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Introduction

The IEC Policy Platform includes principles in each of the issue areas our organization works, including Clean Water, Energy, Sustainable Transportation, Open Space & Conservation, Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems, Waste Reduction, and Allyship & Power Building. It is voted on annually during our annual membership meeting. Join IEC today to become a voting member and have a say in our policy platform each year.

Clean Water

Water Access & Affordability

Despite Illinois's access to abundant sources of freshwater, many residents face serious challenges in accessing safe, affordable, and reliable water service. Illinois must make investments in protecting our water sources and ensuring equitable access to clean water.

1. Supports making water services affordable for all Illinois residents, including rate restructuring, the creation of a statewide low-income water rate assistance program, and affirming clean water as a basic human right by establishing baseline accessibility to water at low or no cost.
2. Supports a permanent statewide moratorium on water shutoffs for residential customers, funding for immediate reconnection of suspended water accounts, and direct bill payment assistance.
 - a. Opposes excessive reconnection fees.
3. Supports the implementation of the Great Lakes Compact to protect Lake Michigan and the other lakes from water withdrawals that are not sustainable or negatively impact local ecosystems.
4. Supports communities seeking to regionalize water services that demonstrably result in more equitable outcomes across the relevant geographies.

Flooding & Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Flooding harms water quality, threatens public health, stresses infrastructure, and disproportionately harms communities of color. Strategic investments in green infrastructure and long-term maintenance are needed to prevent and mitigate these risks.

1. Supports equitable, data-driven investing and planning to reduce flooding, including:
 - a. Community-driven analysis of flooding and other stormwater impacts to address inequities,
 - b. Helping communities access improved resources to develop sustainable flood risk reduction solutions,

- c. Tracking and publishing demographic data to understand inequities in state investments, and
 - d. Comprehensive floodplain planning and development approaches.
- 2. Supports incentivizing and requiring the use of green infrastructure and natural solutions, including:
 - a. Programs that reduce flood risk through the protection and restoration of ecologically functional floodplains and wetlands, and
 - b. Statewide and local stormwater management policies and performance standards.
- 3. Opposes policies that encourage floodplain development that is not flood-compatible.
- 4. Supports increasing funding to grey and green stormwater and sewage infrastructure state revolving funds, and sources of water infrastructure grant funding that prioritize the replacement of failing infrastructure in underserved communities impacted most by flooding events, CSOs, and overall poor water quality.

Water Quality

Agricultural and urban runoff, industrial and municipal wastewater discharge, invasive species, and crumbling water and sewer infrastructure all harm the quality of our waterways. Establishing protections and expanding investment can protect our water quality.

- 1. Supports maintaining or, where appropriate, increasing fees for water discharge permits and using the fee revenue to support water quality programs.
- 2. Supports two-way protections against aquatic invasive species.
- 3. Supports reducing pollution from nonpoint sources, including
 - a. Developing limits on the discharge of nutrients to Illinois waters,
 - b. Increasing funding for Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy implementation, and
 - c. Adding nutrient controls and implementing necessary pollution controls as identified by Total Maximum Daily Load Studies.
- 4. Supports protecting ground and surface water from point source pollution, including CAFOs, industrial sites, wastewater treatment plants, and coal mining and coal combustion waste.
- 5. Supports state and local collaboration to end occurrences of Combined Sewer Overflows.
- 6. Supports adopting water quality standards that are based on sound science for chloride, nitrate, phosphorus, PFAS, perchlorate, microplastics, toxic pavement sealant, and other pollutants that are discharged into drinking water and waterways and opposes rollbacks through variances.
- 7. Supports protecting and restoring wetlands and expanding the use of wetlands for restoration, land protection, groundwater recharge, and water quality protection.
- 8. Supports designating Illinois waters of special ecological significance as Outstanding Resource Waters to protect them against future degradation.

9. Supports 100% replacement of lead service lines, prioritizing high-risk communities without shifting the cost burden to residents.

a. Opposes partial replacement of lead service lines.

