



Year of Climate

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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Board & Staff

Illinois Environmental Council Board of Directors

Officers

Delmar Gillus | *President*
Ashley Maybanks | *Vice President*
Pastor Scott Onque' | *Treasurer*
Justin Williams | *Secretary*

Elected Directors

Marc Celani
Jessica Collingsworth
David Kolata
Karen May
Anne McKibbin
Juliana Pino
Cary Shepherd

Appointed Directors/Lead Affiliates

Jennifer Baader | *Brookfield Zoo Chicago*
Alyssa Berman-Cutler | *Lincoln Park Zoo*
Maggie Bruns | *Prairie Rivers Network*
Peter Chung | *Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club*
Neda Deylami | *Environmental Defense Fund*
Jo Fessett | *Illinois Audubon Society*
Brian Gill | *Shedd Aquarium*
Delmar Gillus | *Elevate*
MeLena Hessel | *Vote Solar*
Chris Kessler | *Openlands*
Angela Larsen | *Alliance for the Great Lakes*
Karen Magid | *Morton Arboretum*
Ashley Maybanks | *The Nature Conservancy*
David McEllis | *Environmental Law & Policy Center*
Sarah Moskowitz | *Citizens Utility Board*
Nife Olufosoye | *Natural Resources Defense Council*
Pastor Scott Onque' | *Faith in Place*
Cynthia Segura | *YP Board Co-President*
Linda Trey | *Union of Concerned Scientists*
Brian Urbaszewski | *Respiratory Health Association*
Jeff Watters | *Ocean Conservancy*
Justin Williams | *Metropolitan Planning Council*

Illinois Environmental Council Education Fund Board of Directors

Officers

Rev. Brian Sauder | *President*
David McEllis | *Vice President*
Rick Courtheoux | *Treasurer*
Ashley Parr | *Secretary*

Elected Directors

Rick Courtheoux
Angela Foster-Rice
John Gay
Vittorio Gomez
Belinda Li
Ashley Parr
Kelly Shelton

Appointed Directors/Lead Affiliates

Jennifer Baader | *Brookfield Zoo Chicago*
Maggie Bruns | *Prairie Rivers Network*
Jaclyn Carmichael | *YP Board President*
Victoria Coleman | *Union of Concerned Scientists*
Will Kenworthy | *Vote Solar*
David McEllis | *Environmental Law & Policy Center*
Emily Reusswig | *Openlands*
Rev. Brian Sauder | *Faith in Place*
Rev. Booker Vance | *Elevate*

Illinois Environmental Council Young Professionals Board

2025 Young Professionals Board

Cara Braasch
Caitlin Brown
Jaclyn Carmichael
Ryan Driskell Tate
Sam Fishman
Katherine Gage
Kiera Gavin
Brad Hanzel
Kirsten Holston
Leah Jorn
Claire King
Dalaney Malloy
Tessa Murray
Maty Ortega Cruz
Mythreyi Rajasingham
Jenna Rethman
Ana Rios
Lissa Sangree-Calabrese
Joe Santoro
Cynthia Segura
Kaelyn Sheehan
Kaitly Szymborski
Adam Toerner
Aaron Wang
David Weaver
Skylar Wilke



Illinois Environmental Council Staff

Leadership

Jennifer Walling | *Chief Executive Officer*

Programs

Blake Andonov | *Policy Manager, Conservation and Agriculture*
Chelsea Biggs | *Chief of Staff*
Stephanie Blumenthal | *Climate Policy Manager*
Cate Caldwell | *Sr. Policy Manager*
Samira Hanessian | *Energy Policy Director*
Lindsay Keeney | *Chief Programs Officer, Conservation and Agriculture*
Gabby Plotkin | *Sr. Policy Manager, Waste and Water*
Dany Robles | *Legislative Relations Director*
Iyana Simba | *City Government Affairs Director*
Sergio Vargas | *Chicagoland Conservation Policy Manager*
Chad Wallace | *Food Systems Policy Director*
Stella Younkin | *Government Affairs Fellow*
Francisco Lopez Zavala | *Climate Policy Associate*

Communications & Development

Tucker Barry | *Chief Communications Officer*
Sam Bower | *Sr. Communications Manager*
Danny Collins | *Sr. Development Manager*
Hannah Dembosky | *Operations and Events Associate*
Hannah Flath | *Sr. Climate Communications Manager*
Meredith Lukow | *Sr. Grants Manager*
Maxine Touchette | *Communications Associate*
Mundra Turtoqtokh | *Development Associate*

Operations

Aly Mejia | *Office Manager*
Angie Mizeur | *Chief Operations Officer*



IEC's strength has been its ability to speak for the entire environmental movement in Illinois.

SANDRA MCAVOY
IEC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
(1978-1982)



Sandra McAvoy celebrates Earth Day at the Illinois State Capitol.



