

# Council Rooms, City of Rockford

2025-133-R

Rockford, Illinois

Date: June 16, 2025

By: Alderman April Prunty on behalf of the Legislative & Lobbying Committee

WHEREAS, the City of Rockford is a non-home rule community pursuant to the laws of the State of Illinois;

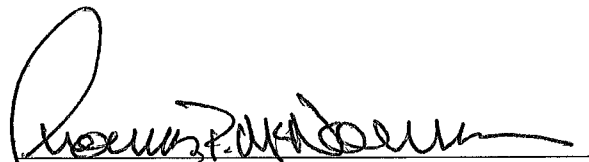
WHEREAS, as a non-home rule community, the City of Rockford lacks the ability to effectively govern in certain subject matter areas in which the State of Illinois has not expressly granted the City authority;

WHEREAS, the City of Rockford desires the ability to improve the lives of its citizens and to effectively govern in all necessary matters;

WHEREAS, the City of Rockford must, therefore, lobby the General Assembly of the State of Illinois, US Congress and State/Federal agencies for enabling legislation in those subject matter areas in which it lacks authority;

BE IT RESOLVED, THEREFORE, by the City Council of the City of Rockford:

In addition to other legislative matters, the items set forth in the attached memorandum shall remain a priority for the City of Rockford's federal and state lobbying efforts.

  
Mayor Thomas P. McNamara  
City of Rockford, Illinois

ATTEST:

*Angela L. Hammer*

ANGELA L. HAMMER, Legal Director  
*Ex Officio* Keeper of the Records and  
Seal of the City of Rockford, Illinois



Ayes: DURKEE, LOGEMANN, TUNEBERG, TORINA, PRUNTY, BEACH, SALGADO, MEEKS,  
BELL, BONNE

Nays:

Absent: FROST, WILKINS, HOFFMAN, (GRANATH was away)



## Memorandum

Date: June 2025

To: Sen. Stadelman; Sen. Syverson; Rep. West; Rep. Vella; Rep. Sosnowski; Rep. Cabello

From: Thomas McNamara, Mayor

Re: 2025 – 2026 City of Rockford Legislative Priorities

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Each year, the City of Rockford actively works with our partners in the Illinois General Assembly and US Congress to lobby on behalf of (or against) legislative matters that impact the City of Rockford.

The City appreciates that our State and Federal delegations work hard on behalf of the organization and our residents to pass legislation or advocate for funding that makes our community better for everyone.

Below is a list of legislative priorities for 2025 approved by City Council. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but is intended as a reference for legislation, funding opportunities, or projects that could benefit Rockford.

- **Federal Funding:** Funding pauses, shifts in federal priorities, and changes in grant programs, impact not just local governments, but also nonprofits, businesses, and, many residents who rely on these funds. The White House proposed budget for FY2026 calls for 23% discretionary spending cuts – or \$163B – accomplishing this through eliminating programs like Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) impacting Rockford funding for housing rehab, economic development, and public services, Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) removing anti-poverty funding managed by Health and Human Services and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) ending seasonal utility support for thousands of low-income households in Rockford.

Additional resources and services have already been impacted through Social Security Office, and access to healthcare and benefits.

- **Pensions & Property Tax:** Like all Illinois municipalities, Rockford is under increased pressure to meet its pension obligations, with **pension payments forecast to account for 100 percent of the City's operating tax levy by 2031.**

Although the recent consolidation bill provides some relief, larger cities such as Rockford will not see any substantial change in pension obligations without additional reforms. In fact, the reform may actually result in increased pension costs for the Rockford. City Council continues to advocate for pension reform aimed at relieving the taxpayers' burden without negatively impacting the retirement benefits earned by our City retirees. Rockford joins with the Illinois Municipal League (IML) in supporting their legislation to alleviate the pension funding burden by extending the amortization date for the public safety pension funds as well as lowering the required funding ratio to 80% for these funds. Rockford's pension obligations increase from \$26.7 million in 2023 to \$30.9 million in 2024 to \$34.6 million in 2025 (a 30% increase between 2023 and 2025). Without legislative intervention, Rockford's obligation will be a staggering \$67.6million in 2040.

- **Public Safety:** Public safety continues to be the number one concern among Rockford residents. Everyone in our community deserves to feel safe.

A) Domestic Violence. Domestic violence remains a leading contributor to all violent crime in Rockford. The City has been leading initiatives aimed at preventing and stopping the cycle of violence that has plagued our City. Rockford would benefit from legislation that would help provide funding for the Family Peace Center – a proven model to serve survivors and reduce homicides.

