



## Creating Jobs in Illinois

As Illinois struggles with record unemployment caused by the Great Recession, we need to ensure that our top priority is doing everything possible to create new jobs and support businesses operating in Illinois.

I have identified several important steps that State government can take to support jobs and businesses. If elected to the Illinois legislature, I would pursue the following policies:

### **1. Restore Fiscal Sanity**

The budget crisis in Illinois is not only impacting state services, but is also impacting the business environment in Illinois. While it is widely recognized that Illinois will need to raise new revenues, it is unknown what form that will take. A business that is considering investing in Illinois isn't able to evaluate whether that investment will be profitable since it doesn't know what our tax policies are going to be in the future. We need to provide clarity so that businesses aren't scared away by the uncertainty and unknown. I will be releasing a companion policy statement outlining my recommendations to fix Illinois' budget deficit.

### **2. Increase Support For Energy Efficiency and Local Renewable Energy Production**

Every dollar that is spent on energy is one that cannot be spent on salaries or investing in new growth and expansion. To make matters worse, most energy dollars leave the local economy, rather than continuing to circulate and support an economic multiplier. Cutting energy costs through efficiency, as well as increasing local energy production, can have a strong impact on our local economy. There are a number of good programs in place through the State, utility companies, and the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation that support this effort, however we need to take it to the next level.

Illinois should ensure that financing mechanisms are in place so that every cost-effective energy measure can be implemented. Available options including tax credits, eliminating sales taxes on efficiency and renewable products, and creating new revolving loan funds.

### **3. Foster the Emerging Clean Technology/Clean Energy Industries**

The personal computer revolution began in the mid-late 1970s, creating new businesses, jobs and economic growth in its wake. Likewise, the internet revolution started in the early 1990s. We stand today at the threshold of the clean technology revolution that will drive the next global cycle of economic growth.

That growth has already begun. According to the Pew Center for the States, between 1998 and 2007 clean energy-related jobs grew at a rate of 9.1 percent, or two and half times faster than the overall job growth rate of 3.7 percent. *Yet during that time, Illinois was one of only eight states to see a decline in the number of clean technology jobs.* Additionally, Illinois ranks in the bottom 25 percent of states for the percentage of jobs in clean technology. Unless we take action to support this new economic boom in Illinois, the investment and jobs will go elsewhere.

*“Although every state has a piece of today’s clean energy economy, clear winners and losers will emerge going forward. Policy makers who act quickly and effectively could see their states flourish, while others may lose opportunities for new jobs, businesses and investments.”*  
– *The Clean Energy Economy*, Pew Center on the States

Here are some steps that should be taken:

**Focus and Coordination.** Appoint a Green Jobs Director in the governor’s office, who will coordinate Illinois’ clean technology initiatives. The Director would also chair a Green Jobs Cabinet, to include representatives from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, State Board of Education, Board of Higher Education, Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resources, Agriculture, and the Illinois Commerce Commission.

Among other things, the Director and the Cabinet will have to provide a laser-like focus on bringing together and coordinating the innovation, incentives and training that will be needed.

**Innovation.** Like previous economic revolutions, clean technology and energy will be driven by new, disruptive technology, some of which is in process and some of which is still to be discovered. Illinois is blessed with major education and research institutions, especially surrounding the 10<sup>th</sup> District. Argonne and IIT have active programs in this area, as do others. We need to be able to marry the research innovations with entrepreneurship, providing economic opportunities locally. The next generation of clean technology needs to say “Made in Illinois” rather than “Made in China.”

**Clean Technology Zones and Incentives.** Like Planned Manufacturing Districts and Enterprise Zones, we should create areas that can bring together green manufacturing with research, development and training. The 10<sup>th</sup> District is home to the former Republic Windows factory, which is a model of turning economic disaster into a success story. Now owned by Serious Materials, the facility is making some of the most energy efficient windows in the world.

There are two sites in the 10<sup>th</sup> District that should be converted to Clean Technology Zones:

- 1) The Finkl Steel property in the North Branch Industrial Corridor can provide a bridge from the old economy to the new, while carrying on a more than 100-year tradition of environmental stewardship. The State should acquire the property.
- 2) The 2<sup>nd</sup> location is the former Brach’s Candy site located in the Northwest Industrial Corridor. It is also adjacent to the former Northwest Incinerator site that could be incorporated into the project. The community has proposed that the property be used for a new high school with a clean technology focus. This is an excellent way to prepare our youth for participation in the new clean tech economy in a way that leverages and combines with additional green job training programs for the community.

More broadly, Illinois should enact a set of tax incentives to lure new businesses to locate in Illinois. Michigan has become the nation's research and manufacturing center for the next generation of batteries for electric vehicles. As a result of state incentives, several companies have located there, bringing with them \$2 billion investment. We need to do the same.

**Training and Education.** Clean Technology and Clean Energy jobs will require an educated, trained and skilled workforce. We need to ensure that Illinois citizens have access to the training and support they need to qualify for these jobs, as well as the entrepreneurship skills to allow them to start the small businesses that will provide the backbone of this economy.

#### **4. Ensure an Educated and Trained Workforce**

As with Clean Technology, all businesses want to know that there is a pool of skilled and educated labor available. Illinois needs to reform public education with greater accountability and support those reforms through increased investment. Today's students are tomorrow's workers, managers and business owners. They need to be adequately prepared, and businesses need to view Illinois as a preferred place to locate because of the skills, expertise and quality of the workforce.

#### **5. Reform Unemployment and Workers' Compensation**

The costs of unemployment and workers' comp are two of the leading non-tax expenses mandated by government. Reducing these costs will increase the competitiveness of Illinois businesses.

Despite a large increase in the rates paid by employers several years, the Unemployment Insurance fund in Illinois continues to have problems. Several months ago, Illinois ran out of money and was forced to borrow from the federal government for the second time in the last five years. We need to find a way to maintain the solvency of the fund without further burdening employers.

Businesses complain that Illinois has high workers' compensation costs relative to other states, even when taking into account benefit levels. We need to look at reforms that can bring down the costs of providing this benefit while still protecting workers. Two major areas to consider are reducing or limiting benefits when the workplace is not the primary cause of an injury, and when the employee is intoxicated or drug use is involved.

#### **Sources:**

Pew Center on the States  
Illinois Chamber of Commerce