Earth Day celebration at the State Capitol.

Golden Anniversary

Evergreen Mission



Celebrating 50 years of environmental leadership in Illinois.

From federal rollbacks to attacks on core environmental protections, 2025 tested our resolve. But after 50 years of fighting for Illinois' environment, we know one thing: we don't back down. As we marked our Golden Anniversary, we continued to push forward—passing stronger policies, mobilizing communities, and standing up for clean air, clean water, and healthy ecosystems.

Our Golden Anniversary year was a powerful reminder of where we started and what we are building toward. IEC began in 1975 with two staff members, 40 affiliate groups, and one electric typewriter in a small Springfield office. Organizations and environmentalists formed IEC to strengthen our community's voice in the Illinois General Assembly.

Professors, students, scientists, farmers, conservationists, community organizers, and everyday Illinoisans came together because they all understood something important: Illinois deserved a healthy environment and a unifying force to deliver on that shared vision.

From those early days grew not just a movement, but a community. And today, that work continues with you.

That spirit continues to guide us. 50 years later, we continue to proudly lead an environmental movement more powerful than ever in our state's history. We now represent over 130 organizations of all sizes, a team of over 20 staff members, and over 600 dedicated individual members.

The determination that fueled IEC from the beginning remains at the heart of our work, even in the face of challenges from the current Trump administration.

Together, we have opened doors at the Capitol that are often closed to the public and made sure community voices—your voice—are heard where decisions that impact Illinoisans are made.

As always, thank you for being part of this movement and for helping us build a cleaner, safer, and more hopeful future for Illinois.

50th Anniversary Highlights

Our development team of Sr. Development Manager Danny Collins and Development Associate Mundra Turtogtokh broke records this year at our 50th anniversary Environmental Leadership Dinner. We're thankful to the organizations and individuals who sponsored the dinner, recruited a table, bought tickets, participated in our Silent Auction, or donated to our mission.

Over the course of the year, we convened environmental leaders, past and present, to help us reflect on and document the incredible history of Illinois' environmental movement. Out of that process, we honored the legacy of those who paved the way and projected a vision for the next 50 years. We were proud to produce a 50th anniversary [video](#) and book telling that story, five decades in the making.

Environmental Leadership Award Winners

- Lifetime Achievement Award
 - Hon. Elaine Nekritz
- Milestone Achievement Award
 - Sen. Julie Morrison & Rep. Abdelnasser Rashid
- Organizing Champion Award
 - American Federation of Government Employees Local 704
- Movement Builder Award
 - The Joyce Foundation
- Karen May Green Caucus Advocacy Award
 - Andrea Densham



IEC Staff at the IEC 50th anniversary Environmental Leadership Dinner.



A Historic Year for Climate Action

Two back-to-back climate policy wins during October's Veto Session made for the biggest 24 hours for climate action in Illinois history.

On the night of October 30th, climate advocates celebrated a decisive win for our state's climate. **The Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability (CRGA) Act** passed with a vote of 70–37 in the House and 37–22 in the Senate. Not since the Illinois General Assembly passed the **Climate and Equitable Jobs Act** four years ago has the nation seen such a strong demonstration of climate action out of a state general assembly. CRGA is a promise to Illinoisans and our climate that we can, and will, accelerate our climate goals and take steps to make energy more affordable for everyone.

“The passage of the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act marks the biggest climate action by any state since the Trump administration rolled back the Inflation Reduction Act,” said IEC Chief Executive Officer Jen Walling. This act further cements Illinois’ legacy as a national leader on climate.

IEC was proud to play an integral role in the passage of this significant legislation, from direct lobbying to leading educational and advocacy communications strategy that generated or contributed to over 86 news clips to driving over 4,500 messages to legislators’ offices to hosting three climate lobby days bringing over 1,000 dedicated Illinoisans to the State Capitol to organizing and participating in 12 related educational events.

Then, in the early morning of October 31, a second massive climate package passed. Illinois history was made.

Following months of negotiations—and mere hours after the passage of CRGA, the Illinois General Assembly passed the **Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA) Act**. This act addresses air and climate pollution in Illinois’ transportation sector by reforming and investing \$1.5 billion in public transit.

The transportation sector is our state’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

IEC Legislative Relations Director Dany Robles said, “Thanks to the leadership of the Governor’s Office, State Senator Ram Villivalam, and State Representative Eva-Dina Delgado, among other climate leaders in the General Assembly, Illinoisans will move across the region more safely, reliably, and affordably, and the state will continue to move forward on its climate goals.”

Dany was a campaign co-coordinator, playing a key role in activating and aligning advocates, setting strategy, and conducting direct lobbying. Others on our team led educational and advocacy communications strategies that generated or contributed to over 52 news clips, mobilized over 4,000 constituent messages into legislator offices, hosted or participated in more than 10

educational and advocacy events about the need for clean and equitable transportation, and organized direct outreach to thousands of impacted riders.



