



Dates:



April 01
By this date, local government websites must offer a two-way communication option

April 14
Annual Town Meeting

July 8-9
Resolutions Committee

July 28-29
IFB Commodities Conference

As of January 1, 2015, the mileage reimbursement rate for officials is 57.5¢ per mile.

Did you know...

Most municipalities in Illinois have adopted May 1 as the beginning of their fiscal year. But this date is not fixed in law, so some have adopted a different starting date.



Governor targets consolidation

Executive Order establishes task force to study the process

By Kevin Rund

Governor Bruce Rauner is using his authority to look for efficiencies in local government.

Rauner issued Executive Order 15-15 on February 13, effective February 17. It establishes the Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force, charged with considering the consolidation and redundancy of local governmental units and the elimination of unfunded mandates.

Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti will chair the task force whose members will be appointed by the Governor from both within and without local

governmental bodies. Sanguinetti has indicated that the task force will be made up of 15 appointees from across the state.

The task force will be required to complete its work and submit its report to the governor by the end of 2015, after which it will be dissolved.

In his statement ahead of signing the order, Governor Rauner said, "Illinois leads the nation with nearly 7,000 units of local government." He went on to add, "Many of these unnecessary layers of government are why hardworking families end up paying

(See Consolidation on page 3)

Changes to the Farmland Assessment Law

Noticeable in the 2015 assessment values

By Brenda Matherly

CHANGE NEEDED

The passage of SB 20 (in 2013) contained language introduced by the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) that limited value changes of the Certified Values for all Farmland Productivity Index (PI) soils to 10% of Illinois' median cropland soil PI.

The median cropland soil PI in Illinois is a PI 111. The legislation also added a \$5 reduction in the certified value limit for the 2015 assessment year only.

Prior to the passage of SB 20, each individual PI was limited to a growth

(See Assessments on page 4)

Annual Town Meeting

Big date in local democracy takes place on the second Tuesday in April — the 14th

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

To the legal voters, residents of the Town of _____ in the County of _____ and State of Illinois, that the Annual Town Meeting of said Town will take place on
Tuesday, April 14, 2014

being the second Tuesday of said month at the hour of 7:00 o'clock P.M. at *[Location]* for the transaction of the miscellaneous business of the said town; and after a Moderator having been elected, will proceed to hear and consider reports of officers, and decide on such measures as may, in pursuance of law, come before the meeting; and especially to consider and decide the following:
[Agenda]

That notice (above) will be appearing soon on bulletin boards, light poles, town hall doors and in store windows. It can also show up in local newspapers. It heralds the coming of one of the very few events where basic democracy (direct voice of each citizen) still functions, and it happens in only 20 states in this nation.

Under Illinois law, townships in Illinois must hold an Annual Town Meeting on the second Tuesday of April. It should be held after 6:00 p.m. (unless the electors fix some other time) at a place in the township picked by the township board.

While anyone is welcome to attend these meetings, only the electors of the township (persons registered to vote in the township) are eligible to vote on questions put before the assembly. All questions on motions are determined by a majority of the electors present and voting.

Notification of the meeting is to be given by the town clerk by posting written or printed notices in three of the most public places in the town at least 10 days before the meeting, and if there is an English language newspaper published in the town, by at least one publication in that newspaper, before the meeting.

A moderator, elected from among all electors at the meeting, presides over the meeting making announcements of the business, preserving order, and deciding all questions of order. The moderator has the same power as an election judge.

At a town meeting, the town clerk is the only elected township official to have an assigned role; he/she must keep minutes of the proceedings. The other elected officers of the township have no special authorities; they are like any other elector present.

The powers that may be exercised by voters at the Annual Town Meeting are extensive and include tax rate increases and disposition of property. For a complete list of those powers, visit: <http://www.toi.org/Resources/Download-Center.aspx>, and select "Powers of Electors" (12/7/2011) near the bottom of the list.

Special Town Meetings may be held when the board of trustees of the township, or at least 15 voters of the town, shall file in the office of the town clerk, a statement, in writing, that a special meeting is necessary for the interests of the town, and setting forth the objects of the meeting.

For more on the Annual Town Meeting, visit the Township Officials of Illinois website at: www.toi.org/events/default.aspx

LINK

Consolidation

(Continued from page 1)

some of the highest property taxes in the nation."

DuPAGE

Among the dignitaries sharing the stage with the Governor on February 13 was Dan Cronin, DuPage County Board Chairman. That County has been active since Cronin's election in 2010 in finding ways to consolidate or merge surplus units of local government to reduce redundancy and cut taxes, while maintaining services.

