

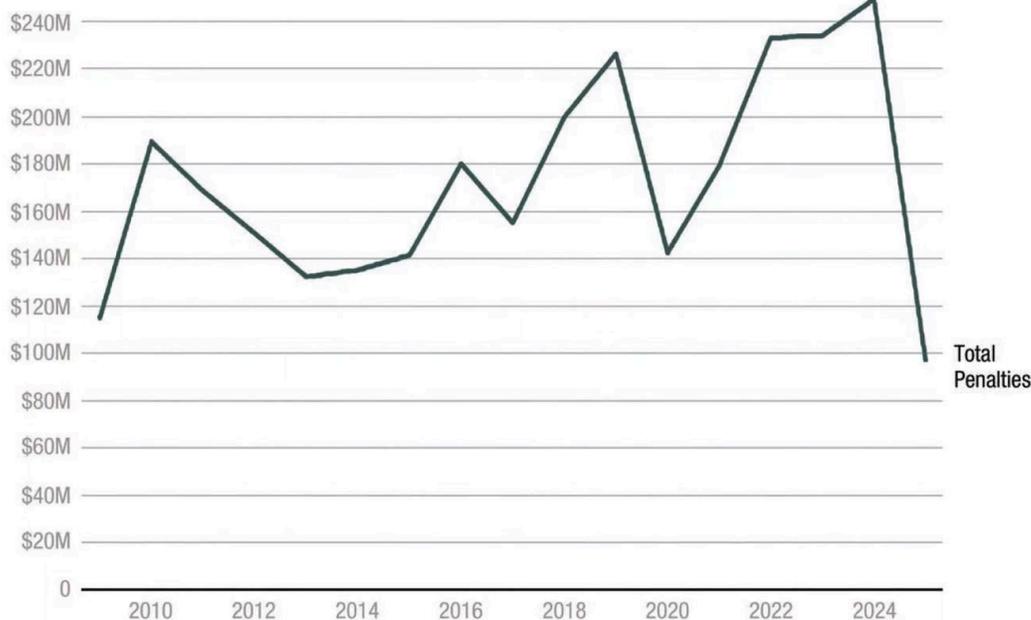


2026 State Policy Agenda

Chicago Women in Trades (CWIT) has spent nearly 45 years championing women’s equity in the construction trades. We have achieved this through our efforts to increase the number of women and other gender minorities prepared to compete for and succeed in trade apprenticeships and non-traditional employment through our training programs, as well as improving opportunities for women to enter and remain in these occupations through technical assistance for industry partners and policy advocacy initiatives. With less than 5% of construction trade jobs held by women in Illinois, leaders in the General Assembly fighting for equity are critical to advancing our work.

With attacks on equity and worker protections at the federal level, our efforts have never been more important. Last year alone witnessed a dramatic dismantling of workplace safety regulations and federal enforcement. During 2025, wage and hour penalties have decreased by 94%, and workplace health and safety penalties have dropped by 47% - the lowest it's ever been since 2009. These issues will only be exacerbated by further anticipated deregulation and funding cuts.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration Penalties since 2009



Penalty amounts for all years are from January through September (in constant dollars).
Source: Violation Tracker • Created with Datawrapper

OSHA's imposed penalties through September of 2025 total less than \$94 million — a 47% decrease from average penalties during similar periods each year since 2009. (Source: Good Jobs First)

Through the committed work of the General Assembly in collaboration with Governor Pritzker, Illinois has created first-in-the-nation policies and investments to ensure equal access to opportunities in the union construction trades, to enable safe and inclusive worksites, and to increase gender and racial equity in good jobs that create career pathways to economic security. In this moment of unprecedented federal assaults on the progress made towards equity and inclusion, the Governor and the General Assembly must support and strengthen existing laws and funding streams to ensure that good, family-sustaining jobs remain available to all and that our worksites remain safe for all workers.