IEC’s Dany Robles speaks at a press conference on the Northern Illinois Transit Authority Act.

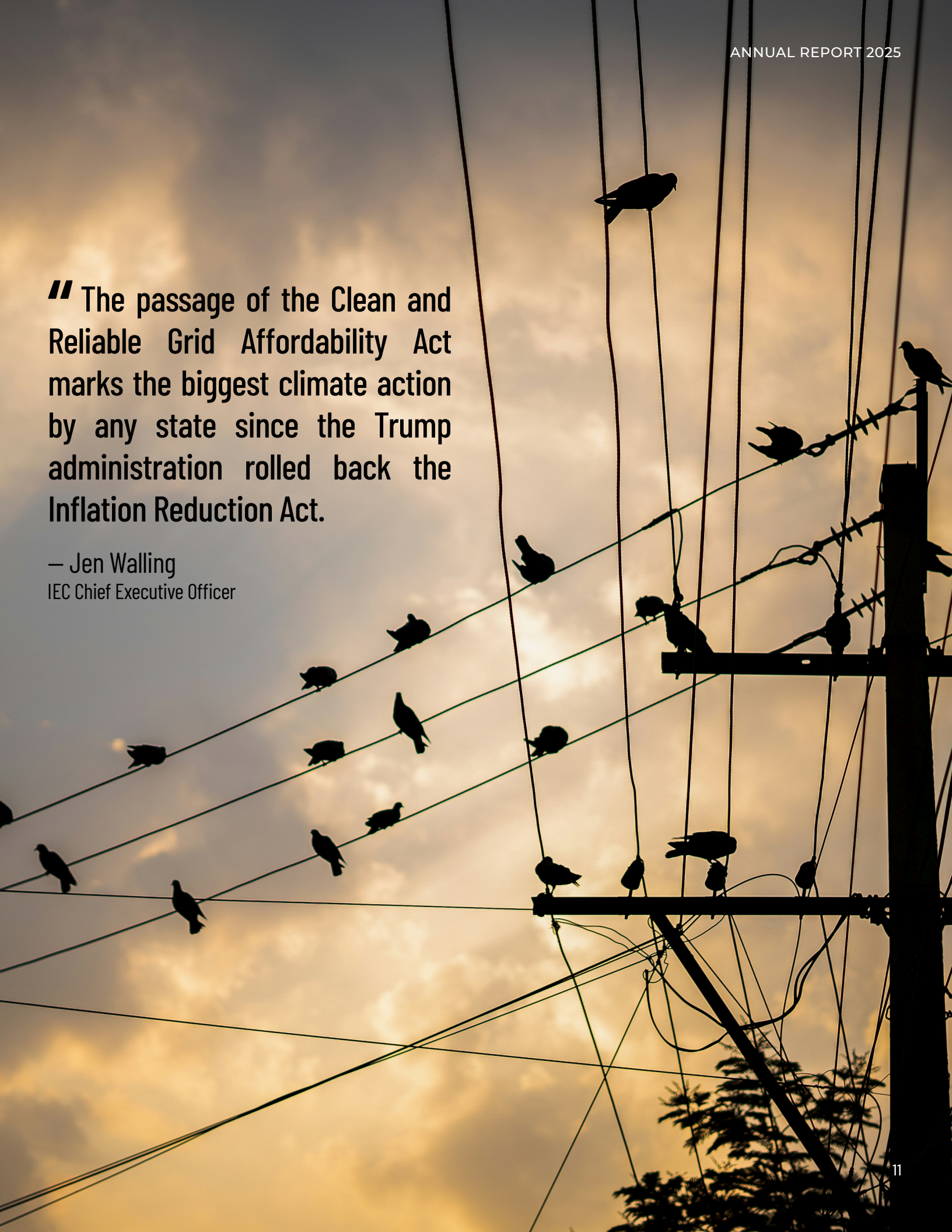
Our partners in the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition deserve tremendous praise for the breadth of industry expertise they brought to the negotiations for both climate packages, CRGA and NITA.

At IEC, we’re proud of our staff’s commitment to the spirit of collaboration and their work guiding our movement to these victories every step of the way.

The Illinois legislature decisively rejected the anti-climate and anti-environmental justice policies touted by our federal government in large part because IEC has been laser-focused on building an informed and mobilized climate majority in the Illinois General Assembly. While the federal government repeals climate policies and the Trump administration rejects DEI initiatives and policies grounded in equity, Illinois is passing policies that prioritize accessibility and economic vitality for all Illinoisans.

“ The passage of the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act marks the biggest climate action by any state since the Trump administration rolled back the Inflation Reduction Act.