Cronin is reported to believe that \$80 million will be saved by the county through consolidation. \$43 million of that would accrue directly to the county (with a \$300 million annual budget) and the remaining \$37 million would be saved by county-appointed bodies.

[LINK](#)

*Illinois Farm Bureau's®
SWAT
(Strength With Advisory
Teams) Local and State Gov-
ernment team is planning a
meeting in DuPage County in
March to consider the
consolidation options exercised
in that county.*

Federal Initiatives Have Big Benefits for Rural Citizens

Executive

By Brenda Matherly

What comes to mind when you hear the word infrastructure? Do you see miles and miles of pavement rolling out across the land in the form of roads? Do you think about framework allowing for affordable and reliable water services and waste treatment? Maybe you even think about electric power lines?

However, I wonder how many people considered broadband? Well, USDA Rural Development certainly considers broadband an important component of our infrastructure - especially in rural areas.

The ability for rural communities to offer reliable broadband services is a significant factor in expanding economic opportunities and improving the quality of life for both rural residents and businesses.

Since 2009, USDA Rural Development's investment in broadband has provided new and improved service to more than 78,000 rural residents across the state. In addition, USDA Rural Development's progress on technology has allowed 31 rural schools to deliver information into the classrooms and homes of their students.

And while the benefits of broadband are felt locally, the driving force behind connectivity is primarily a federal issue. It takes

federal dollars to fund many of these infrastructure projects that reach into the homes of our most rural communities. It takes federal regulations and law making to expand these services and improve access to our neighborhoods.

Recently, President Obama announced that he is establishing a new Broadband Opportunity Council. The purpose of this Council is to bring together more than a dozen federal government agencies that have the authority to help speed up broadband deployment and improve access in areas that need it the most. The White House initiatives will include several components such as:

- Challenging the government to remove all unnecessary regulatory barriers to broadband build-out and competition.
- Holding a nationwide Community Broadband Summit in June 2015
- Launching a technical assistance program that will build on broadband access and adoption programs funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
- Offering financing to eligible rural providers that invest in connectivity to unserved and underserved rural areas through its Community Con-

(See **Broadband** on page 5)

Assessments

(Continued from page 1)

of 10% from its prior year's Certified Value.

Under the new law, value changes of all Farmland Productivity Index (PI) soils will be limited to 10% of the prior year's Certified Value for Illinois' median cropland soil, PI 111. This change became effective beginning with the 2015 assessed values for taxes payable in 2016.

The impact of this change allowed 2015 Certified Values of farmland to increase 10% of the PI 111's 2014 Certified Value, minus the \$5 deduction.

Assembling all those provisions results in the Certified Values for the coming year. The 2014 Certified Value for a PI 111 was \$203.32. Therefore, the increase of 10% to have been applied to this year's Certified Value was \$20.33. But, that amount was then reduced by \$5 (for the 2015 assessment year only), which means the resulting increase will be \$15.33. This maximum increase in the Certified Value for PI 111 (\$15.33) will be applied to increases in the Certified Values for all soil PI's.

REASON FOR CHANGE

The new law is intended to bring farmland assessed values in line with the original intent of the Farmland Assessment Law and allow the statutory formula to be more effective in determining the income potential of all farmland.

The previous 10% cap on individual PI soils was artificially keeping the value of lower PI soils from increasing to the actual productivity levels where they should be assessed.

By supporting the proposed IDOR change, the integrity of the Farmland Assessment Law will be maintained and the effective implementation of an income approach to determining the assessed value of farmland can continue.

The maximum increase in the Certified Value for soils with a PI 111 (\$15.33) will be applied to increases in the Certified Values for all soil PI's for the 2015 assessment year—taxes payable in 2016.

FARMLAND ASSESSMENT LAW

Since the passage of the Farmland Assessment Act in 1977, farmland in Illinois has been assessed for tax purposes using a formula that takes the soil's ability to produce income as a basis for determining taxable value.

Prior to 1977, farmland values were based on widely-fluctuating market values. Stabilizing the tax base was the

main reason the Farmland Assessment Act was necessary.

The law calculates farmland property values on a realistic formula based on the income potential for cropland. The farmland property assessment formula produces "Calculated Values" that are used to assess cropland.

In 1986, an amendment was made to the Farmland Assessment Act to limit both increases and decreases in the equalized value to 10% of the prior year's value. The application of the 10% limit produces "Certified Values."

Since 1986, the assessed values of farmland have frequently been based on those "Certified Values." The process of limiting the assessed value to a maximum annual change of 10% was first suggested by the taxing districts to help stabilize large swings in values from year to year. This helped provide some additional stability in the annual budgeting process for local taxing districts.

Despite the original intent of the previous 10% cap on individual PI soils, over the years, that limitation was artificially keeping the value on soils—especially lower PI soils—from increasing to the actual productivity levels.

