

Governor Pat Quinn Signs Legislation to Protect Diversity in State Public Works Projects

Written by Laurel White
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New Law Will Benefit Minority-Owned, Female Businesses; Ensure Fairness in Minority and Female Employment on Public Works Projects

CHICAGO – July 27, 2011. Governor Pat Quinn today signed legislation to help ensure a fair state contract bidding process for minority- and women-owned businesses, and to advance minority and female employment in Illinois' workforce.

“This important new law will help ensure fairness, transparency and equal opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses in Illinois,” Governor Quinn said. “Today’s action underscores my commitment to maintaining a diverse, skilled and effective labor force.”

House Bill 2987 creates the Project Labor Agreement (PLA) Act, which requires state agencies under the Governor to consider the use of PLAs on public works construction projects. A PLA establishes the terms and conditions of employment for a construction project, ensuring a level bidding field for minority- and women-owned businesses and helping increase minority and female employment on public job sites. The new law codifies an Executive Order issued by the Governor in 2010.

The law requires the state department, agency, authority or board responsible for awarding the project to negotiate the PLA with labor organizations engaged in the construction industry. If the parties cannot agree to the terms of the project labor agreement, the Governor appoints a designee to assist the parties in reaching an agreement.

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Sponsored by Rep. Patrick J. Verschoore (D-Rock Island) and Sen. Toi Hutchinson (D-Chicago Heights), the law includes provisions for binding procedures for resolving jurisdictional labor disputes and grievances; guarantees against strikes; ensuring a reliable source of skilled and experienced labor; setting goals for apprenticeship hours for minorities and females as well as total number of hours to be performed by underrepresented minorities and females; and binding all contractors and subcontractors on the public works project through the inclusion of appropriate bid specifications.

The law also requires that an entity with a PLA in connection with a public works project to file a quarterly report with the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) that includes workforce participation by minorities and females. The IDOL will submit an annual report to the General Assembly and the Governor that details the number of minorities and females employees under all public labor agreements within the state. The new law takes effect immediately.

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