— Jen Walling
IEC Chief Executive Officer



Progress in the Prairie State



IEC Leadership

In 2025, IEC's staff underwent an organizational shift. One key outcome was the elevation of IEC's leadership team to the C-suite.

In early 2025, Lindsay Keeney was promoted from Conservation Director to Chief Programs Officer, Conservation and Agriculture. Lindsay joined IEC in 2015. Since then, she's been an effective steward of our conservation policy portfolio. She directs our conservation tour program, which serves as a key tactic for building legislative and community power in the conservation and sustainable agriculture spaces.

In October, IEC and IECEF board presidents recognized Jen Walling with a promotion from Executive Director to Chief Executive Officer after 14 years of service to the organization. This promotion is a testament to her leadership at IEC and within the larger environmental movement.

Congratulations, Lindsay and Jen!

Key State Legislative Victories

Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act (SB25) – The CRGA Act is the biggest state investment in clean energy since the Trump administration rolled back the Inflation Reduction Act, and provides consumers with critical tools to save money on their utility bills and advances Illinois' climate goals.

Northern Illinois Transit Authority Act (SB2111) – Reforms and invests \$1.5 billion in public transit, helping mitigate air and climate pollution across the region.

Climate Displacement Act (SB1859) – In a bold commitment to proactive, people-centered climate policy, this bill establishes Illinois' first Climate Displacement Task Force. A landmark step toward preparing our state for the human impacts of climate change, we are especially proud that environmental justice (EJ) and community voices were prioritized, with representation from immigrant rights groups, labor, housing advocates, and EJ organizations built into the Task Force.

Indigenous Peoples' Conservation Rights Act (HB1605) – Adds federally recognized Native American tribes to the list of entities that can hold a conservation easement.

Rewilding Illinois (HB2726) – Defines the term "Rewilding" in state statute for Illinois Department of Natural Resources (INDR) to use as a strategy for ecological restoration.

PFAS Phase-Out (HB2516) – Phases out the use of PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances), aka "forever chemicals," in the manufacturing of children's products, cosmetics, intimate apparel such as sleepwear or underwear, menstrual products, and dental floss by 2032.

Mahomet Aquifer (HB3614/SB1723) – In 2023, Illinois passed nation-leading legislation to regulate Carbon Capture and Sequestration, but the Mahomet Aquifer, which supplies clean water to nearly one million people throughout Central Illinois, was originally left unprotected. This bill extended that legislation to protect the sole-source aquifer and public drinking water from proposed carbon injection well projects.

Increased Penalties for Environmental Violations – IEC worked with University of Chicago Law Professor Mark Templeton to elevate environmental violation penalty opportunities to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), leading to its inclusion in the Budget Implementation Bill.



2,500+

Illinoisans

engaged across **35**
events hosted by IEC
in 2025

Lobby Days

Climate was on everyone's mind in 2025. In January, May, and October, over 900 Illinoisans from every corner of the state made the trip to Springfield to fight for climate action. We were thrilled to see such a strong outpouring of support from Chicago to Metro-East and everywhere in between.

We also convened community leaders and advocates to fight for soil health, strengthen resources for conservation and open space stewardship, and untangle Illinois from plastic pollution. Over 200 Illinoisans joined us to discuss these topics with their representatives in the House and Senate.



Legislative Report

We believe in strengthening democracy by making the process of government more accessible to environmental advocates. Each year, we share our progress at the state level in our annual Legislative Report. This tool is designed to keep our movement informed on how environmental policy is progressing within the General Assembly.

[View our 2025 Legislative Report on our website.](#)



Environmental Scorecard

Holding decision-makers accountable for their use of power is a key piece of our theory of change. Our annual Environmental Scorecard is a tool advocates can use to do just that. When would you use this? In an election year, for example! There is no better way to evaluate whether your legislators have used their power in the General Assembly to protect climate and conservation in Illinois or to aid big polluters and dirty fossil fuel special interests. Outside of election season, voters can use this information to build stronger relationships with their lawmakers and urge them to become—or remain—green champions.

[View our 2025 Scorecard on our website.](#)



A photograph of the Illinois State Capitol building, a grand neoclassical structure with a prominent dome and a portico supported by columns. In the foreground, a paved walkway leads towards the building, with several people walking away from the camera. The sky is overcast and grey. A yellow dotted line graphic separates the large number '1,300' from the rest of the text.