That artificially-low barrier had led to the scrutiny of the overall system, and to the ultimate need for change.

LINK

Revenue sharing targeted

Governor calls for a 50% reduction in state revenue share with local governments

by Kevin Rund

Now facing unprecedented State funding deficits and the expiration of a temporary income tax increase, the Governor is proposing to reduce the tax revenue the State shares with local units of government.

A portion of the Governor's approach to filling the State's budget gap is to cut in half the State's revenue sharing with municipalities and counties.

The Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) sets aside a portion of the state's income

tax receipts to be shared with counties and municipalities. The amount that each municipality or county receives is based on its population in proportion to the total state population based on the latest U.S. census.

Over time, the LGDF received a varying percentage of the total income tax sales tax funds collected. In recent years, the local share has been 8%. The Governor's proposal would cut that to 4% starting July 1.

In the big picture of things, the money in the LGDF is collected

from taxpayers as a percentage of income, but it's distributed on a per-capita basis. So the LGDF effectively—though only incrementally—redistributes money to poorer districts from areas where taxpayers are better healed financially.

So, despite the outcry from some of the State's comparatively wealthy cities and counties, the ones likely to be hurt the most by such a cut are those less financially well off.

The State is hurting, too.

[LINK](#)

Enterprise Zones

A local incentive with State support, and State veto

Illinois has an economic development tool known as the Illinois Enterprise Zone (EZ) Program. The State must approve each proposed zones.

As in most states, The Illinois EZ Program is designed to stimulate economic growth and neighborhood revitalization in economically depressed areas.

This is accomplished by offering businesses located (or those that locate) in a designated EZ incentives through state and local tax waivers and regulatory relief such as sales tax breaks on building materials and an investment tax credit of 0.5% for qualifying property.

The EZ differs significantly from a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District (where the incentives are funded through local governments foregoing property tax growth.) But in the EZ, it's the State that picks up a significant portion of the incentive's cost.

Both programs offer incentives for local growth. However, Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) policy views EZs as far less problematic than the TIF. While the former is primarily State-funded, the latter is controlled by a county or a municipality, but the tax dollars are plucked from all local taxing units.

(See **EZ** on page 6)

Broadband

(Continued from page 3)

nect broadband grant program

USDA Rural Development recently accepted applications for the Community Connect broadband grant program. This program will help fund broadband deployment into rural communities where it is not yet economically viable for private sector providers to deliver service. These federal dollars will be offered to eligible rural carriers that invest in building infrastructure that will bring high-speed Internet to unserved and underserved areas.

Now what comes to mind when you hear the word infrastruc-

(See **Broadband** on page 6)

2015 Rural Nurse Practitioner Scholarship Program

Apply Now! Applications are due in the Illinois Farm Bureau® office by May 1

By Brenda Matherly

Applications are now available for the 2015 rural nurse practitioner scholarships. This year Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) will again offer five \$4,000 scholarships to qualified applicants.

The scholarship program, now in its 23rd year, helps encourage and develop a pool of rural health practitioners to help meet primary health care needs in rural Illinois. Students who receive scholarships agree to practice for two years in an ap-

proved rural Illinois community.

To be eligible for the scholarship, students must be Illinois residents and be a Registered Nurse accepted or enrolled in an accredited Nurse Practitioner Program. Funding is provided by the Rural Illinois Medical Student Assistance Program (RIMSAP).

Applications and information can be received through your local county Farm Bureau® and have also been placed on the RIMSAP website at www.RIMSAP.com.

We again encourage County Farm Bureaus to promote this program locally. Applications are due in the Illinois Farm Bureau® office by May 1, 2015.

For additional information, contact Peggy Romba at 309-557-2350, or via e-mail at promba@ifb.org.

LINK



Rural Nurse Practitioner Scholarship Program



Time Table

May 1	Applications due
June	Illinois Farm Bureau Nurse Practitioner Scholarship Committee recommends recipients to the grant providers
July	Recipients are notified
Sept.	First installment paid to university
Jan.	Recipient submits a one-page progress report to Scholarship Committee
Jan.	Second installment paid to university
May	Second progress report is submitted to Committee

Upon graduation, recipient must submit a letter to the Scholarship Committee verifying employment in a rural community.

After completion of the two years of service, the recipient must verify he/she has been employed in a rural community.

Broadband

(Continued from page 5)
 ture? Hopefully it is the pathway to rural connectivity through advances in federal broadband initiatives.

LINK

EZ

(Continued from page 5)
 There have been a number of changes in recent years regarding the way EZs are established and operate. Watch our next issue of LINK for that and more on the fundamentals of the concept.

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