10. Supports ensuring the equitable technical capacity of water and wastewater utilities to maintain existing infrastructure and plan for future upgrades.

Water Sustainability

Illinois has an abundance of water resources, with 900 miles of rivers, 119,000 miles of streams, 91,000 ponds and lakes, and jurisdiction over more than 1,500 square miles of Lake Michigan. However, irresponsible use of these resources can be detrimental.

1. Supports funding a statewide water supply management plan based on regional water supply plans to ensure a sustainable water supply for future needs.
2. Supports state incentives for water conservation at the local and regional levels.
3. Supports fully implementing and enforcing clean water and resource protection laws.
4. Supports expanding non-revenue water auditing to all community water suppliers, not just those who intake water from Lake Michigan.

Energy

Electricity Generation

Ensure equitable and efficient decarbonization of the Illinois electric sector and prioritize rapid decommissioning of harmful fossil-fueled electric generating units in low-income and BIPOC communities while supporting clean energy development tools and programs to accelerate the adoption of wind, solar, geothermal, battery storage, and other renewable energy and storage systems statewide.

1. Supports equitable and just phase-out of fossil fuel power plants, including:
 - a. Decarbonizing the electric sector by 2030, and
 - b. Prioritizing decarbonization mechanisms favored by BIPOC communities that maximize environmental protection.
2. Opposes market-based emissions reduction solutions but supports using financial mechanisms to fund a just transition and reduce GHG emissions.
3. Opposes the construction of new fossil fuel plants and nuclear power plants.
4. Supports allowing emerging technologies to compete in capacity markets by pricing in pollution reduction, consumer savings, and grid benefits.
5. Supports performance-based utility ratemaking that prioritizes clean energy and equity, as well as integrated grid planning statewide.

6. Supports expanding equitable clean energy policies to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2050.
7. Supports only sources of energy defined as clean and/or renewable energy in the current renewable portfolio standard law.

Energy & Gas Efficiency and Building Decarbonization

Energy efficiency and building decarbonization are essential to lowering Illinois' greenhouse gas emissions and providing economic relief for low-income households and communities of color that are disproportionately burdened by expensive utility bills.

1. Supports reducing energy burdens on low-income and BIPOC households, including multifamily buildings.
2. Supports a moratorium on electric and gas shutoffs.
3. Supports expanding energy efficiency standards, programs, and incentives and improving existing programs.
4. Supports ensuring that all public and private energy utilities faithfully execute and create energy efficiency programs and continue expanding these projects to increase customer savings and maximize benefits to low-income and BIPOC households.
5. Supports adopting net-zero energy codes for new buildings and a solar-ready construction policy.
6. Supports using building performance standards to spur the reduction of energy use in existing and new buildings.
7. Supports mandatory participation of all rate-payers in energy efficiency programs, including large commercial and industrial customers.

Extraction, Burning, & Mining

1. Supports coal ash standards that are at least as protective as federal rules, require utilities to provide for robust public participation, and ensure that owners of coal ash lagoons - not taxpayers - pay for cleanup.
2. Opposes high-volume hydraulic fracturing.
3. Opposes subsidies and incentives for extractive processes and supports polluter pays principles.
4. Opposes unwarranted and excessive expansion of new natural gas infrastructure, including pipelines.
5. Supports reforming the planning processes for energy assets to account for potential public health and environmental impacts, including a robust public input process that meaningfully includes BIPOC and frontline communities.

6. Supports the creation of worker assistance and training programs, as well as infrastructure investments in frontline communities. Local communities with power plants and mine closures are supported with funding, job training, and clean energy opportunities through the lens of a just transition.
7. Supports policies that keep fossil fuels from being extracted, or if fossil fuels are extracted, supports policies that maximize community control and input and minimize pollution.