1,300

Lobby Day Participants

For decades, our
Lobby Days have
inspired legislative
action among our
decision-makers,
our affiliates, and
passionate Illinoisans

100% Scorers: Illinois' Green Champions

Senators

- Cristina Castro
- Javier L. Cervantes
- Bill Cunningham
- Mary Edly-Allen
- Laura Ellman
- Paul Faraci
- Sara Feigenholtz
- Graciela Guzmán
- Michael W. Halpin
- Don Harmon
- Adriane Johnson
- David Koehler
- Robert F. Martwick
- Laura M. Murphy
- Robert Peters
- Mike Porfiro
- Willie Preston
- Mike Simmons
- Elgie R. Sims, Jr.
- Steve Stadelman
- Rachel Ventura
- Karina Villa
- Celina Villanueva
- Ram Villivalam
- Mark L. Walker

Representatives

- Carol Ammons
- Jaime Andrade
- Diane Blair-Sherlock
- Kam Buckner
- Mary Beth Canty
- Kelly M. Cassidy
- Terra Costa Howard
- Margaret Croke
- Eva-Dina Delgado
- Marti Deuter
- Daniel Didech
- Kimberly du Buclet
- Laura Faver Dias
- Robyn Gabel
- Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz
- Edgar Gonzalez, Jr.
- Nicolle Grasse
- Will Guzzardi
- Sonya M. Harper
- Hoan Huynh
- Lilian Jiménez
- Tracy Katz Muhl
- Stephanie A. Kifowit
- Lindsey LaPointe
- Theresa Mah
- Joyce Mason
- Debbie Meyers-Martin
- Anna Moeller
- Bob Morgan
- Martin J. Moylan
- Michelle Mussman
- Suzanne M. Ness
- Kevin John Olickal
- Abdelnasser Rashid
- Anne Stava
- Nabeela Syed
- Emanuel "Chris" Welch
- Ann M. Williams
- Janet Yang Rohr



Illinois environmentalists walk through the state Capitol from one legislator meeting to another.

Environmental Townhall Series

Every fall, IEC provides Illinoisans with an opportunity to weigh in on the following year's legislative priorities. Our team of environmental policy experts hosts an annual series of town halls to gather feedback and insight from everyday environmental advocates across the state.

State-level environmental action has always been vital, but an environmentally unfriendly federal government makes this work even more urgent. Pushing our decision-makers to support policies that safeguard the environment is our way of fighting back.

Together, we develop policy priorities that will bolster Illinois' role as a national leader in the environmental movement.

Nature-based Climate Solutions

At IEC, we're committed to safeguarding our plants, animals, and natural systems that sustain life. Fossil fuels, especially from transportation and buildings, are the leading drivers of the climate crisis. They pollute our air, drain our water resources, and fragment the land wildlife depends on. But Illinois' open spaces are not without hope.

In 2025, IEC and our conservation partners passed two key bills with implications for climate change mitigation: The Indigenous Peoples' Conservation Rights Act and Rewilding Illinois. The Indigenous Peoples' Conservation Rights Act allows federally recognized tribes to hold conservation easements. These voluntary agreements let landowners protect natural, agricultural, and historical features on their property. The law gives landowners the option to work with tribes to achieve their conservation goals, joining 31 other states in this approach. Conserving land this way helps preserve rural heritage, wildlife, habitat, clean air and water, and recreational opportunities for communities.

Rewilding Illinois promotes the restoration of native species and habitats, creating connected landscapes that can better withstand the impacts of climate change. By encouraging the return of native plants and wildlife, this legislation gives the Illinois Department of Natural Resources official legal standing to rewild ecosystems that provide essential services like carbon storage, water filtration, and flood mitigation, while enhancing biodiversity across the state.

Together, these victories reflect a broader commitment to protecting Illinois' landscapes at every scale, from expansive ecosystems to individual species. Building on this momentum, IEC also advanced targeted legislation to safeguard vulnerable wildlife and irreplaceable habitats that are critical to a healthy, climate-resilient Illinois.



IEC continued our efforts to pass the Wetlands Protection Bill, which enshrines state-level wetland protections in law. Today, only 10% of Illinois' historic wetlands remain, making these ecosystems more vulnerable than ever. Wetlands provide critical habitat for wildlife, filter water, and help communities avoid expensive, dangerous flooding and climate impacts. Over 2,100 Illinoisans took action to help safeguard that 10%. We had an incredible time [showing Illinois decision-makers](#) the importance of wetlands and their value to communities across the state. IEC and our affiliates remain committed to seeing this critical conservation bill passed, ensuring Illinois' remaining wetlands are protected for generations to come.

The Illinois General Assembly passed the Gray Fox Season Bill, which grants the Illinois Department of Natural Resources the authority to regulate the gray fox hunting season to ensure population stability and longevity. Previously, state law required an automatic open season regardless of population trends, limiting the state's ability to respond to declines. With gray fox populations declining due to factors such as disease and habitat loss, this change allows IDNR to use science-based data to open, limit, or close the season as needed. The bill supports adaptive wildlife management and helps protect this native species for the future.

Chicago Environmental Lobby Week

In 2025, IEC founded the first-ever Chicago Environmental Lobby Week, replicating our success at the state level and connecting 140 constituents with their alderperson.

