANUARY - Maisch joined U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin and Gov.-Elect Pritzker for Immigration Reform



MARCH - Chamber Day with keynote speaker Congressman Rodney Davis



JULY - Fifth Annual Exports Conference



SEPTEMBER - Chamber Celebrates 100 Years at Annual Luncheon

APRIL - Shattuck Outlines SB 1839



NOVEMBER - Stonewater Participates in AT&T's Believe Chicago



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Illinois Chamber Impacts 2019 Legislation



TODD MAISCH
PRESIDENT AND CEO

It was a busy and exciting year for the Illinois Chamber. We represented business on many issues including the legalization of recreational cannabis, passage of sexual harassment legislation and the first capital bill in a decade.

Though we remain skeptical that legalization of recreational cannabis is the right direction for Illinois, the Chamber came to the table and the strongest workplace protections in the nation were included in the final law. We expect some of those protections to come under attack next year, and we will be vigilant in opposing any legislation that would weaken the rights of employers to maintain a drug-free workplace.

We will continue to be engaged in discussions on sexual harassment and ethics legislation that we worked on diligently with the General Assembly. While many of these laws tend to start in the public sector, experience tells us that this kind of legislation typically trickles out to the private sector and we are making sure we are prepared if and when new legislation is proposed that would change these kinds of regulations for businesses.

Finally, we will work with the Governor's Office, legislators and stakeholders throughout the implementation of the Rebuild Illinois capital bill. Besides the roll out, we will continue to be involved in discussions about public-private-partnerships and other innovative funding ideas to ensure Illinois doesn't go another decade without a capital program.

In this issue, our Director of Legislative Relations Tyler Diers goes a little deeper into some of our biggest legislative victories and a few defeats in 2019. President of the Chamber Center for Business Management Laurie Silvey also provided articles on our New Laws Forum and Workers' Compensation Conference that provide additional insight into the impact of this year's legislative session.

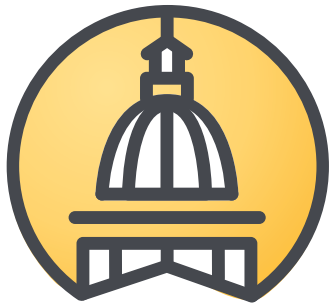
You will also hear from Executive Director of the Chamber Tax Institute Keith Staats on what is sure to be our biggest initiative in 2020 – opposing the graduated income tax.

In this issue, we also wanted to highlight a few of our outstanding members. Silvey wrote about the Freedom Award that Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) received from the Secretary of Defense. Chamber Director of Communication and Advocacy Whitney Barnes contributed articles on the diversity and inclusion efforts at Illinois American Water lead by their Corporate Diversity Lead Rhonda Carter Adams, and on the Chamber's participation in the American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) Program. Chief Operating Officer Candace Gerritsen and exchange fellow Nguyen Tran Dieu My, participated in the program that is part of the White House Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI).

We encourage you to stay tuned and stay in touch in the new year as we work together to create stronger business and a stronger Illinois.

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Details are listed on the chamber website:

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Keith Staats
Executive Director
Tax Institute
Illinois Chamber of Commerce

This article is the first of what will be a series of articles as we approach the vote on the proposed constitutional amendment in which I will debunk the contentions of the proponents of the graduated income tax.

GRADUATED INCOME TAX

Debunk / Round One



In this year's spring session of the Illinois General Assembly, the House and the Senate, on party line votes, passed a proposed constitutional amendment that would authorize the imposition of a graduated income tax. The proposed constitutional amendment will be considered by the voters at the November 2020 general election.

The Illinois Chamber of Commerce strongly opposes amending the Illinois Constitution to authorize a graduated income tax. The case against the graduated income tax is clear.

This article is the first of what will be a series of articles as we approach the vote on the proposed constitutional amendment in which I will debunk the contentions of the proponents of the graduated income tax.

The Illinois Constitution provides that, in order to become effective, a constitutional amendment must be approved by either three-fifths of those voting on the amendment, or a majority of those voting in the election. The debate over whether Illinois should maintain its flat rate tax is the most important current tax policy discussion in Illinois.

The drafters of the 1970 Illinois Constitution and the Illinois voters who ratified the constitution wisely determined that Illinois should

impose a flat rate income tax. Article IX, Section 3 of the Constitution states:

A tax on or measured by income shall be at a non-graduated rate. At any one time there may be no more than one such tax imposed by the State for State purposes on individuals and one such tax so imposed on corporations. In any such tax imposed upon corporations the rate shall not exceed the rate imposed on individuals by more than a ratio of 8 to 5.

The proposed constitutional amendment would change Article IX, Section 3 as follows:

The General Assembly shall provide by law for the rate or rates of any tax on or measured by income imposed by the State. A tax on or measured by income shall be at a non-graduated rate. At any one time there may be no more than one such tax imposed by the State for State purposes on individuals and one such tax so imposed on corporations. In any such tax imposed upon corporations the highest rate shall not exceed the highest rate imposed on individuals by more than a ratio of 8 to 5.

The amendment grants the Illinois General Assembly unlimited



authority to craft a graduated income tax rate structure. Graduated rates can be imposed on the income of individuals and corporations.

The amendment is not limited to authorizing a graduated rate structure. The amendment eliminates the prohibition of imposing multiple income taxes on individuals and corporations. The current prohibition prevents the General Assembly and the governor from passing and approving legislation that adds an additional income tax burden to particular types of taxpayers. The amendment would end this prohibition.

The elimination of the prohibition against multiple income taxes is important because it allows the General Assembly to target particular industries or categories of taxpayers for discriminatory treatment, including certain industries or taxpayers that are politically unpopular.

If the amendment is adopted nothing would prevent the General Assembly from passing legislation imposing a second tax, or some type of income tax surcharge, on any industry. For example, the General Assembly could conclude that nuclear power plants, tobacco companies, fast food companies or investment firms that take advantage of the lower federal tax rate afforded to “carried interest” should be subject to a

second tax or surcharge because of some determination of that such taxpayers do not pay their “fair share” in light of the nature of their business activities.

