



LAKECOUNTY

FY2024 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



Lake County, Illinois

FY2024 Legislative Agenda

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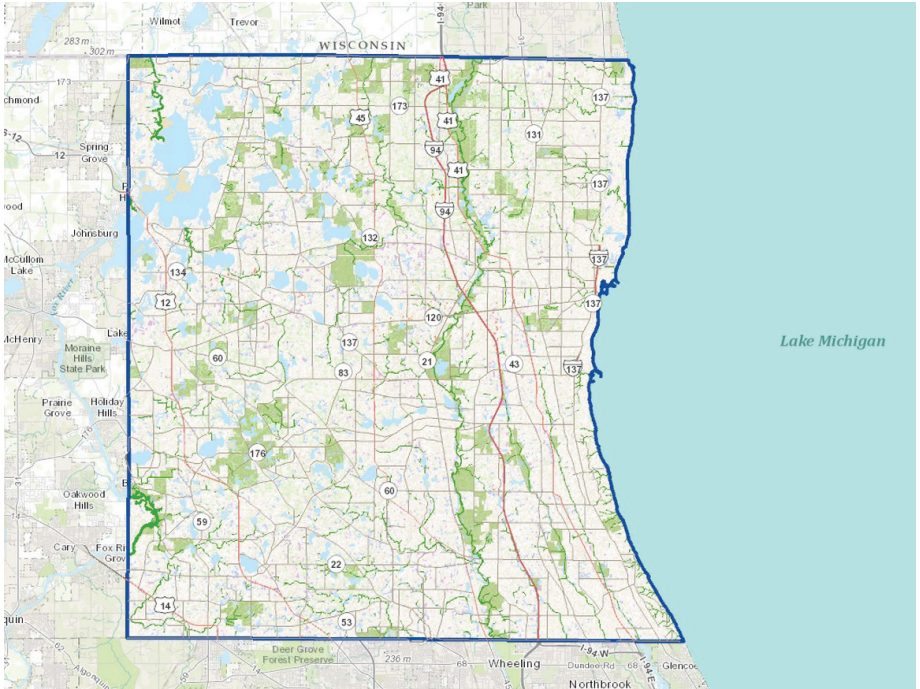
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About Lake County



- **Land Area: 448 square miles**
- **Halfway between Chicago and Milwaukee**
- **Easy access to Chicago on four Metra commuter rail lines and 32 train stations**
- **Major waterways—Lake Michigan, Fox River, Chain O'Lakes**



POPULATION

- Population: 714,342 (2020)
- Third largest county in Illinois

Source: census.gov



HOUSING

- Housing units (2021): 270,019
- Median value of owner-occupied housing units (2016-2020): \$271,700
- Homeownership rate (2016-2020): 73.5%
- Households (2016-2020): 248,684



HEALTH AND RECREATION

- 50,000+ acres of land, offering educational, recreational, and cultural opportunities for all ages
- 40 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline
- 100+ beaches*
- 550 miles of trails and bikeway connections
- 200+ lakes and rivers
- Ranked #2 in Illinois for physical activity and #4 for access to places to be active and healthy

*Source: Lakecountypartners.com,

Source for other statistics: Lake Co., IL Convention & Visitors Bureau



ECONOMICS

- Median household income: \$92,654
- Per capita money income: \$47,223
- Unemployment in Lake County: 4.1%* Illinois: 4.5% (not seasonally adjusted)* U.S.: 3.7% (not seasonally adjusted)*
- 30,000+ businesses (11 Fortune 500 companies)
- 90.8% of residents age 25+ have graduated high school, and 46.1% have a bachelor's degree or higher (2012-2016)

*Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security

Source for other statistics: census.gov

Lake County, Illinois

FY2024 Legislative Agenda

INTRODUCTION

Lake County government strives toward fiscally stable, efficient, and transparent operations amidst uncertain political and economic climates. Maintaining strong partnerships with legislators ensures that Lake County residents continue to receive valuable, efficient, and cost-effective services.

As always, the Lake County Board appreciates the opportunity to meet with our legislators to discuss challenges we face as a County. To best address such challenges, Lake County must govern free from the restrictions of various statutes and public acts which slow down the process to ensure a high quality of life for its residents.

Lake County government is cognizant of the current financial environment at all government levels and has prepared the FY2024 Legislative Agenda in that context. As such, this year's Legislative Agenda includes both comprehensive, aspirational items with potential regional or statewide effects as well as specific technical changes that make Lake County government – and in some cases all local governments – more efficient.