Building Power in Chicago



Chicago Environmental Lobby Week

IEC has organized many lobby days at the Illinois State Capitol over the years. In 2025, we were thrilled to mobilize over 200 Chicagoans at our first Chicago Environmental Lobby Week—held during Earth Month! This event allowed Chicagoans to meet their alders, connect with their neighbors, and help advance city environmental policies, including the Hazel M. Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance (CIO). You can watch our Chicago Environmental Lobby Week recap video here.

Hazel M. Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance (CIO)

IEC, our environmental justice partners, and supportive alders joined a rally calling on the City Council to pass this ordinance. The CIO plays an important role in preventing the siting of new industrial polluters in areas already overburdened by large amounts of pollution. By centering the voices of impacted residents and ending the cycle of environmental sacrifice, we can build a safer, more just city.

In the increasingly challenging federal political landscape, this was a wonderful opportunity to take action and build toward impactful change at the local level. Three alders, Daniel LaSpata (1), Julia Ramirez (12), and Maria Hadden (49), joined us to demonstrate their support to “End Sacrifice Zones” and a history of injustice at the hands of big polluters. Watch our recap video here.

2025 Chicago City Council Environmental Scorecard

Our city scorecard is a mid-term report encompassing votes from January 2023 (not included in the previous scorecard) through July 2025. We tally up the pro- and anti-environment votes, and from there, we create resources that indicate whether elected officials are using their power to fight for you and our planet OR polluters.

100% Scorers: Chicago’s Green Champions

- Daniel La Spata
- Lamont Robinson
- William Hall
- Julia Ramirez
- Jeylú Gutierrez
- Derrick Curtis
- Jeanette Taylor
- Michael Rodriguez
- Byron Sigcho-Lopez
- Jessie Fuentes
- Rossana Rodriguez-Sánchez
- Bill Conway
- Carlos Ramirez-Rosa
- Andre Vasquez
- Timmy Knudsen
- Bennett Lawson
- Angela Clay
- Matt Martin
- Leni Manaa-Hoppenworth
- Maria Hadden



View our 2025 Chicago City Council Environmental Scorecard now, available on our website.

2025 Chicago Highlights

Since we started our city advocacy work, we've been steadily growing influence and power in City Hall. Below are some highlights of our progress.

Breaking Down Chicago's FY26 Budget

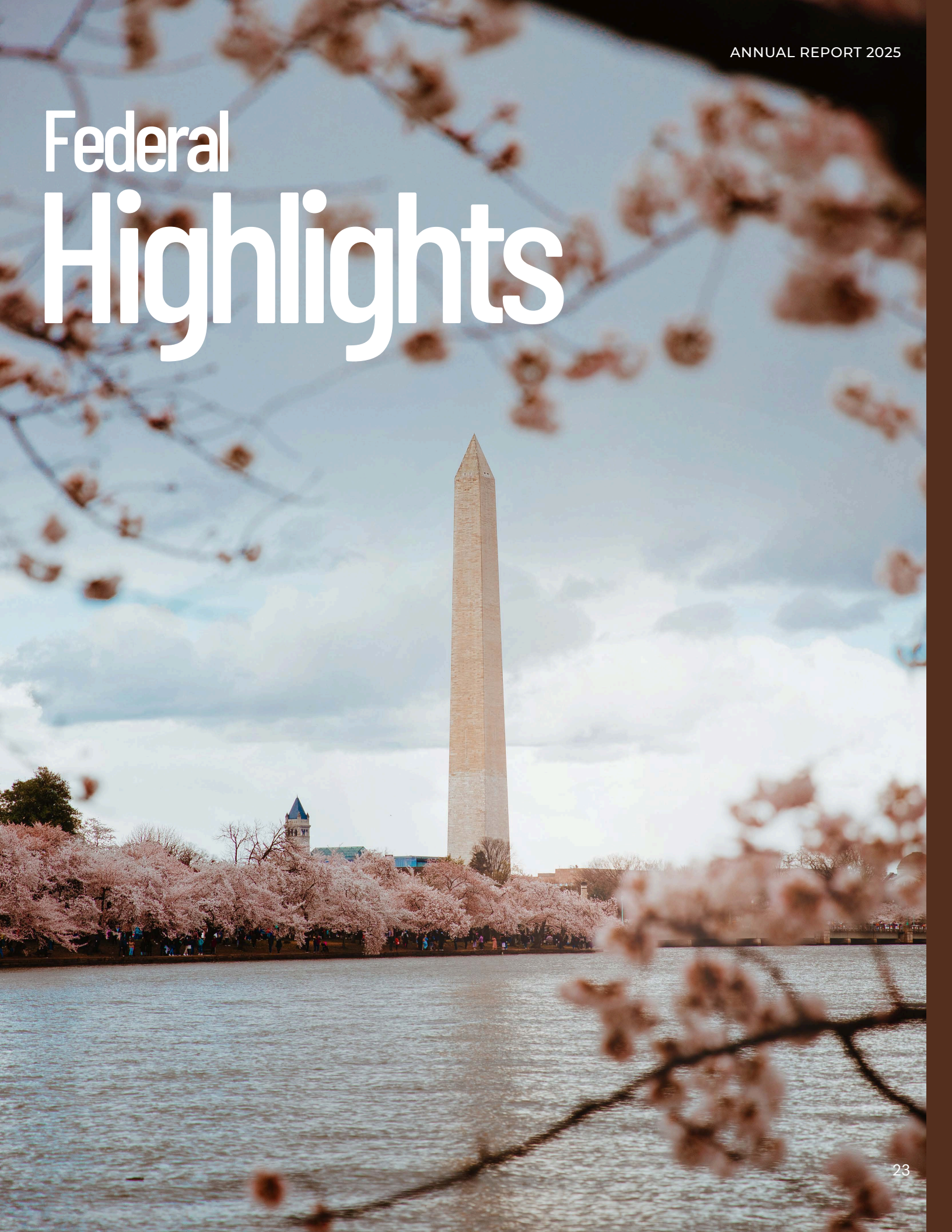
Government budgets are an expression of government priorities, making them incredibly important, as opaque as they may be. Parsing through city budgets trying to make heads or tails of line items and complex budget terms can be out of reach for most of us, which is why IEC publishes an annual analysis of Chicago's city budget. Understanding how the decision-makers representing us are allocating our tax dollars is critical to being able to advocate effectively for strong environmental priorities and hold our government accountable to those of us they represent. [Our FY26 Chicago Budget Analysis is available on our website.](#)