The flat rate tax and the “one tax” requirement prevents Illinois lawmakers from singling out particular types of taxpayers or particular types of income for discriminatory treatment. This protection is eliminated if the proposed constitutional amendment is adopted.

The flat rate tax ensures all citizens pay their fair share to fund state government. Contrary to the contentions of the opponents of the flat rate tax, the current structure is not regressive in the strict sense of the word. The current Illinois income tax structure has a progressive effect. The current Illinois income tax uses various exemptions and the earned income tax credit to lessen the burden on the poorest Illinois citizens. In this regard, Illinois assists its lowest income citizens better than in many of the surrounding states. The flat rate income tax provides a necessary brake on tax rate increases on individuals - everyone at all income levels shares the pain of a tax rate increase. Proponents of the graduated income tax cite the history of income tax increases under the current structure for the proposition that it is difficult for the General Assembly to raise tax rates and will remain difficult under a graduated rate structure. Their assertion simply is not true.

It will be much easier to raise income taxes under the proposed amendment. As discussed above, the proposed amendment allows

the General Assembly to single out particular types of taxpayers and particular income levels for increased income taxes. It defies credulity for the proponents of the amendment to assert that it will not be easier to enact higher tax rates on a minority of taxpayers, who may be a unpopular group of taxpayers, than it is to raise taxes on all taxpayers.

Proponents of the amendment assert that the Illinois flat tax is outside of the mainstream. This is simply incorrect. Here are the facts - 43 states impose income taxes on individuals and 41 tax wage and salary income. Seven states do not have an income tax on individuals. Nine states impose their income tax on individuals at a flat rate. Thirty-two states have a supposed graduated rate structure. But, 10 states with a graduated rate structure begin their top brackets at under \$25,000 in taxable income and two states begin their top brackets at \$30,000 in taxable income. Therefore, only a minority of the states have a truly “graduated” rate structure. The current Illinois flat tax is consistent with the majority of the states.

The constitutional amendment authorizes a graduated income tax on corporations. Only 13 states impose a graduated income tax on corporations. A graduated income tax on corporations is outside of the mainstream. The Illinois flat rate tax on corporations is in the mainstream. The Illinois flat rate tax is one of the best economic advantages Illinois possesses over neighboring states. The adoption of the proposed constitutional amendment will eliminate that advantage.

Veto Session 2019 Wrap Up

By Tyler Diers, Director of Legislative Relations, Illinois Chamber of Commerce

While the fall veto session is generally designed for the legislature to take up vetoes, it also provides for the opportunity to provide technical “clean up” to laws that were recently enacted as a product of the spring legislative session.

Every year, the Illinois legislature convenes in the fall for the fall veto session. The concept is rather simple. In the spring, the legislature meets and passes legislation which is sent to the governor’s desk where he or she can act on that legislation. Once a bill is sent to the governor, they have four options. They can sign the bill, thus making it a law. They can do nothing and by default bill becomes law after 60 days. They can amendatory veto the bill (or, in other words, edit the bill) and send it back to the legislature with their recommendations. Or they can veto the bill in its entirety.

If a bill is vetoed or amendatory vetoed, the fall veto session is the time for the legislature to take up those vetoes. The legislature has the option of accepting amendatory vetoes, or in the case of total vetoes, override the governor’s veto with a three-fifths majority in each chamber.

During the previous administration, the veto session was often a tumultuous time. Former Governor Bruce Rauner, often in disagreement with the legislature, vetoed a lot of bills. This led to busy veto sessions where the legislature often attempted to override Rauner’s vetoes.

Fast forward to today and state government is a little different. With the legislature and the governor’s office occupied by one party control, there was little disagreement and therefore very few vetoes. In fact, Governor Pritzker only vetoed seven bills this past session, most of them innocuous vetoes. None of those vetoes were overridden.

While the fall veto session is generally designed for the legislature to take up vetoes, it also provides for the opportunity to provide technical “clean up” to laws that were recently enacted as a product of the spring legislative session. Given 2019’s productive spring legislative session, many bills were signed into law (591 to be exact). Many of which were done in haste and as a result may not have been fully vetted during the legislative process.

Most importantly, the Chamber was successful in securing technical clarifications to the recently enacted Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act. Laid out under SB 1557, this clean-up bill codifies several key issues for employers and protects from litigation actions taken by employers for random drug testing, preemployment testing and for failure of a drug test. It clears up the concern that employers might have to prove impairment when an employee fails a drug test. While employers’ drug and alcohol policies will still need to meet the standards of reasonableness and non-discrimination, these changes provide greater clarity and protections to employers who need and want safe employees, safe workplaces and a safe public.

The Chamber also saw technical fixes to some of the pertinent tax provisions that passed this spring as part of the bi-partisan, grand bargain. SB 119 contained language that cleaned up to various tax policies such as the Chamber’s data center initiative, streamlining the manufac-



turer's purchasing exemption, and amending the collection of sales taxes from remote sellers.

However, veto session doesn't confine the legislature to only action on vetoes and technical clean-up bills. Any time the legislature is in session, they can act on just about anything they deem necessary. This helps keep us on our toes.

This veto session we saw traction on legislation to further enact regulations on the use of ethylene oxide, or ETO. HB 3888 would have further regulated EtO and sought to phase out its use throughout the state. The Chamber opposed this legislation as it would have disrupted the supply chain for medical supplies and devices. This legislation eventually failed to advance out of the Senate but will be back in 2020.

This veto session also saw traction on legislation requiring employers of all sizes to provide 40 hours of

paid sick leave to both full-time and part-time employees. While this bill passed out of House Labor Committee, it did not receive a full floor vote in the House. However, this legislation is one vote away from getting to the governor's desk. The Chamber and others met with the sponsor to discuss a potential compromising amendment. This issue is sure to see action in 2020.

What perhaps is shaping up to Governor Pritzker's first veto override was the passage of legislation to permanently reinstate the sales tax exemption for materials, parts, equipment, components, and furnishings incorporated into or upon an aircraft. This credit expired a few years back and its absence is threatening the existence of good paying aircraft maintenance jobs throughout the state. The Chamber supported this legislation; however, the governor vetoed the bill on November 25.

