



# **LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBERS GET UPDATE ON ILLINOIS CHAMBER'S JOBS AGENDA, OTHER ISSUES AT EVENT HOSTED BY THE MADISON-BOND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD**

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Edwardsville, Ill., June 23, 2011... The head of The Illinois Chamber of Commerce visited Edwardsville yesterday to brief more than 40 members of the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois on a range of legislative issues, including the State Chamber's Jobs Agenda, worker's compensation reform and the state budget. During the breakfast program hosted by the Madison-Bond Workforce Investment Board, Illinois Chamber President and Chief Executive Officer Doug Whitley highlighted some of his agency's proposed solutions to address the challenges of jobs creation, as showcased in the booklet recently released by the State Chamber - Jobs Agenda - A Blueprint for Growth & Prosperity.

While his remarks touched on the past, acknowledging the state's lack of economic growth during the challenging last decade, he largely focused on the future and the need to look forward in order to bring about change. Three key issues that the Chamber believes need to be addressed include fiscal responsibility in Illinois government; the cost of doing business in the State of Illinois, particularly as it relates to workers' compensation; and environmental law and regulation. Whitley notes that they already are seeing movement on some of those issues, citing the following as recent progress by the democratic leadership:

- \* The impeachment of former Governor Rod Blagojevich;
- \* Passage of a capital bill for the first time in 10 years, paving the way for \$30 billion in investments;
- \* Changes to the Illinois state pension system - for new hires;
- \* Preliminary efforts to take on Medicaid with the goal of saving \$500 million in expenses;
- \* Recognition that the state budget is out of hand and the involvement of individual legislators in the budgeting process for the first time in a decade; and
- \* Passage of legislation making some initial improvements to the workers' compensation system.

He cautioned, however, that much work remains on the workers' compensation front and that will remain a top priority for the Chamber in the months and years to come. "While we couldn't endorse the final bill, we were glad it passed and are pleased that this issue has been moved to the center stage," said Whitley.

On the workforce development front, Whitley noted that there is a huge disconnect between education and employers and that there really needs to be more communication between the two to create graduates with the right type of intellect to meet future workforce needs.

Whitley wrapped up his remarks by noting that another key challenge that lies ahead is the need to reverse the bad PR that the state has gotten in recent years and change the perception that Illinois is, in his words, "a laughing stock." He states the only way to do this is for people to get involved, understand the broader picture and communicate with their legislators regarding the types of changes needed to create an environment that is conducive to growth, investment and jobs.

"Today's program provided an excellent opportunity for area leaders to learn more about the Illinois Chamber's jobs agenda," said Gerry Schuetzenhofer, president of the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois. "While many talk about the importance of jobs, few have concrete ideas on how to create them, so it's very encouraging to hear that the State Chamber has a plan aimed at addressing the existing impediments to job creation and growth in order to generate a more positive outlook for Illinois' future."

"Mr. Whitley is a very enthusiastic speaker who clearly is focused on the needs of the State of Illinois and the interests of the business community," noted Charlie Juneau, chairman of the Madison-Bond Workforce Investment Board. "We appreciate his efforts and believe that the Chamber's new publication will help to bring workforce and jobs issues to the forefront."

Copies of Jobs Agenda can be downloaded at <http://www.ilchamber.org/Illinois-Chamber-Of-Commerce/Main/Who-We-Are/Jobs-Agenda.htm>.