An Empowered, Resourced Chicago Department of Environment

After a decade of campaigning to reinstate the city's Department of Environment, we succeeded in bringing an official DOE back to Chicago. In 2025, our budget advocacy led to a now-resourced DOE with the authority to enforce environmental violations. This work will reduce pollution in our city and sets the stage for the next chapter of environmental policy in Chicago, passage of a permitting ordinance with environmental justice and cumulative pollution burden front and center.



Federal Highlights



Protecting climate progress, farmers and growers, access to food, and our public lands.

The first Trump administration provided us with a blueprint for how a second Trump term might approach environmental policy. While we anticipated this president putting our nation's environment to the test, no one anticipated the speed with which this administration is recklessly dismantling our environmental protections. Following a slew of funding cuts and federal employee layoffs, it quickly became clear that IEC needed to convene our partners and define a formal federal strategy for environmental advocacy.



IEC Sr. Policy Manager, Cate Caldwell (L), and Chief of Staff, Chelsea Biggs (R), stand outside the U.S. Capitol after an afternoon of congressional meetings with LCV.

Thanks to the incredible leadership and support of the League of Conservation Voters (LCV), IEC has been able to step up to the plate to uplift stories of how Illinois is being impacted.

To accomplish this goal, we hired a Sr. Policy Manager to develop an organizational engagement strategy for federal policy.

Cate Caldwell comes to IEC with years of experience, having worked extensively on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Most recently, Cate served as a trusted policy staffer on Senator Duckworth's team, where she played an integral role in federal policy initiatives on energy, environment, environmental justice, and agriculture issues. Her deep understanding of the legislative process and established relationships with D.C. lawmakers will be crucial as we work to amplify our impact and lead federal policy efforts that are critical to our mission.

Responding quickly to the quickly shifting landscape, Cate convened IEC affiliates for rapid response calls, giving advocates across our wide network the opportunity to share the latest information, growing fears, emerging strategies, and quality resources so that we could all respond in real time to the connected threats we were all facing together. Some of those resources included a heavily-relied-upon analysis of H.R. 1 impacts on Illinois and of the effects of the federal government's shutdown on our state.

Cate's leadership will also help bridge the gap between state and federal action, ensuring that our state-level goals align with national policies and that we are proactively engaging with lawmakers to drive meaningful change.



Best of Illinois Environmental Council



INVEST IN CLIMATE ACTION!
STRENGTHEN IL's grid with clean energy!

INVEST IN CLIMATE ACTION!

FIX IT!
FUND IT!

STRENGTHEN IL's grid with clean energy!
INVEST IN CLIMATE ACTION!

SAY FAREWELL to foam!
MIEC

INVEST IN equitable transit for all!
MIEC

STRENGTHEN IL's grid with clean energy!
MIEC

INVEST IN equitable transit for all!

MADE to things!

Legislator Tours

We're Taking Legislators Out of Their Offices and Into the Field

As part of our work to educate lawmakers on the importance of agriculture and natural resource conservation practices and to help them become environmental champions in the Illinois General Assembly, we have developed programs that connect lawmakers with experiences that demonstrate the real-world impacts of their votes in the legislature.

