



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

2023 Legislative Agenda

The Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce (SVACC) represents 406 members with 12,000 employees from 20 zip codes in Northwest Illinois. The SVACC is a significant voice for the business community in the Sauk Valley and has an obligation to represent the interest of its members. As part of the organization's strategic plan, the SVACC is committed to keeping members and local citizens informed about and engaged in legislative issues and public policy matters at the state, local, and national level. There are many issues and policies to be addressed, yet as a small rural chamber, it is important to prioritize a smaller number of key issues and focus on addressing those to best serve the membership.

Advocacy and Engagement:

To address this key priority a major part of the Chamber's legislative focuses on information, engagement, and accessibility. There are so many sources to get information regarding local, state, and national issues and finding reputable, fact-based information sources is critical as a part of information dissemination. The SVACC allocates time and resources to locate and share relevant, reputable, fact based, and current sources of information to keep members informed about issues that may impact their business and the community at large. As a rural community there is often the feeling of being left out of the conversation regarding issues that impact our area directly or even indirectly. The Chamber believes it imperative that we advocate for chamber members, the business community, and rural Illinois through creating opportunities for members voice to "be heard" with our legislators on issues and policies that are relevant to this small Midwestern community.

The Chamber is intentional in its approach to organize opportunities for members to learn and have conversations about priority issues. It also provides opportunities for members to engage with elected officials at the state, local, and federal level. These include:

- Hosting and promoting state legislators traveling office hours in the Sauk Valley.
- Sterling City Council members and mayors invited to ribbon cuttings of chamber members.
- Partnering with the Whiteside County Healthier Communities Partnership to host and implement a yearly legislative luncheon.
- Hosting an annual lunch and learn with guests from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Great Lakes Region office and Illinois Chamber of Commerce.
- Hosting and moderating a candidate forum yearly for local and/or state elections.
- Organizing a downtown walking tour with state legislators to allow them to meet with and listen to small business owners. This is done in partnership with Sterling Main Street.
- Attending Illinois Chamber Day in Springfield.
- Monthly Mayors Breakfast with key community leaders representing business, healthcare, education, manufacturing, and agriculture.
- Monthly meeting with City of Sterling mayor, city manager, director of Greater Sterling Economic Development, and director of Sterling Main Street.

Workforce Development

Workforce Development has been and continues to be a priority issue for the Chamber. The Chamber believes it has an obligation to membership and the community to be a champion for the business community in regard to workforce development. Too often, policy decisions regarding workforce and career pathways are made without input from the business community. The Chamber is committed to making sure the business community is represented and engaged in workforce development and education discussions, action planning, and implementation at the local and state level.

The Chamber supports:

- Incentives, programs, and policies at the state and federal level that promote career exploration in the form of job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships for students at the high school level or post-high school level.
- Incentives and policies at the state and federal level that provide assistance in programming and platforms that implement essential skills training and implementation for students at the high school level or post-high school level.
- An education system that strives for equity, maintains a commitment to the importance of social and emotional health, stresses career readiness through career exploration, Career Technical Education support, and college preparedness.

Illinois Education Success Network

The Chamber is a member of the advisory board for the Inspire MORE leadership community representing Northwest Illinois. Inspire MORE is a formally recognized community with systems in place to drive meaningful and equitable postsecondary attainment. In 2009, the Illinois P-20 Council established a goal for Illinois to increase the number of adults with high-quality college degrees and postsecondary credentials to 60% by the year 2025. While the P-20 Council and state agencies monitor this goal and focus on state policy to support it, state policy alone will not drive the local efforts needed to ensure students seamlessly progress to and through postsecondary education and into the workforce. Recognizing the emergence of local initiatives across Illinois to increase postsecondary attainment and the lack of a statewide support infrastructure, the Illinois 60 by 25 Network was launched in 2013 by three network organizers: Advance Illinois, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. In 2022, the network updated its name to the Illinois Education and Career Success Network, to express its purpose and vision for 2025 and beyond.

Regional Manufacturing Consortium

In partnership with the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Sauk Valley Community College the Chamber meets quarterly with manufacturers and education systems located in the region.

Birth to 5 Illinois.

Illinois established an Early Childhood Transformation Team charged with ensuring early childhood policy is influenced by community voice and data, building a structure for equitable allocation of current and anticipated funding, and making funding stable, predictable, and consistent for early childhood providers. As part of these transformation efforts, the state also partnered with the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) to launch Birth to Five Illinois with the goal of creating Birth to Five action councils and family councils in each of 39 regions built upon the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Regional Offices of Education statewide structure but operating independently. The Birth to Five action councils include parents and families, service providers, educators, and advocates who are

tasked with identifying service needs in each region. Information gathered by these councils will be provided to the state in hopes of informing policy around birth-to-five programs over the next decade, and beyond. In addition, Birth to Five councils can serve as regional advocacy bodies to influence local policy, including funding opportunities. The Chamber participates as an advisory board member to Council #47 representing Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside County.

Economic Development

The Chamber advocates for policies and legislation that is pro-business and pro-growth. At a local, regional, state, and national level, the SVACC supports a coordinated approach to economic development involving public-private partnerships.

Redistricting Reform-State of Illinois

The way in which districts are drawn is one of the most crucial functions of government. This process of drawing electoral district boundaries determines how elections will be managed for a period of ten years. Illinois' congressional lines are drawn by the state legislature, as a regular statute, subject to gubernatorial veto. Allowing legislators to draw their own districts is a conflict of interest and has shown electoral consequences in the state of Illinois. The Chamber supports ongoing efforts for redistricting reform.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

U.S. Officials - Senators



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RESOURCES

SVACC - saukvalleyareachamber.com

IL Chamber - ilchamber.org

U.S. Chamber - uschamber.com

State of IL - ww2.illinois.gov

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