We expect the legislature to override his veto.

Mayor Lightfoot came up empty in her attempt to fix the tax rates for a proposed Chicago casino. She also ran into a road block on her proposed graduated real estate transfer tax, which was opposed by the Chamber.

Governor Pritzker was successful in obtaining his major policy initiative of the fall veto session by securing passage of local police and fire pension consolidation. The Chamber supported this initiative.

And with federal investigators swirling around the Illinois Statehouse, we also saw legislation advance to enact ethics reforms.

Oh, and long-time Senate President John Cullerton is resigning which will bring the Senate back in January to vote on a new President of the Senate.

Leader in Diversity: Illinois American Water

By Whitney Barnes, Director of Communication and Advocacy, Illinois Chamber of Commerce



Rhonda Carter Adams,
Corporate Diversity Lead
Illinois American Water

“I am proud to work for Illinois American Water because first and foremost, I see a pure genuine interest in the engagement of diverse partners, specifically minority business partners, and that is a work environment where I can grow and flourish.”

—Rhonda Carter Adams

Illinois American Water has become a Midwest leader in utilizing diversity and inclusion to grow their business, cultivate a creative company culture and positively impact their communities. At the forefront of their initiative is their vivacious, serious and dynamic Corporate Diversity Lead Rhonda Carter Adams.

Based in Belleville, IL, Adams helps carry Illinois American Water’s diversity and inclusion initiatives by working with their team to develop and implement strategies to attract diverse candidates to the company and engage with the business community to utilize diverse suppliers.

“It has been statistically proven that companies that embrace diversity and inclusiveness are more successful in what they do,” Adams said. “Illinois American Water realizes that we best serve our customers when our workforce and business partners reflect the communities that we serve.”

Since 2014, Illinois American Water has averaged around a 30 percent diverse hire population with greater than 50 percent of that being women. The employee population has also realized over 50 percent growth with Hispanic/Latinx and over 45 percent in African-American hires.

Adams said it is not enough to just promote diversity, but the company must utilize their diverse talent through a strategy of inclusiveness for maximum success.

“When we speak of inclusiveness and diversity, not only do you want a diverse workforce where all groups of minorities, females, veterans and

LGBTQA communities are represented,” Adams said. “We want them present at the table of influence. We must make sure our diverse talent is part of the round table discussion on decisions that truly matter to the organization.”

Part of her position is understanding that people perform best when they are given the tools to flourish. It is vital for companies make sure everyone feels comfortable and included so the business can maximize their input, Adams explained.

She used the example of – you can invite a girl to a party, but you still need to ask her to dance.

“When I look at Illinois American Water’s leadership, I see a diverse group in senior leadership around the table being included in that conversation - that’s inclusiveness,” Adams said.

Illinois American Water’s diversity and inclusiveness initiative has been integrated into all the company’s core strategies, including with suppliers and partners.

For example, in 2017, seven percent of their total spend for goods and services were with certified women-owned businesses. That represents more than four times the purchases made with women-owned businesses since 2014. The total diverse spend, which includes minority-owned and veteran-owned businesses, increased more than 20 times during that same period.

“Supplier engagement isn’t just a metric goal for the organization,

it is a true commitment, because we understand that we can't service our customers to the best of our ability and deliver the value that they deserve if we don't reflect our community," Adams said.

Adams stressed that, again, it is not just about having diverse partners and suppliers but it's ensuring that they are included in those conversations that are impactful to the organization.

"Inclusiveness and diversity promote creativity, innovation, and creates more creative thinking around strategies that could take an organization to another level," Adams said.

Diverse community partnerships help Illinois American Water address the needs of their diverse customers and help ensure the company has a positive economic impact on their community.

Illinois American Water partnered with the of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce this year as a key sponsor of their 2019 Women's Conference.

"We were proud to sponsor the conference, because we pride ourselves in aligning with community partners who support our core values and our key strategies," Adams said.

Adams said their diversity initiative trickles down throughout their entire organization, from leadership through the true, genuine interest in diversity of the leaders of Illinois American Water and the enterprise of their national American Water Corporation.



"Inclusion and diversity initiatives have been a journey for our organization where the key progress has come from leadership," said Adams, who reports directly to President of Illinois American Water Bruce Hauk.

"Our leaders are truly committed to these strategies that are across all business functions. It is not the drive and will of one team, one group, or one department – it's the entire organization that embraces this and that's where the change truly happens."

Progress has been made throughout Adams' 18 years in the diversity field, and she said it is always evolving.

"Over time, the idea of diversity and inclusiveness has changed from being a mandatory - regulatory requirement, to corporations like ours truly feeling the value of diversity and understanding how it does truly impact the bottom line and the dollars of the organization," Adams said. "It has evolved from a reporting structure for customers or and government bodies to the realization that when teams are diverse there's more relativity of thought, there's more exchange of ideas, there's more innovation and more success from

*Illinois America
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with suppliers and
partners.*

teams working in a diverse and inclusive type of environment."

As for the future, Illinois American Water is continuing its work to improve their company, culture and community.

"I am proud to work for Illinois American Water because first and foremost, I see a pure genuine interest in the engagement of diverse partners, specifically minority business partners, and that is a work environment where I can grow and flourish," Adams said.

Reciprocal Program with Vietnam

By Whitney Barnes, Director of Communication and Advocacy, Illinois Chamber of Commerce

This year, the Chamber participated in the American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) Program that is part of the White House Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI).



Gerritsen at the American Center U.S. Consulate General office in Ho Chi Minh where Vietnamese students can come and study, have access to books and technology and apply to American Universities.

This year, the Chamber participated in the American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) Program that is part of the White House Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI).

The Chamber hosted ACYPL Fellow Nguyen Tran Dieu My, known as My (pronounced ME), from Vietnam in the Chamber's Chicago office for four weeks in May 2019, follow-

ing the first phase of her program spent in Washington D.C.

"Back home I'm working in the Institute for Development Studies," My said. "It is an advisory department for local governments, and we work on policies and recommendations related to international trade and implement international agreements."