State Legislation

CWIT Led: [Menstruation and Lactation Support on Construction Sites - SB 3465 / HB 4760](#)

Chief Sponsors: Senators Guzman and Hunter/ Representatives Mah and Stava

This legislation would strengthen Illinois law to ensure that construction workers who menstruate or express milk have safe, sanitary, and dignified working conditions on construction sites. Building on existing lactation and bathroom sanitation requirements, the bill establishes clear standards for menstrual hygiene access and lactation accommodations, making construction sites healthier and more inclusive, welcoming and equitable workplaces.

CWIT Supported: Workplace Extreme Temperature Safety Act — HB 3762 / SB 2501

This law mandates that the Department of Labor establish rules for managing occupational exposure to extreme heat and cold, requiring employers to create safety plans that include breaks, hydration, shade, and other measures. It also establishes clear thresholds and is enforced through a multipronged approach.

CWIT Supported: Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program Act — HB 3483 / SB 2413

This bill includes a broader set of reasons people need paid leave, provides sufficient leave time and replaces a substantial share of workers' usual wages, and protects workers against job loss or retaliation for taking leave. More specifically, employees will be eligible for up to 18 weeks of paid leave for various reasons, funded through a combined 1.12% wage contribution.

CWIT Supported: Promptly Issue and Fully Fund Grants and Contracts; Improvements to the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act — HB 4707 / SB2844

Improves the Government Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) by establishing clear timelines for issuing grant agreements and contracts to ensure uninterrupted services from nonprofit providers. This also promotes workforce stability by prohibiting arbitrary caps on indirect costs.

CWIT Supported: Make Court of Claims Process More Efficient; Amends the Court Claims Act — HB4340 / SB2843

Revises the Court of Claims Act by establishing clear timelines to guarantee nonprofit service providers receive prompt communication and timely resolution of uncontested claims arising from lapsed appropriations.

CWIT Supported: Ensure Timely Payments; Strengthening the Illinois State Prompt Payments Act — HB4288 / BS2845

Strengthens the Prompt Payment Act by establishing clear payment deadlines, ensuring nonprofit service providers are paid on time and can sustain uninterrupted services.

CWIT Supported: Amends the Private Business and Vocational Schools Act of 2012 — HB 4264

Clarifies which educational institutions are exempt from being classified as private business and vocational schools. Certain low-cost programs are excluded from the definition of a private business and vocational school if it offers instruction or programs of study where students are not charged any tuition or fees, except for a small fee to cover the costs of materials like books and tools.

CWIT Supported: JTED Funding — HB 5273 / SB 4054

Appropriates funding to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) for the Job Training and Economic Development (JTED) Program, which is a program that provides support for community-based workforce training initiatives and job placement services.

CWIT Supported: Civil Rights Safeguard Act — HB 5386 / SB 3777

Amends the Illinois Human Rights Act to expand protections against discrimination. This redefines “unlawful discrimination” to include actions that result in discriminatory effects, regardless of intent, across employment, credit, and public accommodations.

FY 2027 State Budget

Revenue Crisis

Federal policies have targeted critical funding to address barriers that women and other groups experience in accessing high-wage careers: food insecurity, housing instability, a lack of caregiving supports, transportation, and medical care. The state will not be able to fill the gaps created in the safety net without new revenue, which is why CWIT has endorsed the proposals of the Illinois Revenue Alliance, including closing corporate loopholes, the digital ad tax, the billionaire wealth tax, and tax haven reporting.

Job Training and Economic Development (JTED)

JTED is one of the state's only investments in job development outside of WIOA, and its corresponding federal administrative burdens. It provided flexibility for programming, and funding focused solely on barrier reduction for workers facing economic challenges, such as housing, transportation, and more. JTED was revitalized under the state's appropriations of federal COVID-relief dollars, and while \$10 million in funding is maintained in FY2027, it is not the \$20 million needed to meet the state's current and future workforce needs.

