

Lt. Governor Simon welcomes nation's lieutenant governors to Illinois

Written by Justin Stofferahn
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Conference to promote Illinois tourism, spotlight education and veterans issues

CHICAGO – July 17, 2012. Lt. Governor Sheila Simon will host the nation's lieutenant governors in Chicago this week as the National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA) convenes its 50th annual conference in Illinois.

Expected to generate over \$600,000 in hotel, transportation, restaurant and tourism revenue, 30 lieutenant governors and their staffs will meet at the Drake Hotel on Wednesday through Friday to identify policies that can improve college completion rates, link veterans to employment, increase access to locally grown food and combat domestic violence, among other issues.

Simon, the NLGA's Midwest Region Chair, and Governor Pat Quinn will conduct the conference's opening ceremonies Wednesday morning.

"I value this opportunity to showcase Chicago and share innovative strategies to grow our state and nation," Lt. Governor Simon said.

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Following Wednesday's opening remarks, Simon will introduce the conference's opening session on higher education. Jeff Mays, executive director of the Illinois Business Roundtable, and Dewayne Matthews, vice president of policy and strategy at the Lumina Foundation, will discuss higher education policies that can improve college certificate and degree completion rates and connect graduates to good-paying jobs.

Simon recently advocated for passage of legislation that aims to reduce remedial needs at colleges and universities by implementing the state's first math curricula for middle and high schools. The models should lead to more high school seniors enrolling in math courses that prepare them for college and careers. Building on this success, Simon is asking the NLGA to pass a resolution in support of state-specific solutions that will boost high school graduation and college readiness.

"America's lieutenant governors are making a difference and as we welcome them to Illinois, this is a wonderful opportunity to share best practices and develop solutions," Governor Quinn said. "We are grateful for our own Lt. Governor Sheila Simon, who is leading the way on education as she pushes to reach our goal of 60 percent graduates by the year 2025."

On Friday, Simon will moderate a discussion on the role states should play domestic violence prevention, and be joined by the Acting Director of the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, Bea Hanson. The Violence Against Women Act, which enhances the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women, is up for reauthorization before Congress.

Simon's office is piloting a program that connects domestic violence survivors in underserved areas with family law attorneys for free via Skype. The Virtual Legal Clinic currently operates out of shelters in Peoria and Jacksonville at no new cost to taxpayers and is expected to expand later this year.

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The NLGA is a bipartisan, nonprofit, professional organization for elected officials who are first in line of succession to the governors in the United States and five territorial jurisdictions. Since 2000, at least 20 lieutenant governors have succeeded governors, including former Lt. Governor and current Governor Pat Quinn. The NLGA last held a conference in Chicago 50 years ago.

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