During her stay, My compiled research for her project related to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and export markets.

"I hope that in the future my project can help the local entrepreneurs to develop their business and international trade," My said.

She explained that, while many international agreements have been signed in Vietnam, most Vietnamese companies are still SMEs.

"They may meet some difficulties in assessing the information of international markets, especially foreign markets like the U.S., Europe and Japan," My said.

She added these difficulties could include language barriers and access to reliable information.

"That's why I proposed a plan to create a portal relating to export markets for local entrepreneurs," My said.

To further investigate her project, My spent time speaking with Chamber staff and learning about the day-to-day business of a statewide chamber organization. She worked closely with Chamber Chief Operating Officer Candace Gerritsen and Executive Director of the Chamber International Business Council (IBC)

Laura Ortega on IBC events and development meetings, including the Chamber's 2019 Exports Conference.

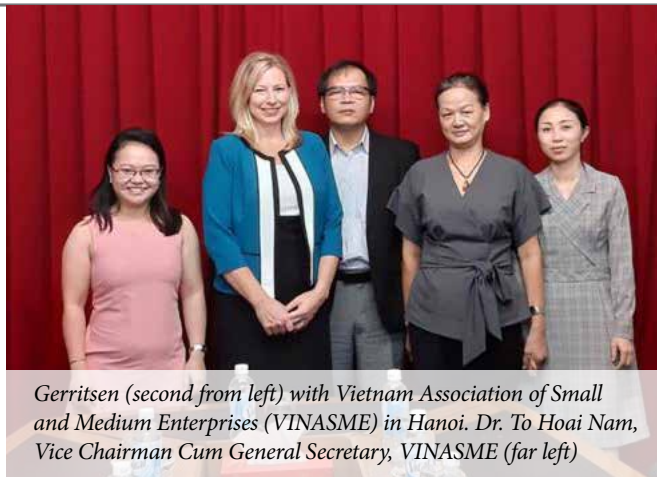
"I learned how they connect businesses together and how they organize the event successfully," My said.

She also met with union representatives and local and state officials in various communities to immerse herself in Illinois' business community and toured elementary schools to learn more about the American education system.

My also received exposure to Illinois' political system. She traveled to the Chamber office in Springfield to learn more about the legislative affairs process and meet with the Chamber's legislative staff. She shadowed staff in various meetings in Springfield as well at the Illinois Statehouse where she sat in on legislative session activities including a House floor debate. While in Central Illinois, she also visited a rural farm to learn more about Illinois agribusiness.

"When I come back to Vietnam, I have the responsibility to implement my project in practice," My said, adding that she was looking forward to Chamber staff's reciprocal visit to her home country during the implementation.

As part of the reciprocal program, in October 2019, Illinois Chamber Chief Operating Officer Candace Gerritsen traveled to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam to meet with business people, govern-



Gerritsen (second from left) with Vietnam Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (VINASME) in Hanoi. Dr. To Hoai Nam, Vice Chairman Cum General Secretary, VINASME (far left)

ment leaders, agencies and business organizations related to Small and Medium Enterprises. My put together a rigorous plan of meetings with government, private and association representatives to give Gerritsen an inside view of Vietnamese business.

"It allowed me to become immersed in a culture in a way one wouldn't normally be able to just by being a tourist," Gerritsen said.

Gerritsen was educated about available resources in various forms and entities to assist SMEs and met with stakeholders passionate about contributing to and growing the Vietnamese economy.

"We learned SMEs want business to grow, are interested in finding new markets, make customer connections, network with people and organizations that can lead to business development and contribute to growth," Gerritsen said.

Through the visit, Gerritsen found many similarities of challenges facing U.S. SMEs, specifically that Vietnamese SMEs also need and want to be educated on other parts of running their businesses besides business development.

"They are grappling with regulations within their country or province/state that are complicated, antiquated, unnecessarily bureaucratic and expensive," Gerritsen

said. "Vietnamese SMEs have challenges with finding a qualified work-force to hire, follow correct accounting practices, and how to interact with financial institutions, etc. That

all sounds similar to SMEs in the U.S."

The experience helped remind Gerritsen of the importance of taking the time to learn the history and background of people and situations before formulating opinions, thoughts or solutions - specifically when it comes to business.

"They have similar needs, wants and aspirations," Gerritsen said. "The environment, and of course, culture provides a different perspective and outlook. Likewise, taking time to really listen, working to put yourself in someone else's shoes, brings a breadth of compassion, empathy and self-awareness that is easily forgotten in the fast paced, multi-faceted lives we all lead."

Overall, the program was a wonderful lesson for professionals in both countries on how gaining mutual understanding, enhancing leadership and professional skills, and building lasting and sustainable partnerships are integral to progress in the global economy.

"I was reminded people are people no matter where they live," Gerritsen said. "I couldn't be more humbled to have been able to share in this program and as an extra bonus to have made some valuable friendships along the way."

Chamber Member ADM Receives Freedom Award

By Laurie Silvey, President, Center for Business Management, Illinois Chamber of Commerce

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve has a robust program of awards culminating with the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the U.S. Government to employers for their outstanding support of employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve components.



Veronica Braker and Andrew Marchese accepted their award from ESGR National Chair Craig McKinley.



Each year, Guard and Reserve employees have an opportunity to nominate their employer for the Employer Support Freedom Award. Since the Freedom Award was instituted in 1996, 280 employers have been honored in annual ceremonies in Washington, D.C.

In 2019, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) was one of 15 employers chosen from across the country to receive the honor. ADM has always supported their reserve component

service members. Dean Espenschied, Manager Talent and Development for ADM, noted that over the past 16 years, ADM has really stepped up the level of support. "ADM colleagues were being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and ADM began to provide differential pay to keep our employees whole while they are serving," he says. "We also pulled together a group, ADM-Vets, in September 2017. These members of the group are here to support colleagues, dependents, and family members who needed us. We made an announcement recently that we will pay all ADM employees full pay while they are on their two-week annual training. It's that next step forward."