Climate Change

1. Supports reducing sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, mercury, and other pollutants, including greenhouse gas emissions from fossil-fueled power plants, motor vehicles, and other significant sources of pollution, in ways that prioritize environmental and public health benefits for environmental justice communities.
2. Supports reducing economy-wide emissions of carbon dioxide and other global warming pollutants, the equivalent of 30% below 2005 levels by 2025 and 90% below 2005 levels by 2050.
3. Supports policies that reduce industrial GHG emissions at least 15% relative to 2018.

Sustainable Transportation

Planning & Budgeting

A sustainable financial model that supports a mobility plan is critical, given transportation's essential role in keeping society operating. Transit service and investments should be decided through strong public health and racial equity lenses and with authentic rider/community engagement.

1. Supports the creation of a sustainable, long-term financial model for transit, paratransit, and performance-based planning to direct transportation investments. Plan criteria should include the following:
 - a. Expanding public transit access, with special emphasis on equity;
 - b. Reducing dependence on single occupancy vehicles, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita;
 - c. Reducing pollution, especially in disadvantaged, BIPOC, and/or environmental justice communities;
 - d. Selecting transportation solutions that complement surrounding land uses to protect, rather than mitigate damage to, natural, agricultural, and cultural resources;

- e. Measuring transportation investment efficacy with a focus on potential person throughput - not vehicles;
 - f. Increasing funding to improve intelligent transportation operations and systems;
 - g. Improving access to jobs, especially in disadvantaged communities, and including increased service options during late night and weekend hours; and
 - h. Maintaining and improving existing road transportation infrastructure only when it has been deemed necessary.
2. Supports increasing frequencies and services for all transit in Illinois and priority access for low-income transit-reliant riders to key destinations, including jobs, education, food, and healthcare.
 3. Supports full transit fare integration to enable seamless transfers between transit systems with a minimized need for physical contact points and reduced fares for low-income riders and youth.

Pollution Reduction, Public Health & Safety

To protect public health and the environment, policy should encourage making Illinois a zero-emission state by encouraging mode shifts from single occupancy and internal combustion engine vehicles to pedestrian, biking, transit, and zero-emissions vehicles equitably.

1. Supports funding for pedestrian and bike corridors for reaching jobs, shopping, and recreation areas. Supports and promotes trail development and acquisition.
2. Support policies that rapidly expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure equitably.
3. Supports growing public and private electric vehicle fleets and factoring into account all the benefits electric vehicles can provide to the electric grid when incorporated smartly, including stability services, peak shaving, and storage.
4. Supports policies that promote sustainable transportation options and make streets safer for pedestrians, bikers, and transit riders, including lower speed limits and reduced costs to communities seeking to build walking and biking infrastructure.
5. Supports requiring and publicly releasing a cost, environmental, and climate impact analysis of every proposed transportation project receiving state funding, including the measurement of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita.
6. Supports tracking the condition of transportation and infrastructure investments, especially in lower-income and communities of color.
7. Supports quantifying risks from hazardous material transport and assessing appropriate fees to cover locally needed safety equipment and training.
8. Opposes policies or fees that add unreasonable expense to the purchase of consumer electric vehicles.

Land Use

Land use and development patterns are directly contributing to climate change by causing development to be spread out, leading to both more and longer car trips and more land and energy being consumed for development.

1. Supports policies that lead to compact development, efficiency, and projects which meet the following criteria:
 - a. Minimize distance from a downtown core/town center and transit;
 - b. Development patterns exceed the existing average density (households/acre)
 - c. Achieve a Walk Score of 70 or higher;
 - d. Reduce vehicle parking minimums and adds bike parking;
 - e. Reuse federal- or state-designated brownfield sites and avoids development in greenfields;
 - f. Integrate clustered freight and transportation alternatives and comply with sound, comprehensive land use and water planning; and
 - g. Complement surrounding natural, cultural and agricultural resources.

Open Space, Natural Resources, Land & Conservation

Planning & Budgeting

Over the years, Illinois programs and agencies tasked with protecting and conserving the land have seen significant fluctuations in funding and staffing. Sustained/increased funding for land and conservation projects, as well as the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), is imperative to building up our state and national lands.