B) Juvenile Crime: Rockford continues to encounter high levels of serious juvenile crime. We need greater tools to identify high risk juvenile offenders and intervene to both prevent them from entering the court system and interrupt the pattern of increasingly serious offenses. In particular, we know that juveniles that are caught in stolen vehicles at an early age are far more likely to show a pattern of escalate to higher and higher violent offenses. This puts themselves and the community at risk of harm. We need reasonable changes in state law along with additional funding to provide these minors with appropriate services to stop the school to prison pipeline.

C) Emergency Response Costs: Rockford continues to see increased emergency calls for service year over year. Many of these calls for service are not “emergencies,” but are a result of individuals or entities utilizing ambulance transport for non-emergency related illnesses. Legislative fixes are needed to assist in driving down calls for service that are not bona fide emergencies. In particular, the Rockford Fire Department has seen an increase in calls for service to elder care facilities for “lift assist.” In these cases, patients have fallen and rather than have personnel help the patient up, these facilities call 911 to dispatch firefighter paramedics. The City supports legislation that would allow municipalities to recover the costs of “lift assists” from these facilities.

- **Mental Health:** Since the State drastically cut funding for mental health services several years ago, the burden has fallen to municipalities and underfunded non-profits. Additional State funded is necessary to address this issue. The City has had some success in this area. In 2023, the City successfully advocated for and the

General Assembly passed legislation (with advocacy from Rep. West and support from Rep. Vella and Sen. Stadelman) to allow the City to appoint two additional members to the Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board, which oversees the county-wide mental health sales tax and funding for dozens of mental health grants. However, additional State support is necessary to adequately address the mental health crisis facing our region.

- **Funding for Police Training:** The 2021 police reform bill contains sweeping mandates related to police training. The RPD has long called for additional training for its officers, especially related to mental health response (Critical Incident Training) and field training. However, training can be incredibly expensive. The City advocates that any training mandated by the State also include funding from the State so that the burden is not passed on to property taxpayers. .
- **Preservation of Local Government Distributive Fund Allocation; other funding:**

The City of Rockford uses various revenue sources to fund basic, essential services for our citizens. The primary components include property taxes, sales and use taxes, and our per capita share of the Local Government Distributive Fund from the State. After years of difficult cuts, tax and fee expansions, Rockford has been fiscally responsible in achieving balanced budgets in lean times. Rockford had a projected budget deficit for 2021 even before COVID and the related economic downturn occurred. Now, the forecast is even more challenging. Taking LGDF will certainly result in loss of jobs and critical services provided to our residents.

We often hear legislators talk about rising property taxes in the State of Illinois. Understanding the State of Illinois does not impose property taxes, fully funding LGDF is truly one direct way that the State can ensure we keep our property taxes competitive. While we understand the State is facing significant budget challenges of its own, reducing the local share of distributive funds will cause significant harm to the cities and villages providing core services.

Rockford has lost over \$120million in revenue due to the State cutting our share of LGDF.

In 2023, Rockford advocated for an increase in LGDG. The GA did increase income tax receipts going to the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF), which supports municipal operations. Beginning August 1, 2023, the local share of income tax receipts from individuals, trusts and pass-through entities increased to 6.47% (from 6.16%). This is the second increase in LGDF in as many years, which will result in millions of dollars in additional funding to support City operations.

In 2024, Rockford again advocated for an increase in LGDF, however the State did not approve the restoration of funds to municipalities., Rockford urges full restoration of LGDF to the historical 10% of all income tax collections. The State

has removed the grocery tax, creating a \$6 - \$8 million deficit annually the City will need to fill or cut expenses.

- **Capital Projects:** It is imperative that capital projects that are important to Rockford receive funding from the State. In addition to the State capital plan, the US Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in 2021, which will provide Illinois \$15 billion over five years for roads, bridges, airports, and public transit. Although many of these funds will be distributed via existing formulas, it is critical that Rockford receive its fair share from this significant influx of federal funds into our state.

The City Council encourages our state and federal delegation ensure that Rockford receive its appropriate funding. In addition, the City advocates to be included in the next round of the Connect Illinois program. The program was part of the Rebuild Illinois capital improvement program. Connect Illinois is about the right of all communities to access healthcare, education, and economic opportunity through digital connectivity.