FY 2026 Appropriation	FY 2026 Expenditure	FY 2027 Proposed
\$31 Million	\$20 Million	\$11 Million

Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship (Capital Budget)

Illinois Works was an innovative program developed along with the passage of the 2019 Capital Bill. It included substantial funding for pre-apprenticeship training to build a diverse pipeline of qualified individuals from every community ready to work on state capital projects, while also creating mandates and incentives for them to be hired on those projects through apprenticeship requirements and bid credits. While the bid credit was just implemented in 2024, the Illinois Works pre-apprenticeship program has been graduating higher numbers of women and people of color every year since 2022. In FY2024, 76% of program participants were people of color, and 24% were women.

FY 2026 Appropriation	FY 2026 Expenditure	FY 2027 Proposed
\$20 Million	\$20 Million	\$20 Million

Other funding: Highway Construction Career Training Program (HCCTP)

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has been using a small amount of federal funds and a substantial amount of state road funds for HCCTP, a pre-apprenticeship program run through MOUs with community colleges, as well as a financial incentive to IDOT contractors who hire graduates. Because of the way that dollars are distributed, it is not included in the annual appropriation process. According to FOIA results, in FY2023, the state planned to spend \$6.6 million on the program, with less than 4% of the funding coming from the Federal Highway Administration.

IDOT has additional opportunities to invest in workforce development, which should be explored. The 2021 federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provides states the ability to target formula highway funding so that surface transportation projects provide jobs to communities in need of increased economic security under 23 U.S.C. § 504(e). IDOT should invest in expanded supportive services and workforce development as part of any

infrastructure project to increase state-wide capacity to provide opportunities for underrepresented groups to work in these construction jobs, with special emphasis on maximizing opportunities for women and people of color. The supportive services that are eligible for this funding include pre-apprenticeship training programs; childcare; tools; workwear; retention services (including support groups, mentoring, and peer networking); stipends; and application fees and other costs of entering registered apprenticeship programs and required pre-employment training. Implementation of this provision under Trump must still be evaluated.

Key State Laws

There are several state laws that have been critical to increasing access to opportunity and centering workforce equity on state-funded construction projects. The implementation and enforcement of these policies are critical, particularly considering the dismantling of federal protections, and fierce attacks on worker rights, equity and diversity.

Illinois Works Job Program Act (30 ILCS 559/20) — As mentioned elsewhere, Illinois Works was included as part of the 2019 capital bill passed by the General Assembly. The Pre-Apprenticeship program has funded over 40 programs and trained more than 4,000 Illinoisans for careers in the construction trades. The law also includes bid incentives for contractors on state funded programs who hire graduates and retain them on jobs throughout their apprenticeship, as well as a requirement to have a percentage of their work done by apprentices, of which 50% should be graduates from a state-funded pre-apprenticeship program.

Prevailing Wage Act (820 ILCS 130) — Applicable to publicly funded projects across the state of Illinois, it requires wage standards and reporting from contractors. In 2023, that reporting was expanded to include the demographics of their workforce including race, gender, and ethnicity for all public works projects, and made transparent through public reports. Quarterly reports of this information are available through the Illinois Department of Labor.

Project Labor Agreement Act (30 ILCS 571) — State agencies that enter into Project Labor Agreements should establish goals for women and minorities in both apprenticeship and overall work hours. The implementation and effectiveness of this requirement have not been evaluated.

Responsible Bidder Code (30 ILCS 500/30) — Explicitly included compliance with federal Executive Order 11246 that required contractors to take specific actions to ensure equal employment opportunity for women and minorities on construction projects. Unfortunately, this federal EO was overturned by the Trump Administration, weakening the state's ability to require compliance.

Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/2-109) — Requires that state contractors have an anti-harassment policy and conduct annual anti-harassment trainings. As the Trump Administration has redirected the focus of the federal civil rights entities like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the USDOL Office of Apprenticeship and the USDOL Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs away from sexual and racial harassment, state implementation of the Illinois Human Rights Act through the Illinois Department of Human Rights will be critical to ensure that women, immigrants, and racial and gender minorities are able to experience safe worksites that are free from discrimination and harassment.

To partner with Chicago Women in Trades on initiatives to enhance workforce equity in construction and other nontraditional, high-wage careers, contact:

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