

OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

The Lieutenant Governor is the second highest executive office in Illinois and first in line for succession to the governorship. Under the Illinois Constitution, the Lieutenant Governor becomes the Acting Governor if the Governor is unable to discharge the duties of the office. Over the course of Illinois history, seven Lieutenant Governors have replaced Governors who died, resigned or were removed from office. In addition to being prepared to lead the state, the Lieutenant Governor exercises the powers delegated to her by the Governor and that may be prescribed by law, including acting as the state's top advocate for rural communities, military families and river conservation. Lieutenant Governor Simon also is committed to education reform, domestic violence prevention and better government.

Advocating for Rural Communities

As chair of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council (GRAC), Lieutenant Governor Simon leads a group of government agencies, academic institutions and rural advocacy groups dedicated to improving the economy, environment and health of rural communities. Since its founding in 1986 by executive order, the council has provided a link between state and local agencies to support innovative rural development initiatives and public policies. Under Simon's guidance, the council added citizen members and formal representation from the Illinois Farm Bureau for the first time.

In spring 2012, Lieutenant Governor Simon conducted Rural Listening Posts in Carbondale, Freeport, Gibson City, Mattoon, Peoria and Quincy. More than half of the participants predicted their quality of life would improve in the next five years, but they identified job creation, education funding and access to quality health care as areas of concern. The input informed the GRAC's new strategic plan — a Vision for Rural Illinois — in addition to Simon's advocacy for college and career readiness and voluntary school district consolidation. The council continues to partner with academic researchers to track the transfer of wealth and other rural trends in order to provide a solid foundation for



Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon promotes a grant program that allows farmers' markets to accept Link cards via wireless machines at the Uptown Farmers' Market in Chicago.



Lieutenant Governor Simon inspects recruits before a graduation ceremony at the Naval Station Great Lakes in North Chicago.

meaningful policy and legislative reforms.

Through GRAC, Lieutenant Governor Simon is working to improve access to local food sources to increase nutrition and economic development potential for rural Illinoisans. Her office has sponsored training for farmers' market vendors and promoted the expansion of food-stamp spending at markets and fresh-food stands. Simon successfully supported legislation that designates the first Saturday of each month as a "Buy Local" day, allows small family farms to more readily participate in food entrepreneurship, and permits homemade baked goods to be sold at farmers' markets and other community events. She also supported legislation creating the Farmers' Market Task Force, which is conducting a comprehensive review of the laws and administrative rules regulating farmers' markets.

Rural providers of emergency medical services (EMS) have an ally in Lieutenant Governor Simon thanks to the GRAC's EMS subcommittee. Simon has sponsored a statewide summit for providers, testified before a House EMS Task Force in support of training reforms, and provided staff support for more than 17 EMS hearings across the state. Simon favors a new balance of in-person and online training for EMS recertification to keep patients safe but control costs for volunteer-run organizations. She also has advocated legislation to better align state EMS licensing classifications and definitions with national standards.

Representing Military Families and Bases

As required by law, Lieutenant Governor Simon chairs the Interagency Military Base Support and Economic Development Committee. The committee acts as the central information clearinghouse for all retention, realignment and reuse activities, serving as a liaison among community organizations, Illinois' congressional delegation and the public. The committee was established in 2005 in response to nationwide military base closures. Simon is collaborating with public and private partners to conduct a statewide economic impact study of the bases and defense industry in Illinois.

Simon also established an Illinois presence on the U.S. House Defense Communities Caucus, and has called for the federal government to maximize financial assistance for public schools in the North Chicago region that serve military families at Naval Station Great Lakes. Successful legislation to give veterans credit for prior military-training experience and to study the needs of women veterans received Simon's support in the General Assembly.

Protecting Illinois Rivers

The rivers and streams of Illinois have long been instrumental in shaping the culture, communities and commerce of the state. Chaired by Lieutenant Governor Simon, the Illinois, Mississippi, and Wabash and Ohio River Coordinating Councils unite citizens, river enthusiasts, and state and federal agencies in coordinating policy and initiatives for the preservation and restoration of our watersheds. Included with these statutory responsibilities are interrelated issues of economics, flooding, recreation and tourism. To ensure the three councils promote achievable and effective projects, Simon re-established the Science Advisory Committee to provide expert advice on conservation issues. She also is updating the Illinois River Watershed Integrated Management Plan adopted in 1997, which is used by the Illinois River Coordinating Council and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a guiding document for river restoration.