ADM was nominated during the last several years by Andrew Marchese, a project manager for ADM and a Major in the U.S. Army Reserve. He has enthusiastically touted ADM's support of him and other service member employees since he was offered a job with the company. "The support from ADM is second to no one, second to none," he says. "It is almost like we are a family. When I was hired, it was known I was in the military. Part of my offer was I had to complete school, complete my officer course and then come back to ADM. It was support right out of the gate. Ever since that day, there have never been questions whether I was out for training or for school."

When Andy was deployed to Iraq in 2011, the support from ADM was outstanding. "I received care packages to share with my entire unit



The Freedom Award is displayed proudly in the main lobby at the North America Headquarters of ADM in Decatur along with the poster and certificate from the Pentagon ceremony.

and those came from a lot of different ADM offices,” Andy says. “My family back home was never alone. ADM sent support to my family as flowers for my wife, fruit, or just a call to check in on them. It’s a statement of support and it reassures me every time that my job is there and everything is good when I return home.”

Andy is currently serving with a rapid response unit that does a great deal of disaster relief across the country and other territories. He sometimes gets only 24 hours notice of deployment when a storm happens. “I don’t have to worry about the job,” he says. “Communication is key with my supervisor and others within ADM. Each time this happens, they wish me the best and there are open arms of support during the deployment and when I return. As an employee, I have never questioned my decision to be in the service and be an ADM employee at the same time.”

The journey to the Freedom Award win began in 2012 when Andy returned to work after his deployment. ADM signed a Statement of Support with their COO (now their CEO). Service members nominated supervisors for patriot awards and the company received higher level awards over the next couple of years. “The first time we submitted the

nomination for the Freedom Award we did not get it,” Andy says. “Each year ADM continued to get stronger as a company, increasing their level of support. We continued to submit the nominations and after five or six times, this one felt good.”

In June 2019, Dean and Andy received the news that ADM was going to be a recipient this year. “The news was very humbling and it was hard to believe since we had tried so many times,” Andy says. “It was a lot of work and it would have been easy to give up. But ADM didn’t give up on support of the military and my colleagues, so I kept trying.”

“The more times we submitted, the more ADM realized that we could do for the service members,” Dean says. “Andy was the one doing the work for the process. The submission process was a good learning process on how we can continue to do better. Everything Andy says is spot on.”

Receiving the award was a highlight of the year. On August 23, 2019, Dean and Andy flew to Washington D.C. along with Veronica Braker, ADM’s Senior Vice President, Global Operations. “Being able to see our executive champion on stage with everyone else was amazing,” Dean says. “The ceremony showcased that we are among a group of great companies.”

Andy’s wife, Jennifer, was able to join him at the ceremony as well. “I was excited to represent ADM with myself, Veronica, Dean, and my wife in Washington, D.C.,” he says. Hearing the other people who have similar stories shows that ADM is among the top companies in the U.S. to work for when it comes to support of Reserve and Guard. It was a culminating event for us, but it gave us a chance to continue to improve how we move forward and continue to get better.”



(L to R) – Attending the award ceremony at the Pentagon were Ron Bacci, the 2019 State Chair Illinois ESGR, Dean Espenschied, Manager Talent and Development, ADM, Veronica Braker, Senior Vice President Global Operations ADM, MAJ Andrew Marchese, Project Manager ADM, Jennifer Marchese, and Laurie Silvey, current State Chair Illinois ESGR.

New Laws Forum 2019

*By Laurie Silvey, President,
Center for Business Management,
Illinois Chamber of Commerce*

*The Illinois Chamber
co-hosted the Sixth
Annual New Laws
Forum on December 4
in partnership with
the Illinois State
Council of SHRM.*



The Illinois legislature was very busy during 2019, leaving HR professionals across the state in need of updated policies, and information on how to handle the multitude of new laws. The Illinois Chamber co-hosted the Sixth Annual New Laws Forum on December 4, in partnership with the Illinois State Council of SHRM. The agenda gave an overview of several important topics by knowledgeable speakers.

The day started off with Jeffrey Risch, partner at SmithAmundsen LLC, giving an update on the variety of new Illinois laws and regulations. He included discussion of the minimum wage increase and overtime law changes, workers' compensation, and the video interview act. He spoke about the changes to prevailing wage, the BIPA supreme court ruling, and Equal Pay.

Next on stage was Mike Wong of SmithAmundsen, who gave an in-depth review of the legalization of recreational marijuana coming to Illinois in January 2020. Employers want to know if they can continue their zero tolerance drug-free workplace and Mike dissected the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act to make it easier to understand. He also

reviewed the medical cannabis law and the specifics. He reviewed legal exposure items that employers need to look at and the fact that marijuana is still an illegal drug under federal law.

During the lunch hour, we were honored to have Jim Bennett, Director of Illinois Department of Human Rights on hand, along with two of his colleagues. They invited the audience to be sure they got all their questions answered on the Amendments to the Illinois Human Rights Act.

Lisa Horn, Vice President, Policy Engagement for SHRM, spoke on the Washington Outlook for Workplace Public Policy. She reviewed the advocacy areas that Congress and the Senate have been looking at over the past year. Workplace flexibility and leave were discussed. She noted that the exempt ruling updates are now in effect. She spoke about proposed sick leave mandates being debated with a paid leave requirement a possibility.

She also spoke about debate regarding workplace immigration, including updates to work visas and proposed E-verify changes. Workforce development is an important issue, with possibilities of employer educational assistance and job train-



ing initiatives. The big discussion was about health care and adjustments to the Affordable Care Act including postponement of the Cadillac tax. She also discussed harassment, compensation equity, and culture changes.

Bev Alfon of SmithAmundsen LLC presented on the Anti-Harassment/Omnibus Bill and other EEO Updates. She spoke in-depth about the upcoming requirement for mandatory anti-harassment training, the Workplace Transparency Act, and expansion of employee protections for unlawful discrimination. She gave multiple practical tips on enforcement of harassment policies. She discussed the specific additional requirements for hotel and casino employers. She finished with the amendments to the Illinois Equal Pay Act.

The event finished with each table of attendees being given a scenario to read and discuss with the audience and the moderators. Jeff Risch was joined by Jay Shattuck, Executive Director of the Employment Law Council for the Illinois Chamber. They lead a lively discussion about hypothetical situations involving each of the topics that had been discussed today.