The guiding tenets of Lake County's Legislative Agenda are to:

1. Support legislation that grants additional permissive authorities for counties.
2. Support legislation that allows counties to expand non-property tax revenue sources.
3. Support legislation that promotes transparency at all levels of government.
4. Support legislation that encourages cost-effective government consolidation.
5. Support legislation that mitigates inefficiency.
6. Oppose unfunded mandates imposed by the state or federal government.
7. Oppose legislation that would reduce the existing authority of county government.
8. Oppose legislation that erodes existing state-appropriated County revenues.
9. Oppose legislation that weakens the County's ability to consolidate local governmental units and circumvents an existing appeals process.

Specifically, with respect to legislative policy numbers six and eight, Lake County vehemently opposes any action that will divert, redirect, or reduce any funds owed and/or due to units of local government (e.g., sales tax, income tax, and Personal Property Replacement Tax).

Additionally, Lake County’s Legislative Agenda is guided by the following values adopted within the County Board’s Strategic Plan:

- i. Equity
- ii. Excellence
- iii. Innovation
- iv. Leadership
- v. Responsibility
- vi. Sustainability

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Lake County, Illinois

FY2024 Legislative Agenda

PURPOSE

The intent of Lake County's Fiscal Year 2024 Legislative Agenda is to formalize the County's positions on legislation both anticipated and sought to be considered. Our elected officials may use the Agenda as a guide when considering legislation that would impact Lake County.

This Agenda describes the County's proposed initiatives and/or underlying interest in specific issues. With coordination between the Lake County Board, the County Administrator's Office, the County's legislative consultants, and the Lake County legislative delegation, the agenda explains County initiatives and informs County positions taken on specific bills once the legislative session begins. During session, the County Board may also consider amendments to the Legislative Agenda and adjust its position on bills.

In addition to the Legislative Agenda, Lake County attempts to influence policy through other avenues, such as submitting comments on administrative rulemakings and making direct appeals to administrative officials. While the Legislative Agenda is not intended to direct such action, it serves as a resource to inform important County efforts.

THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA AS A "NIMBLE TOOL"

Members of the Lake County Board agree that the issues described within this Legislative Agenda represent their collective endorsements. The Lake County Board recognizes that many other unforeseen issues will become known throughout the legislative year. While it is important to have approval from the Lake County Board for additional endorsements before any position becomes official, it is also important for the Legislative Agenda to be a "nimble tool" that appropriately supports an ever-changing landscape during the legislative process. As such, the manner in which the Legislative Agenda may be used to adjust and/or react to the fast-paced legislative process is outlined below.

PROCESS TO AMEND LAKE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The County Board may revisit the Legislative Agenda at any point as a body, or through its Legislative Committee. The Legislative Committee may be convened on an as-needed basis with the County's legislative consultants and County staff when the following circumstances present themselves:

Legislative action is expected that would significantly impact a County policy and/or operation, which the County Board has previously provided general direction, but which the County Board had not provided specific direction. (This might occur via the Legislative Agenda or other approved policies.) As such, time-constraints may preclude the County Board from having an opportunity to provide the needed direction. In these situations, the County Board Chair, the County's legislative consultant, and County staff may turn to the Legislative Committee for direction on such legislation so that the County can advocate accordingly. The County Board will be informed whenever such Legislative Committee direction has been provided and may choose to revisit such direction at a future meeting.

Amendments to the Legislative Agenda should be adopted with the goal, such that modifications require consistency, when applicable, with the criteria outlined below:

- A. Uniformity with the County Board's Strategic Plan;
- B. Expected relevance in the upcoming or present legislative sessions;
- C. Uniqueness of issue or impact to Lake County;
- D. Viability or likelihood of achieving a goal;
- E. Opportunity for providing or preserving funding for Lake County; and
- F. High probability of metrics of success to allow the position to be removed from future legislative agendas, if achieved.

These criteria, which provide important guidance and direction, are not intended to prohibit departures in unique circumstances as determined by the County Board and/or Legislative Committee, such as when adoption of a County position is important to support its regional partners, even when the legislation is otherwise of limited consequence to the County.