In her position as river councils' chair, Lieutenant Governor Simon monitors and influences state responses to flood, drought and economic development along Illinois rivers. Simon ensured that the state followed transparency requirements during a contentious debate over mining near Starved Rock State Park, and lobbied on behalf of river commerce when drought threatened barge traffic on the lower Mississippi River. When flood waters threatened several communities in Simon's native Southern Illinois in early 2011, she urged the Army Corps of Engineers to breach a levee to save homes and businesses in Cairo, where she assisted local officials in sandbagging.

Inspiring Better Government

Lieutenant Governor Simon is leading by example when it comes to open and honest leadership. She has released annual financial profiles of herself and her senior staff members that go above and beyond what is required by law. The disclosures empower the public to determine if officials are serving taxpayers' interests, or if they harbor any conflicts of interest. To combat the state's pay-to-play culture, Simon's first executive order set a new standard for government ethics. She prohibited her campaign fund from accepting contributions from employees of Illinois executive branch offices, and issued a "no free lunch" order that prohibits her staff from accepting free meals from lobbyists.

Under the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act, constitutional officers, elected officials and certain high-ranking public employees are required to file an annual Statement of Economic Interests. Although the form aims to expose existing or potential conflicts of interest, it has been deemed "woefully inadequate" by the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform. Simon is leading the charge to pinpoint the problems and introduce new language that will improve accountability and require more specific disclosures of economic interests. Her coalition includes representatives from good-government groups, state and county agencies, legal counsel and members of the General Assembly. Legislation that overhauls the disclosure questions, crafted in part by Simon, passed the Senate in 2013.

Simon also is calling for greater transparency in how income tax dollars are spent. She wants taxpayers who file online to receive an itemized receipt that illustrates where their money goes and how it fits into the state's multi-billion dollar budget. Simon's office is working with the Department of Revenue and the Governor's Office of Management and Budget to design a taxpayer receipt for the roughly 500,000 residents who file online for free, and a webpage will be available to those who file by other means.



Lieutenant Governor Simon speaks to the “Future College Class of 2025” in Rockford. Simon is leading reform efforts to ensure that 60 percent of working-age Illinoisans hold a degree or certificate by 2025.

Helping Domestic Violence Survivors

Illinois’ domestic violence laws provide greater protections to a wider range of victims than do the laws of many other states; however, there is more work to be done. Lieutenant Governor Simon is working with volunteer legal experts to ensure our laws reach all victims and reflect new technologies. She launched a virtual legal clinic with pro bono attorneys for survivors and participates in events to raise awareness of domestic violence issues. Each year in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Simon partners with the Department of Central Management Services to exchange no-longer-used state cellphones for monetary and phone donations to domestic violence prevention agencies in underserved areas.

Improving Education

Unlike other states, Illinois does not have a single official or cabinet position that oversees preschool through higher-education efforts. Governor Quinn has designated Lieutenant Governor Simon to fill this role as his point person on education reform. In this capacity, Simon serves as chair of the Joint Education Leadership Committee on the P-20 Council, which is working to increase the percentage of working-age adults in Illinois with college degrees or certificates to 60 percent by 2025, and to prepare the state workforce for the highly skilled jobs of the future. In her first two years in office, Simon met with leaders, faculty and students at each of Illinois’ 48 community colleges and 12 public universities, and recommended the state adopt reforms to reduce the time it takes to earn a degree, decrease student debt and increase college transparency. After identifying math as the greatest academic barrier to college completion, Simon worked with stakeholders to launch the state’s first math curriculum models for the 6th through 12th grades.

Simon also served as chair of the Classrooms First Commission, a bipartisan, blue-ribbon committee comprised of education stakeholders. The commission solicited input from the public and education experts on ways school districts can reduce duplicative administrative spending and improve educational offerings, and provided recommendations on district efficiency and effectiveness to the Governor and General Assembly in 2012. The resulting legislation makes it easier for school districts to voluntarily consolidate.

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