The day finished with door prize drawings from our exhibitors. Thank you to SHRM for being our lunch sponsor for the day and to Traliant for sponsoring the break. We also appreciate our exhibitors, Illinois ESGR, IX Solutions, Feel Good, Inc. and SmithAmundsen.



Mike Wong, Partner, SmithAmundsen LLC



Jim Bennett, Director of Illinois Department of Human Rights



Jay Shattuck, Executive Director, Employment Law Council, Illinois Chamber and Jeffrey Risch, Partner, SmithAmundsen LLC

Workers' Compensation and Safety Conference

By Darbi Durham, Business Services Assistant, Illinois Chamber of Commerce

The Illinois Chamber strives to provide the Illinois business community with timely information to ensure employers are up-to-date in all realms of business.

The Illinois Chamber strives to provide the Illinois business community with timely information to ensure employers are up-to-date in all realms of business. Workers' Compensation is not much different. This past fall the Illinois Chamber hosted their 12th Annual Workers' Compensation in Lisle, IL on October 8, in order to not only inform, educate and assist employers on how to be compliance, but also to show employers how to reduce their workers' compensation costs in the process.

To begin the conference, we started with Executive Director Employment Law Council Jay Shattuck and Chairman of Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission Michael Brennan with opening remarks to get the Conference underway.

The first speaker to kick off the 12th Annual Workers Compensation & Safety Conference was the Owner and President of ASA Law Group Shuaib Ahmed. Shuaib gave a presentation overview of Medical and Recreational Marijuana in Illinois and the effect on WC Claims Handling. He was able to dissect the Medical Cannabis Act, while also explaining both medical and recreational marijuana in Illinois and the challenges

facing employers navigating Workers' Compensation claims.

We convened into two series of workshops during the conference; the first series was broken into three intimate groups throughout the conference. The first workshop had Mark Carter and Jynniifer Cotharn from Inman & Fitzgibbons where they briefed the attendees around Best Tools for Defense; Strategic Use of IMEs, Record Reviews, Utilization Reviews and Impairment Ratings. During the workshop they discussed understanding the tools that are available to help protect the insured's interest in a critical part of claim handling and how each tool impacts cost and advancement of claims to closure.

The second workshop by Michael Teti with Digistream Investigations spoke on the Investigations in the Age of Geosocial Data and how it's changing the face of risk management and investigations. Michael explained just how to gain eye-opening insight into accidents, site-security, workplace harassment, and high exposure incidents by locating social media photographs.

Lastly, the final workshop in the first series was presented by Surbhi Sarawat Goyal and Charles Maring from Brady Connolly Masuda, P.C. Defending Work Injuries... Before They Happen! In this workshop the presenters went over low-cost strategies that employers can implement in-house to prepare for a work injury before it happens. These strategies can be helpful to employers, HR, and





(Above): Mark Carter and Jynnifer Cotharn of Inman & Fitzgibbons briefed workshop attendees on Best Tools for Defense.

Safety Personnel mediate costs and more importantly, protect the company's interests.

The second series of workshops had Brian Clay, MD, Illinois Bone & Joint talking about Standardizing a Return to Work Protocol for Back injuries in the. All attendees were aware of the markers when a patient can return to work with low back pain, what to avoid, standard practices, and improvements throughout this process.

Shawn Biery, John Campbell and Bradley Smith with Keefe Campbell Biery & Associates explained the Impact and Implications of SB 1596 (Civil Action may be brought against Employer). In this workshop the attorneys went over relevant cases and law updates to provide guidance which will be helpful for anyone who deals directly with workers' compensation claims.

Lastly, Jeffrey Risch with SmithAmundsen finished the workshops by discussing OSHA Obligations and Workers Compensation in Illinois. In this workshop attendees received the latest employer OSHA obligations related to work related injuries and claims. It covered from reporting and recording documents, to drug testing rights when an employee is involved with a work-related injury.

The keynote speaker Senior Vice President Product Development & Marketing with Preferred Medical Mark Pew explained the Intersection of Rx Opioids & Medical Marijuana. This discussion focused on the

evolution of thought, presented the anecdote and evidence behind the connection, highlighted implications in the workplace and talked about how drug-for-drug substitution might not always be the answer.

To conclude our 12th Annual Workers' Compensation & Safety Conference, our panelists took part in a roundtable discussion on SB904 with billing and payment problems in the workers' compensation system. Our attendees came ready with plenty of questions for our panelists. Plan to attend our conference in Fall 2020!

Shuaib Ahmed with ASA Law Group discussed Medical & Recreational Marijuana in Illinois and the effect on claims handling for Workers' Compensation



Roundtable panelists included IL Work Comp Commission chairman Michael Brennan, Attorney Amy Bilton of Nyhan Bambrick and Dr. David Fletcher of Safeworks, Illinois with moderator Jay Shattuck, Chamber Employment Law Council Director. They spoke on implementation of SB904.



FGMK is among the largest accounting firms in Chicago and one of the top ranked accounting firms in the United States.

FGMK, LLC is a leading professional services firm providing assurance, tax, and advisory services to privately held businesses, global public companies, entrepreneurs, high-net-worth individuals and not-for-profit organizations. FGMK is among the largest accounting firms in Chicago and one of the top ranked accounting firms in the United States.

FGMK's mission is to uphold a standard of excellence among accounting and consulting firms by providing comprehensive expertise to our clients out of both its Bannockburn, Illinois, and downtown Chicago offices. While continuing to exceed client expectations, FGMK fosters internal growth through career development, training, and support for the firm's valued and dedicated professionals.

They were recently ranked the 49th largest accounting and advisory firm in the United States on Accounting Today's "Top 100 Firms" list, the 5th largest firm on Accounting Today's "Top Firms: Great Lakes" list, and the 11th largest firm on Crain's "Chicago's Largest Accounting Firm's" list for 2019.