In addition, to accommodate any requests that may arise after approval of the Legislative Agenda, the County Board Chair and County Administrator, or their designee, may periodically provide legislative testimony and/or letters of support or opposition based upon any perceived benefit or detriment to Lake County. In doing so, such testimony and/or letters will be guided by the principles and values stated herein.

Lake County, Illinois

FY2024 Legislative Agenda

To summarize, the process for requesting an amendment to the County's adopted Legislative Agenda is provided below:

Amend the formal Legislative Agenda: The approved County Legislative Agenda may be amended at any point through the Legislative Committee and County Board based on consistency with articulated criteria.

County Position on Specific Legislative Bill(s): The County may take a position on a specific bill through action by Legislative Committee based on significant impact to County policy or operation; County Board is to be informed on such direction, and County Board may revisit thereafter.

How does a member of the Board or standing committee seek a County position on specific legislative bills?

1. attend the Legislative Committee and request that it take a position on a bill; or
2. ask the standing committee, for which the bill's subject is pertinent, to request, on behalf of the Committee, that the Legislative Committee take a position on a bill.

Submission of a witness slip on the County's behalf regarding a specific legislative bill

The County Board Chair, County Administrator, or their designee, County legislative consultant may submit a witness slip on the County's behalf on specific legislation when the County's Legislative Agenda is clear about what the County's position is or following specific action by the County Board or Legislative Committee on a specific bill. Nothing herein prohibits an individual member of the Lake County Board to submit a witness slip on a specific bill in their individual personal capacity.

POSITIONS

1. **Sponsor:** Lake County sponsored initiatives.
2. **Support:** Seek to support partner organizations in their sponsorship of the initiative. These proposals are broad based with impacts that extend beyond Lake County. It is most appropriate for a coalition or statewide organization to lead these initiatives, and Lake County will support their efforts as well as the proposals.
3. **Oppose:** Seek to oppose legislation or initiatives that impact Lake County. These proposals are broad based with impacts that extend beyond Lake County. It is most appropriate for a coalition, state or federal organization to lead these initiatives, and Lake County will support their opposition efforts.

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STATE Initiative to Support

Topic: Ensure No Net Loss of Illinois' Wetlands

Issue: In 1818, Illinois contained an estimated 8.2 million acres of wetlands. Based on preliminary results of the Illinois portion of the National Wetlands Inventory, less than nine percent of the original acres remain. Continued loss of Illinois' wetlands may deprive the people of this State of some or all of the benefits they provide. On August 29, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of the Army issued a final rule to amend the definition of "Waters of the United States" to conform with the Supreme Court of the United States' May 25 decision in the case of *Sackett v. EPA*. Specifically, the significant nexus test has been removed when identifying tributaries and other waters federally protected. Recent reports indicate the new rule may leave some 60 percent of the country's wetlands unprotected.

Recommendation: Support legislation ensuring No Net Loss of Illinois' remaining wetlands by mitigation of development impacts. Compensation for these impacts may be accomplished through a combination of the creation of new wetlands, restoration of degraded wetlands, acquisition of existing wetlands, or research.

Value(s) of the County Board Strategic Plan:

- Environmental Stewardship

STATE Initiative to Support

Topic: Private Water Companies

Issue: In 2023, a local private water distributor experienced a significant drop in water storage followed by system-wide pressure loss that led to a Boil Order Notice. Approximately 1,200 water customers were impacted for several days. During this time challenges arose with respect to communication and redundancy

Recommendation: Support legislation that improves accountability on private water distributors, and mandates communication with impacted parties, including local fire departments and districts.

Value(s) of the County Board Strategic Plan

- Leadership
- Responsibility

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STATE Initiative to Support

Topic: Ethan's Law

Issue: There are currently no laws that require the safe storage of firearms in the State of Illinois. According to the 2022 Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Report, more than 1 million guns were stolen from private citizens from 2017 to 2021. A 2015 study reported in Journal of American Medical Association estimated that roughly 4.6 million children live in a home with loaded and unlocked firearms. According to research funded by the National Institute of Justice, over 80% of mass shooters at K-12 schools stole guns from family members.

Recommendation: Support the adoption of Ethan's Law, which would require gun owners to secure their firearms in a "secure gun storage or safety device" or "in a location that a reasonable person would believe to be secure" if a minor is likely to gain access to the firearm without permission, or if a resident of the dwelling cannot legally possess a firearm under existing law.