1. Supports fully funding conservation programs and protecting them from “sweeps.”
2. Supports increasing funding for the IDNR, which had been operating in “survival mode” prior to 2019.
3. Supports comprehensive land use planning and more efficient growth patterns, including green infrastructure planning at the local, regional, and statewide levels.
4. Supports sensible growth initiatives that protect open space and improve water quality and aquatic habitats.
5. Opposes federal rollbacks to wetland protection.

Endangered Species & Habitat Loss

With a rollback in endangered species protection at the federal level, it is imperative that Illinois continues its state-level protection of endangered species. Furthermore, Illinois is home to hundreds of sites that are part of the Nature Preserves System, which are bastions of historic Illinois habitat and ecological diversity.

1. Supports creating special protections for highly biodiverse areas and historically threatened species.
2. Supports hunting programs for formerly threatened species only when a wildlife management plan is in place that will continue to encourage population growth, as needed.
3. Supports creating a unified, comprehensive strategy to protect Monarchs.
4. Supports land use practices that protect native organisms from human-caused degradation.
5. Supports strong and enforceable regulations of levees and opposes rulemaking that would serve to weaken regulations on levees.
6. Supports preserving greenways that protect stream corridors; connect natural areas, cultural and historic sites, and neighborhoods and communities; and provide habitat for native plants and animals.
7. Supports expanding community-based conservation and education programs that promote the value of Illinois' public land and the importance of ecological diversity.

Accessibility

Though open spaces are supposed to be open for all people, there is a disproportionate level of access depending on citizens' race and socioeconomic status. For Illinois to become a leader in open lands, action must be taken to ensure the participation and safety of all people within these areas.

1. Supports increasing funding for open spaces in areas that have limited access to state and national lands, including acquiring parcels of land within urban and lower socioeconomic areas and turning them into green spaces.
2. Supports increasing equality with regard to open spaces, including:
 - a. Making sure that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are safe in open spaces;
 - b. Facilitating the participation of BIPOC in outdoor recreational spaces;
 - c. Ensuring members of the LGBTQ+ community are safe in open spaces; and
 - d. Making open spaces accessible to all communities, regardless of income.

Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems

Reducing Agricultural Pollution

Agricultural production has negatively impacted our environment in many ways. From degraded water quality, the harming of native species and ecosystems, and contributing to climate change, the industrial-scale agricultural system in our state must change.

1. Supports expanding and enforcing limits on nutrient pollution in our waterways.
2. Supports giving the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy the ability to make concrete policy recommendations to the General Assembly and state agencies.
3. Supports expanding farmer education programs on practices that reduce nutrient pollution and help retain carbon in our soil.
4. Supports reforming the Livestock Management Facilities Act to increase requirements as well as fines and give citizens the right to have adequate input into permitting, enforcement, standard-setting, and other regulatory efforts, including binding legal decisions barring the construction or expansion of facilities.
5. Supports reducing air pollution from agricultural activities by banning harmful herbicides and pesticides, reducing drift, and requiring livestock facilities to abide by strict odor regulations and particulate controls.
6. Supports fully and permanently funding the Fall Covers for Spring Savings Program and the Partners for Conservation Fund.
7. Supports standards that require regenerative practices on IDNR-leased farmland.
8. Supports increasing amounts and permanently funding Illinois' Soil & Water Conservation Districts.
9. Supports utilizing federal programs to offset costs for sustainable agricultural practices.

Create a Sustainable & Equitable Food System

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the flaws within our food supply chain. The mistreatment of workers, bottlenecks in food processing, and the lack of accessibility for our most vulnerable communities showed that we must change our agricultural system by shifting our focus away from industrial-scale production for markets outside of our state. We must instead focus on local markets which improve the health and well-being of producers, consumers and workers throughout the food supply chain.

1. Supports increasing opportunities for local food production.
2. Supports ensuring equity and safety within the food supply chain.
3. Supports creating a business license for urban farm enterprises, which allows them to sell whole, unprocessed fruits and vegetables to their target markets, whether on-site or off-site to wholesale and retail customers.

