



Congress Passes Bipartisan Spending Bills with Illinois Priorities Secured by Durbin

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, today released the following statement after the Senate passed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 appropriations bills yesterday. The bills are expected to be signed by President Donald Trump today.

“These bills invest in Illinois’ environment, transportation infrastructure, health, agriculture, service members, and security. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, bringing home federal dollars will always be a top priority for me. I’m glad that Congress was able to come together on a bipartisan basis to pass these bills, which will benefit families in Illinois and across the country.”

These funding bills include the following priorities for Illinois:

Interior and Environment

- ***Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), Great Lakes Region:*** \$320 million in funding for the GLRI to support the inter-agency program to address issues affecting the Great Lakes, including invasive species and pollution. Since 2010 GLRI has invested more than \$226 million in Illinois to implement 170 projects including the removal of toxic chemicals from Waukegan Harbor, green infrastructure projects like the Millennium Reserve near the Calumet River, and the restoration of 40 acres of land at Northerly Island.
- ***Bubbly Creek:*** The bill includes Durbin’s language urging EPA, Army Corps, and DOJ to expedite a resolution to negotiations over liability concerns that have prohibited the Army Corps of Engineers environmental restoration program on the South Fork of the South Branch of the Chicago River.
- ***Ethylene Oxide and the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS):*** The bill includes language addressing concerns about ethylene oxide emissions and urges the EPA to brief the committee about its plans to update federal standards. The bill also includes language to continue to maintain the IRIS program and its mission to identify harmful chemicals with the highest scientific rigor.
- ***Manganese:*** The bill includes Durbin’s language about manganese soil contamination in Chicago and encourages EPA to clean up all affected areas to the lowest possible limits for residential screening and monitoring.

Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development

- ***BUILD Grants:*** \$1 billion in nationwide funding for the BUILD program (formerly ‘TIGER’), of which Illinois has been a major beneficiary since the program was created in 2009.
- ***Amtrak:*** \$2 billion in nationwide Amtrak funding and \$100 million to support a multi-year, \$1.5 billion replacement of Amtrak’s 40-year rolling stock.
- ***Quad Cities to Chicago Rail:*** The bill includes Durbin’s language urging the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to provide a multi-year extension of the current grant agreement to establish the new Quad Cities to Chicago State-supported Amtrak route.
- ***Blocked Crossings:*** The bill includes Durbin’s language directing the FRA to report on its efforts to collect data on blocked crossings and what additional data would be needed to properly analyze the problem.
- ***Roadside Deaths and Distracted Driving:*** The bill includes Durbin’s efforts to combat roadside personnel deaths, specifically \$5 million in grants for testing technology, barriers, and other solutions to improve driver awareness and protect roadside personnel. The bill also includes Durbin’s language directing the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to report on deaths and motor vehicle accidents involving roadside personnel.
- ***Expanding the Chicago HEAL Initiative:*** In Illinois, Durbin has launched the Chicago HEAL Initiative with 10 major hospitals to reduce violence, strengthen neighborhoods, and overall improve community health. The bill includes Durbin’s language encouraging the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to replicate the Initiative across the country by providing incentives for new projects that coordinate with both housing providers and health care organizations.
- ***Assessing the Current Public Housing Backlog:*** The bill includes funding for HUD to complete an updated capital needs assessment of the nation’s public housing stock. The most recent assessment was completed in 2010 and estimated a \$26 billion backlog projected to increase by an average of \$3.4 billion per year.
- ***Improving Public Housing Safety:*** The bill includes Durbin’s language directing HUD to change the process by which emergency safety and security grants are allocated, from a lottery to regionally, based on need.

- ***East St. Louis Receivership:*** The bill includes Durbin's language directing HUD to review the progress made during the three-decade-long administrative receivership of the East St. Louis Housing Authority and to report to Congress on transitioning Public Housing Authorities out of receivership.

Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration

- ***Protecting SNAP Benefits for Illinois Seniors:*** The bill includes Durbin's bill language to protect SNAP nutrition assistance benefits for 8,000 low-income seniors and elderly people in Illinois. In recent years, USDA has sought to strip SNAP eligibility and participation from 150 supportive senior living facilities across Illinois, and the Durbin amendment blocks this regulatory overreach.
- ***Lowering Prescription Drug Costs:*** The bill includes Durbin's report language to lower the cost of prescription drugs by speeding the FDA approval process for lower-cost generic insulin and studying efforts by pharmaceutical companies to block competition by abusing the patent system.
- ***National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research:*** The bill includes \$1.424 billion for the Agricultural Research Service. This amount ensures continued funding for research labs across the country, including the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research in Peoria, where more than 250 scientists and staff are conducting important research to create new markets for food waste, biofuels, and plant-based biochemicals.
- ***Biodiesel Tax Credit:*** retroactively extends the biodiesel tax credit through 2022, ending the longest lapse in the credit's history

Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies

- ***Medical Research:*** Increases funding for medical research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by \$2.4 billion, for a total funding level of \$41.5 billion in fiscal year 2020. Durbin has secured at least five percent real growth at the NIH for each of the last five fiscal years.
- ***Opioids:*** Provides \$3.8 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to address opioid abuse, including \$1.5 billion to help states directly address the opioid epidemic and mental health.

- ***Tobacco Cessation:*** Provides an increase of \$20 million in funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) work to address the public health risk caused by the dramatic increase in youth use of e-cigarettes.
- ***Gun Violence Research:*** The bill includes \$25 million for CDC and NIH to conduct gun violence research for the first time in 25 years.
- ***Textbook Affordability:*** Includes \$7 million for new grants under the Open Textbook Pilot program, a program based on Durbin's legislation that awards grants to create and expand the use of freely accessible college textbooks. Durbin has secured \$17 million for this effort over three years.
- ***Increasing Pell Grant Awards:*** Increases the maximum Pell award by \$150 to \$6,345.
- ***Miners' Pensions:*** Includes a fix for miners' pensions and health care coverage for miners impacted by 2018 and 2019 mine bankruptcies. The fix will cover pension benefits for more than 8,000 miners and health coverage for more than 1,000 miners in Illinois.

Homeland Security

- ***Urban Flooding Pilot Program:*** The bill includes Durbin's request for a \$1.2 million pilot program to provide grants within eligible urban areas (more than 50,000 people) to improve flood mapping and urban flood mitigation, based on a bill introduced by Durbin and Rep. Quigley.
- ***Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program:*** The bill includes Durbin's language directing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to evaluate its process for assisting states experiencing technical difficulties when applying to the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM). The State of Illinois was one of several states that experienced technical difficulties when applying to the Fiscal Year 2018 PDM Program, and was ultimately deemed ineligible for these grants.
- ***Better Protecting Firefighters from Cancer Risks:*** The bill includes Durbin's language directing FEMA to collaborate with fire departments to find cost-effective procedures to reduce firefighters' exposure to carcinogens.
- ***Federal Disaster Declarations:*** The bill includes Durbin's language directing FEMA to communicate with greater transparency how it determines federal disaster declarations. Due to FEMA's disaster declaration process, large states like Illinois

face difficulties qualifying for federal aid to repair damage caused by natural disasters.

- ***Transportation Security Administration (TSA)***: The bill includes funding for an additional 1,090 front-line screening personnel.

Commerce, Justice, and Science

- ***2020 Census***: The bill includes \$7.6 billion for the 2020 Census.
- ***Bureau of Prisons***: The bill includes \$7.47 billion to fund Bureau of Prisons staff, inmate care, and building construction and maintenance costs. This amount ensures full funding of FY20 operations of USP Thomson, a high-security federal prison in Thomson, Illinois. \$75 million of the funding is specifically dedicated to the implementation of the *First Step Act*, at Durbin's request. Durbin was one of the lead authors of the *First Step Act*, a landmark, bipartisan law that uses evidence-based recidivism reduction programs to help inmates successfully return to society after serving their sentence; it also reduces some sentences for certain low-level, nonviolent offenders while preserving important law enforcement tools to tackle criminal enterprises.
- ***NOAA***: The bill includes \$76.5 million for Coastal Zone Management Grants and \$45 million for Coastal Zone Management and Services to support regional efforts to restore and protect coastal communities in the Great Lakes Region. The bill also includes \$4.15 million for the Regional Climate Centers to develop products and services for climate-related issues affecting sectors such as agriculture, transportation, energy generation, and water resources.

Military Construction and Veteran Affairs

- ***Veteran Health Records***: Includes Durbin's language supporting electronic health record integration between the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Durbin helped establish the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center as the first fully integrated, joint DOD and VA health care facility prior to its opening in 2010.

Financial Services and General Government

- ***Election Security:*** Includes \$425 million in election security grant funds to states, of which Illinois is expected to receive about \$14.8 million of this formula funding to help the State Board of Elections maintain its Cyber Navigator Program and local election officials to update their infrastructure.