Value(s) of the County Board Strategic Plan

- Leadership

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STATE Initiative to Support

Topic: Waukegan Coal Plant Environmental Remediation

Issue: The Waukegan coal power plant, located along Waukegan's Lake Michigan lakefront, was decommissioned in the summer of 2022. The owner's current plan is to leave and cap a coal ash pond which currently resides on the property. The long-term existence of the pond creates risk to the surrounding area, residents, and the waters of Lake Michigan. To ensure appropriate protection of the environment, the coal ash pond on the site should be completely removed at a minimum. Additional efforts should be employed to further minimize or eliminate short and long term environmental impacts.

Recommendation: **Support** legislation that mandates the complete removal of the coal ash ponds of the former coal plant. Support Waukegan's legislative efforts that focus on additional environmental remediation of the former coal plant site.

Value(s) of the County Board Strategic Plan

- Environmental Stewardship

FEDERAL Initiative to Support

Topic: Federal Funding for County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs)

Issue: The number of veteran suicides nationwide continues to rise, and approximately 14 of the 20 veterans who die by suicide each day are not under Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) care. This national public health crisis requires a national approach that meets veterans where they're located. County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) are often the first point of contact in the community for veteran's services and they provide assistance on a range of benefits, including service-connected benefits, enrollment in VA health care, VA home loans, education benefits, and available job placement assistance. Veterans are not always aware of the available benefits, and CVSOs are often the first to inform them about their eligibility. CVSOs are nationally accredited by the VA to prepare, present, and prosecute VA claims. However, there is currently no federal funding directly available for CVSOs.

Recommendation: Support the CVSO Act, or similar federal bills, that provide federal funding to support CVSOs or similar local entities.

Value(s) of the County Board Strategic Plan

- Fiscal Responsibility

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FEDERAL Initiative to Support

Topic: E-Vehicle Fire Standards

Issue: Currently, there are minimal State or Federal Standards as it relates to extinguishing fires that occur on or in an Electric Vehicle. Current methods employed by fire fighters result in excessive use of water, the use of creative methods, and potential environmental impact from water runoff.

Recommendation: Work with our Federal Legislators and support the creation of standards using industry experts.

Value(s) of the County Board Strategic Plan

- Leadership
- Sustainability

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FEDERAL Initiative to Oppose

Topic: Increase to the federal weight limit on heavy trucks

Issue: Legislation has been proposed that would raise the federal weight limit of heavy trucks, and establish a “pilot program” for states to test truck weights that exceed the current limit of 80,000 pounds. The increased weight limit is a concern for the county highway system as the heavier trucks will place more stress and strain on the roadway pavement and bridges, which could result in shorter lifespans. Also, there are safety concerns to consider with heavier vehicles traveling on the roadway system and the potential negative outcomes for other vehicles when crashes/collisions occur.

Recommendation: Lake County **Opposes** legislation that would increase the weight limits on heavy trucks.

Guiding Tenet(s) of the Legislative Agenda: Oppose unfunded mandates imposed by the State or Federal Government.

Value(s) of the County Board Strategic Plan

- Leadership

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STATE or FEDERAL Initiative to Support

Topic: Firearm Regulation

Issue: Lake County recognizes that changes are necessary in State or Federal regulation as it relates to firearm safety and control due to the prevalence of gun violence in our Nation.

Recommendation: Lake County **Supports** legislation that:

1. Bans the sale or possession of assault rifles
2. Mandates firearm safe storage
3. Reforms the FOID Card process
4. Mandates training related to the sale or possession of firearms

Value(s) of the County Board Strategic Plan

- Leadership

Topics of Importance

The following topical areas are of high importance to Lake County Government, and are the primary areas of focus for our Legislative Team. When bills are filed or acted on at the State or Federal level related to these areas, an update will be provided at the next available Legislative Committee for discussion and position as necessary.

- Local Government Distributive Fund
- Reduction or Elimination of Sales Tax Surcharge
- Extended Producer Responsibility–Related
 - a. Carpet Stewardship
 - b. Single Use Plastics
- Toxic Pavement Sealants
- Lead Pipe Abatement
- Lake County-Impacted Voter Referendums
- Federal Health Benefits in our Jail System
- State and Local Tax Deduction
- Ethylene Oxide (EtO) Regulations
- Bird-Friendly Building Design
- Metra Funding-Related
- Route 53 Greenway
- Residential PACE Financing
- Green Amendment

Notes

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