

Go Green Illinois, Sept. 11, 2018

Effective Environmental Legislation

Minutes

The program focused on developing an understanding of the power of community voices to implement legislation. We talked about how individuals and groups can impact legislation and environmental policies at the state level. The speakers gave a general overview about how legislation is worked in the general assembly, how we can influence policy issues at the state level, and current priorities for state legislation.

Guest speakers:

- Robyn Gabel, Illinois State Representative
- Jen Walling, Illinois Environmental Council
- Jack Darin, Illinois Sierra Club
- Toba Pearlman, Natural Resources Defense Council

Robyn Gable – Illinois State Representative, 18th District,
<http://roblyngabel.com>. Robyn serves on the Environmental Committee.

Citizen input and activism is important to successful environmental legislation. Advocacy and policy is on three levels – Federal, state and local. State level has the most legislation that impacts our communities.

We make change in three ways:

Legislation: Passing laws - Ideas come from constituents, advocacy groups and individual lawmaker's personal agendas based on their experiences and interests.

Administrative: Working out the details – making change without legislation but working on rules and enforcement can sometimes be a faster approach. Work through your legislator's office rather than going directly to state agencies.

Legal: Forcing legislation through courts – takes a lot of time and money.

Legislators must choose issue based on impact, ability to pass, feasibility, partners, and opponents.

Strategize:

Lead Sponsor: Each law must have a lead sponsor. A lead sponsor is selected/asked based on their passion for the topic and history of passing bills.

Allies: Who will work with you?

Opponents: Special interests. Know what/who you are up against.

Make friends with your representatives before you need them. Invite legislators to events, educate them on issues of importance to your community, include them in your communications and activities. Understand them and know their history, know what you can do for them, decide what you want them to do for you

Negotiate: Accept amendments, negotiate as needed, know your bottom line, disagree without being disagreeable and aim to win by working for win-win solutions.

Tactics: Petitions, meetings, phone calls, letter writing, media, letters to editor, press releases, rallies, public hearings, groups meetings.

Jen Walling, Illinois Environmental Council, (membership group for environmental organizations.) <https://ilenviro.org>

Threats, Opportunities and How We Can Make a Difference”

IEC is the voice of the environmental community, helping all other environmental groups make more of a difference. IEC can help all of our Go Green groups make progress. We can all become members of IEC. The organization:

- Lobbies on behalf of membership and has helped pass much legislation.
- Tracks 250 bills a year that have something to do with the environment.
- Disseminates environmental news.
- Coordinates 80 organizations.
- Builds relationships with legislators.
- Releases annual environmental scorecard for state legislators.
<https://ilenviro.org/scorecard/>

Legislation can take 7 – 10 years to become law, but small laws can get passed quickly – like waiving permit fee for pumpkin collection! IEC can help Go Green groups with strategy to make progress

What sort of language helps pass environmental laws?

Jobs, investment, economic development and diversification

How can our groups help?

Join the Illinois Environmental Council, stay abreast of issues and legislation, communicate this to our members, encourage advocacy, activism and voting.

Jack Darin, Illinois Sierra Club and Toba Pearlman, Natural Resources Defense Council

Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition: Goal is to advance clean energy jobs across Illinois. See www.ILCleanJobs.org

Future Energy Jobs Act:

- Powers one million homes by 2021 powered by wind and solar
- Illinois Solar for All – Solar for low income communities and customers
- More energy savings and lower electric bills.

Four Policy Pillars – How can our communities contribute?

1. Quality jobs and investment in communities across the state
2. 100% renewable energy by 2050
3. Carbon-free electric sector by 2030 (Nuclear will still be in operation.)
4. Electrify the transportation sector

ICJC wants to ensure that high quality jobs and economic opportunity are at the heart of the vision for a clean, equitable energy future for all. Participants were asked to provide input through a survey which is on their website.

Illinois has 1/4 of the coal reserves in the US but even so, there is discussion about moving away from coal as state policy. How can we help the state move in this direction? We need clear goals to make the progress we need.