On these tours, we take legislators out of their office buildings and out into the natural areas we need their help to protect. For example, we bring them to farms in their districts or to conservation areas where they get an up-close look at the importance of conservation practices, soil health, and nutrient pollution reduction. In 2025, we took decision-makers out on more than 20 different tours, a record number. [You can see a full rundown on our website.](#)

That's the "why" behind our work organizing opportunities to showcase the incredible progress that the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) is fostering in our communities. Take Alton, Illinois, for example. Our team worked with Lewis & Clark Community College, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and local partners to host [a tour of their local CEJA workforce hub.](#) Legislators, press, and regional advocates saw firsthand how CEJA provides clean energy training opportunities. They also learned about the the wealth of wrap-around services for training participants and saw an Illinois Solar for All-funded rooftop solar installation. Alton stood out as a beacon of clean energy progress in Southern Illinois, and this tour helped elevate the workforce hub as a role model for future CEJA hubs set to go online in 2026.

As IEC Climate Policy Program Associate Francisco Lopez Zavala [said to a reporter during the tour](#), "Now, because of CEJA, hubs like the community college are helping to build Illinois's clean energy future, which in turn makes our air easier to breathe, our communities healthier, and our grid more resilient." And we are so excited to continue telling that story.



IEC Sr. Policy Manager, Cate Caldwell (L), Chief of Staff, Chelsea Biggs (Center), Rep. Dagmara Avelar and staff from Congresswoman Underwood's office tour IEC Business Council Member BNSF Railway facilities



22,000

Messages

Driven by IEC from constituents
on environmental priorities into
decision-makers' offices

Events

In 2025, IEC hosted 26 free educational events—in-person, virtual, and hybrid—with a cumulative total of 1,843 registrants. Some of the most popular events were:

- **Civics for Environmentalists**
- **Civics for Environmentalists: Chicago**
- **Move It, Hold It, Use It: How Transmission and Energy Storage Support Illinois' Energy Goals**
- **Power Hungry: Data Centers and the Future of Clean Energy in Illinois**

Building Community Power Across Illinois

Our annual [Civics for Environmentalists](#) and [Civics for Environmentalists: Chicago](#) continued to grow in popularity. Over 448 Illinoisans joined these events to gain the insights and tools to keep Illinois a national leader on climate.

IEC Young Professionals Board (YP Board)

No environmental movement would be complete without the dedication of the next generation of environmental leaders. The YP Board engages and organizes young professionals in the Chicagoland area committed to supporting IEC's mission and vision.

Consisting of young professionals from the public, private, and non-profit sectors, this group provides a forum for young professionals concerned about environmental issues to meet, greet, and interact, supplementing IEC's efforts on key environmental policy initiatives.

The two big events of the year are the Fall Wine and Art Harvest and the Holiday Party for a Sustainable Future. We're so grateful for the time this group dedicates to helping us raise funds and build community within the environmental movement.



IEC's Hannah Flath and IEC affiliates from the Metropolitan Planning Council celebrate passage of NITA and CRGA

Wetlands

Protection Bill

IEC continued our efforts to pass a bill enshrining state-level wetland protections into law.

Over 2,100 Illinoisans took action to help safeguard our wetlands.

Donor & Foundation Recognition

We would like to express our immense gratitude to our many supporters, including our funders, donors, sponsors, and affiliate and individual members. Thank you for your passion, your support, and all you're doing to protect Illinois' environment!

Institutional Funders

Illinois Environmental Council

Heat Pump Nation
League of Conservation Voters
Permit Power Action Fund
Sixteen Thirty Fund
Walton Conservation Coalition

Illinois Environmental Council Education Fund

ASPCA® (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®)
The Builders Initiative
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Conant Family Foundation
Crown Family Philanthropies
Funding Good Chaos
Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
Humana
Hunter Family Foundation
Illinois Food Movement Fund
John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
The Joyce Foundation
League of Conservation Voters Education Fund
Lumpkin Family Foundation
National Wildlife Federation
Oberweiler Foundation
Rockefeller Family Fund
Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust
Square One Foundation
TransitCenter
Walder Foundation
Walton Family Foundation



2025 IEC Donors

\$1000+

Joyce Blumenshine
 Clark Bullard
 Ellyn Bullock
 Sally Carton
 Perri & Rick Courtheoux
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 Henrietta Saunders
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Mike Skreiner	Mary Ellen Thielemann
Cindy Skrukud & Thomas von Geldern	Pruthvi Prakash Thogaram
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Ricca Slone	Elizabeth Thomas
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Since 1975, the Illinois Environmental Council has worked to safeguard Illinois—its people, its plants and animals, and the natural systems on which all life depends by building power for people and the environment.

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