4. Supports restricting the definition of “weeds” to an accepted list of invasive and/or noxious plants and opposes definitions that restrict native plants.
5. Supports increasing land access for urban farmers and creating Urban Agricultural Areas.
6. Supports providing urban farmers access to affordable water infrastructure.
7. Supports prioritizing agricultural leases for our most vulnerable populations.
8. Supports state and local governments adoption of Good Food Purchasing Program.

Waste Reduction

Equitable & Widespread Waste Reduction Infrastructure

Create a robust and multifaceted landscape of infrastructure and policy -- such as widespread composting locations and pick-up service, diverse and widespread recyclers, and enforced product stewardship -- to promote waste reduction throughout the state:

1. Supports creating and developing circular economies by offering grants for the development of secondary markets.
2. Supports extending producer responsibility to more effectively manage materials in the waste stream, especially those that represent a significant amount of material currently landfilled or potentially toxic materials.
3. Supports equitably distributing reuse, recycling, composting, and waste reduction facilities considering the following criteria:
 - a. Filling infrastructure gaps, particularly downstate and in lower-income and BIPOC communities, and
 - b. Safeguarding communities, especially environmental justice communities, from air and water pollution born out of recyclers and waste management facilities.
4. Supports banning recyclable materials from landfills so long as there is a plan for sufficient sites to be available for proper reuse or recycling.
5. Supports lowering the amount of single-use materials given to consumers at the point of consumption.
6. Opposes incineration of waste and any waste-to-energy facility that converts plastic into fuel.
7. Supports expanding food scrap and organics composting, including government mandates on the use of end product compost, community composting operations, and landfill bans on organic materials.

Standardization & Education

Promote education around best practices for sustainable waste management and support efforts to unify messaging and norms throughout the state.

1. Supports strengthening statewide recycling goals and mandating a state recycling plan.
2. Supports state grants to educate the public on the importance of reducing the waste stream, including:
 - a. Rejecting single-use items or using products made with recycled content;
 - b. The importance of alternative waste reduction strategies to recycling, such as reuse and donation opportunities; and
 - c. Using recyclables in existing or new products and processes for current or new businesses.
3. Supports creating unified statewide messaging and education on recycling and composting.
4. Supports standardizing regulations and requirements for compostables and recyclables, as well as their recapturing, throughout the state.

Allyship & Powerbuilding

Our Values

We are only as powerful as the people in our movement and those we serve. Building power for people and our environment in Illinois requires us to actively combat social and political power dynamics that disenfranchise marginalized communities across a broad range of issues beyond those that fall squarely within traditional environmental policy. When marginalized communities are empowered, environmental protections become more possible. Thus we are called to stand in solidarity as allies with those fighting for justice and to strengthen our democratic institutions where power drives policy change.

Intersectional Solidarity

1. Opposes and acknowledges the shameful legacy of systemic racism in the United States and within the environmental movement, as well as the responsibility of 11 historically white organizations like IEC to work in solidarity and partnership with communities of color to confront white supremacy and secure racial justice.
2. Supports criminal justice reforms and economic justice policies that increase participation in democracy and the green economy within historically under-resourced communities.
3. Supports self-determination and freedom from discrimination and harassment for all woman-identified people; LGBTQIA+ people; Black, Indigenous, and people of color; and people living with disabilities.

4. Supports a fair, livable wage, safe working conditions, and dignity for all workers.
5. Supports a pathway to citizenship for all undocumented Illinoisans.
6. Supports efforts to increase access to quality, affordable health care for all Illinoisans.
7. Supports and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land.

Civics & Government

1. Supports fully funding and staffing functional, transparent, and accessible governments at all levels.
2. Supports policies that eliminate barriers to voting in free and fair elections where every vote is counted.
3. Supports the right to public protest and free speech.
4. Supports making elected officials and government decision makers more transparent and accessible to the communities they serve.
5. Supports increasing the ability of nonprofits, particularly community organizations, to participate in advocacy efforts.