FGMK has remained committed to its vision of identifying opportunities that create value for the firm's clients while continuously expanding its services to address their unique needs. The firm's cultural pillars are founded in the belief that individual

FGMK Benefits from Chamber's Tax Institute

engagement begins with offering an abundance of opportunities for the firm's people to grow and develop professionally and personally. This culture promotes growth and collaboration across practice areas, which benefits FGMK's clients.

The company is growing across all service lines and is anticipating continued sustained growth in its Tax practice. Within Tax, FGMK's Specialty Tax practices are growing at a record pace to meet market demand. Notably, its State and Local Tax ("SALT") practice grew significantly over the past year. The SALT team's tremendous growth is being driven by both the expansion of the firm's clients' business footprint across state lines, as well as the ever-changing state tax landscape that results largely from states' ongoing budgetary pressures and corresponding energized tax collections as well as increased audit activity. The opportunities, both to strategically expand talent in this key area, as well as to work side-by-side with the firm's clients to resolve the most complex and nuanced state tax issues, are endless.

They expect continued growth in their SALT practice. Throughout that growth, FGMK will remain laser-focused on its SALT professionals' broad and deep state tax technical expertise and professional growth in a range of disciplines. This includes the firm's commitment to developing and

maintaining best practices internally, and being trusted, proactive state tax advisors to its clients and the business community.

FGMK's relationship with the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, and particularly its Tax Institute led by Keith Staats, will remain invaluable in that regard. Not only is the Chamber an important advocate in the Illinois market for our clients, but its Tax Institute is a crucial resource for our SALT personnel relating to Illinois and Chicago tax technical and legislative matters.

The Tax Institute provides vital, real-time information concerning Illinois and Chicago statutory, regulatory and administrative tax guidance, state and city legislative tax proposals, including insights into local politics, as well as on-site and remote trainings and webinars, all which FGMK's SALT practice leverages to ensure its clients' businesses are well poised for compliance and growth. In closing, this past September, FGMK was a proud sponsor of the Chamber's annual luncheon, and the firm looks forward to continuing its strong relationship with the Chamber and its Tax Institute in support of each other's purpose.

Not only is the Chamber an important advocate in the Illinois market for our clients, but its Tax Institute is a crucial resource for our SALT personnel relating to Illinois and Chicago tax technical and legislative matters.

“

It doesn't matter what kind of business you're in — if you can't go ahead and get very fast computing speeds into your business, it's going to be a real problem and it's holding back economic development in certain regions of the state.

”

—Todd Maisch on the need for broadband, *State Journal Register*



[Read full article here.](#)



DISCUSSIONS ON RECREATIONAL CANNABIS

Jay Shattuck, executive director of the Workforce Council at the Illinois Chamber, testified before the Senate Executive Committee on recreational cannabis on May 15. While the Chamber questions whether recreational cannabis is the right direction for the state, the bill that passed includes the strongest workplace protections in the country.



CHAMBER WELCOMES PARTNERSHIP WITH VIETNAM

This year, the Illinois Chamber participated in the US State Department's American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) program that is part of The White House Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI). The Chamber hosted Nguyen Tran Dieu My (pronounced M-e), a woman from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, as our Young Fellow. During her four week stay in Chicago, she was exposed to various programs and meetings with the Illinois Chamber and met many of its members.

Nguyen Tran Dieu My was interviewed by Whitney Barnes, director of communication and advocacy at the Chamber in a video that will be shared with My and on Chamber platforms.

My worked on her project of developing clear paths for small to medium businesses to navigate government agencies and tools to foster start-ups in Vietnam and how to expand internationally. My also spent time in Springfield shadowing the Chamber's government affairs team, meeting legislators and toured the capitol. These exchanges served as a foundation to establish sustainable two-way partnerships between the fellows and American counterparts, with the goal of promoting and strengthening civil society, good governance, mutual understanding and friendship.

DATA CENTER INCENTIVE SIGNED INTO LAW

Governor Pritzker signed the bill containing the Chamber's data center incentive on June 28. Following the signing, Director of Legislative Affairs at the Chamber Tyler Diers published a video on the incentive program that will allow Illinois to be more competitive with neighboring states, while providing communities throughout Illinois a shot at the digital economy.

[Watch the full video here.](#)



SILVEY NAMED ILLINOIS ESGR CHAIR

President of the Illinois Chamber Center for Business Management, Laurie Silvey was named Chair of the Illinois Employer Support of Guard & Reserve (ESGR) Committee on November 15, in Washington D.C.

The Chamber has supported Illinois ESGR for the past 15 years in a variety of ways to help promote and grow positive working relationships between employers and service members.

Pictured at right: Incoming ESGR Illinois Chair Laurie Silvey accepting her charter from ESGR National Chair Ron Bogle at a ceremony in Washington D.C.

[See full press release here.](#)



ILLINOIS CHAMBER RECEIVES QUINCY PROCLAMATION

Quincy Mayor Kyle Moore declared September 23, 2019 as 'Quincy Chamber Day' with a proclamation presented to Illinois Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Todd Maisch, celebrating the powerful role Quincy played in the formation of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce 100 years ago. Illinois State Senator Jil Tracy, Illinois State Representative Randy Frese and Quincy Area Chamber of Commerce Executive President Latonya Brock spoke at the event on the special relationship the Illinois Chamber has with Quincy businesses.

(Pictured at right): State Representative Randy Frese, State Senator Jil Tracy, Chamber President and CEO Todd Maisch, Executive Director of the Quincy Area Chamber of Commerce LaTonya Brock, and Quincy Mayor Kyle Moore.



“Revenue raised this summer is already having an impact and the plan shows continued and significant investment is under way.”

—Todd Maisch on Gov. Pritzker’s release of
Rebuild Illinois projects, *Jacksonville Journal Courier*



[Read full article here.](#)



At left: IERG
Executive
Director
Alec Davis
addresses
the group

IERG HOLDS ENVIRONMENTAL BASICS CONFERENCE

The Illinois Environmental Regulatory Group (IERG) held its Environmental Basics Conference on October 9 and 10, at Erin’s Pavillion in Springfield. This year’s conference featured a range of guest speakers from agency directors to environmental permit writers in order to give attendees a broader understanding of government agency structure, understanding of programs offered, and completing necessary steps to obtain permits. Attendees included a wide range of environmental professionals from businesses throughout the state.