A list of projects based on the approved CIP will be provided to our local delegation on approval of this memo.

- **Economic Development:** The City continues to advocate for opportunities to grow our local economy. Legislation and opportunities for job training, workforce development, and State/Federal resources to boost investment in our community must remain a top priority as we seek to attract and retain businesses. This includes ongoing support for the River Edge Tax Credit, which has been vital to the revitalization of Rockford's downtown, and was recently extended until January 1, 2027.

Working with a coalition of other municipalities and advocates, Rockford secured a five-year sunset extension for the Historic Preservation Tax Credit to the end of 2028. Further, the total maximum amount to be awarded under the Credit is now \$25 million per year.

The City is also advocating our delegation to protect against efforts to limit the effectiveness of Tax Increment Financing district, which are a major economic development tool. Over the last few years, some state legislators have filed bills to limit TIF extensions, to narrow the criteria under which TIFs can be used, and to give other local taxing bodies greater control over the use of TIFs, which we have successfully defeated thus far..

- **Blight Reduction, Property Standards, and Code Compliance:** The City has increased its efforts to combat blighted properties. Neighborhood blight leads to decay, decreased property values, and increases in crime. In 2024, the City has been successful in receiving \$XXXX dollars from Illinois Housing Development Authority to help fund middle housing rehabilitation. Mayor McNamara was on the Governor's Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee for Missing Middle Housing Solutions. As the State advances recommendations of the committee it will be important for the City to be included.

As a non-home rule municipality, Rockford does not have the same tools as our peer communities when it comes to addressing blighted properties and problem property owners and we need to rely more heavily on the Northern Illinois Land Bank. Funding of Land Banks on a greater level is needed and will further benefit our neighborhoods. Additional tools are needed, for example, to help prevent properties from falling into disrepair. The City continues to advocate for more legislative changes to help non-home rule municipalities address problem properties.

The City also supports additional funding for demolition and home repair programs for those properties that can be rehabilitated.

- **Unfunded Mandates & Local Preemption:** Each year, the Illinois General Assembly passes new laws that require significant investment to implement, but do not provide the required funding.

In 2024, the Illinois General Assembly proposed 277 bills with unfunded mandates.

These unfunded mandates strain municipal budgets and often lead to increased property taxes. Passing bills and then pushing off the obligation to pay for them onto tax payers is unfair.

In addition, the General Assembly has continued to pass legislation that preempts local control and erodes municipalities' ability to effectively legislate their own affairs. The assault on local control in effect creates a one-size fits all method of dealing with matters that are important to communities. Municipalities should have the ability to create solutions based on their own unique needs and circumstances.

The City supports legislation that would prohibit unfunded mandates from the GA and requests that our delegation advocate against any legislation proposing new unfunded mandates or legislation that preempts local control.

- **Funding for Lead Line Replacement:** The City of Rockford has been a leader in replacing lead service lines throughout the city. However, cost of replacing lead service lines can be burdensome on city resources and private homeowners. The Illinois General Assembly is encouraged to provide sufficient funding reduce the burden of complying with mandates for service line replacement.

In addition, Rockford advocates that the Federal government create a more equitable formula for distribution of funds for lead service line replacement. Illinois is forecast to have the 2<sup>nd</sup> most lead services lines to replace of any state in the country. However, Illinois does not receive the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest funding for replacement from the Federal government. The funding formula should be data driven and based on need.

Rockford, Illinois

Date: June 16, 2025

**RECOMMENDATION FOR RESOLUTION**

**TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROCKFORD:**

Council Members:

The Committee on Legislative and Lobbying having received a request hereby begs leave to report recommending **approval and confirmation** of the priority items for the City of Rockford’s legislative and lobbying efforts in the Illinois General Assembly.

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Aprel Prunty

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Kevin Frost

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Tim Durkee

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Gabrielle Torina

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Gina Meeks

Committee Action Taken: June 16, 2025

Prunty:	Ayes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nays: <input type="checkbox"/>	Absent: <input type="checkbox"/>
Frost:	Ayes: <input type="checkbox"/>	Nays: <input type="checkbox"/>	Absent: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Durkee:	Ayes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nays: <input type="checkbox"/>	Absent: <input type="checkbox"/>
Meeks:	Ayes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nays: <input type="checkbox"/>	Absent: <input type="checkbox"/>
Torina:	Ayes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nays: <input type="checkbox"/>	Absent: <input type="checkbox"/>