At left: Director of Illinois Department of Natural
Resources Colleen Callahan addresses the group



STONEWATER PARTICIPATES IN AT&T’S BELIEVE CHICAGO

Executive Director of the Chamber Energy Council Katie Stonewater participated in Chamber member AT&T’s Believe Chicago initiative in Pilsen and Little Village on November 4. Believe Chicago is an employee-driven, grassroots initiative to improve lives in 19 Chicago neighborhoods most affected by gun violence and high unemployment through hiring, services, contributions, and volunteering.



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**Illinois Chamber @ILChamber Dec 16**

Congrats to Illinois Chamber Member **@Sunrun** for receiving the Dive Awards Disruptor 2019 of the Year! Sunrun more than doubled its customer base in the last four years to become a market leader in residential solar energy. Thank you **@Sunrun!**
<http://ow.ly/RMOC50xBjaG>

**Illinois Chamber @ILChamber Nov 22**

We are joining **@AmerenIllinois** to spread the word on how to protect yourself from utility scammers. Did you get a call claiming your power will be disconnected if you don't make an immediate payment? **@AmerenIllinois** says this is utility scam!

**Illinois Chamber @ILChamber Nov 13**

IL Chamber Pres Todd Maisch was honored to accept House Resolution No. 507 in acknowledgement of the Chamber's centennial anniversary from Rep. Darren Bailey along with Rep. Dan Ugaste on the House floor November 12th. The Chamber thanks the General Assembly for this recognition!

**Illinois Chamber @ILChamber Oct 25**

IL Member **@BP_America** announced their plan to construct a \$25 million dollar pilot plant in Naperville, IL in 2020. This plant will transform plastic waste into virgin quality feedstocks & divert landfills by improving technology! Thank you **@BP_America** ow.ly/jkNP50wUf43

Illinois Chamber @ILChamber Oct 22

"Revenue raised this summer is already having an impact and the plan shows continued and significant investment is under way" -Chamber Pres & CEO Todd Maisch. TY **@JBPritzker #IDOT & #RebuildIllinois** supporters making IL a better place to work and live! <http://ow.ly/jOq350wRDGA>

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Join us today! [ESGR.mil/volunteers](https://www.esgr.mil/volunteers)

Global trade is changing, don't get left behind

Your customers are all over the world. Is your business selling to them?

DID YOU KNOW: the opportunity in global B2B ecommerce is 6x larger than B2C, according to the US International Trade Commission. In fact, it is quoted as a US \$23.9 trillion market.

And global trade is only on the rise. The 2019 US B2B Ecommerce Market Report outlines a consistent trend of 12% annual growth in B2B ecommerce sales over the past two years.

For any business to capture this demand, ecommerce is critical. But it's not always easy to get started. There are challenges that come along with learning to sell online to audiences both local and global. Building an ecommerce site takes time, money, and technical skills. It is also difficult to learn how to find the right customers, then find a way to communicate and transact with them.

This is why more and more businesses are reaching their business buyers on Alibaba.com. It is a global ecommerce marketplace where B2B buyers and sellers all over the world connect. Alibaba.com is an end-to-end trading platform serving businesses of every size, across 190 countries and regions. Selling on Alibaba.com is akin to participating at a tradeshow that is open 24/7, 365 days a year, with >10 million active buyers passing through every year.

The mission of Alibaba.com is to make it easy to do business anywhere. This means helping buyers find suppliers quickly and efficiently, and enabling sellers to access skyrocketing demand from a global community of buyers. Alibaba.com is specifically designed to support B2B companies and the way they interact. The platform has features like keyword advertising so sellers can target buyers interested in specific product categories. Live translation tools are built in to ensure buyers and sellers can communicate and transact in a trusted environment. Each service offered on Alibaba.com is designed to help businesses overcome barriers to succeeding in global trade. Specifically, US wholesalers, distributors, and manufacturers.

This summer, Alibaba.com opened its B2B platform to US businesses and introduced tools and services designed specifically for them. This gives the opportunity for US business owners to sell their products to US and global buyers. These companies recognize they can become multinational companies without leaving their office.

Our customers are seeing success on our platform. Totally Products is a Florida-based vitamin and supplement

company. Totally Products saw an opportunity to drive more bulk B2B sales and expand to a global customer base with Alibaba.com. They were soon receiving 400 buyer inquiries per month and made (USD) \$1.7 million in sales. When they joined Alibaba.com, Totally Products' international orders only accounted for 1% of their sales. Today, 35% of their sales come from overseas buyers.

But we saw that businesses did not always understand the value of the Alibaba.com platform right away. Some thought it was B2C, others needed help getting accustomed to the digital storefront. To better serve our customers from around the country, and to more deeply understand their needs, a national "Build Up" tour was born.

These workshop and networking events feature our local partners, customers, and reps from the Alibaba.com US team. We travel to different communities across America to work and build community with businesses that are interested in tapping into the global B2B ecommerce opportunity as buyers and/or sellers. Build Ups consist of interactive discussions geared toward helping people build up their businesses through Alibaba.com and the ecosystem of

partnerships and services that we are continually growing. Attendees can then partake in a Q&A session, followed by one-on-one meetings for business owners interested in learning more.

Alibaba.com was founded 20 years ago with the mission of making it easy to do business anywhere. We are continually improving the platform services and experiences to make it easy for businesses everywhere to communicate, transact, and most importantly, trust one another, through a global, digital "operating platform."

Gone are the days where businesses need to meet interested buyers at offline tradeshows. CEOs no longer need to travel across the world to communicate and complete transactions. Companies are no longer limited in their access to supply chain or reaching new demand. The face of B2B trade is changing. "Going global" has never been easier. New possibilities await. Don't get left behind.

John Caplan is Head of North America B2B for Alibaba Group. For more information about Alibaba.com and upcoming Build Up events, visit alibaba.com/buildup



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Employees with obesity are at a 76% increased risk of having a short-term disability¹



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Employees with obesity may file more workers' compensation claims³



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