

On August 14, 2025, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed two new bills into law that will benefit and protect workers in Illinois: Illinois Senate Bill 1976, enshrining existing rights and safety protections for workers; and Illinois House Bill 1189, amending and expanding the scope of the Illinois Prevailing Wage Act.

## **SB 1976: Illinois Enshrines Worker Safety Standards at Risk of Federal Rollback**

Illinois SB 1976, the Workers' Rights and Worker Safety Act (passed as Public Act 104-0161), enshrines certain workplace safety standards, protecting them from future rollbacks or repeals at the federal level. The Bill prohibits any state agency from weakening protections for workers' rights or safety beyond the standards set by federal law, namely federal wage and hour law and federal coal mine safety law, as they existed on April 28, 2025. Thus, absent state law to the contrary, agencies cannot revise their rules to reduce worker protections below the federal baseline as of April 28, 2025.

Moreover, SB 1976 mandates that the Illinois Department of Labor (“IDOL”) must adopt and maintain any federal wage and hour, coal mine safety, or occupational health and safety standards that have been revoked or repealed at the federal level since April 28, 2025. This ensures that these protections remain active in Illinois regardless of federal rollbacks. With respect to OSHA health and safety standards, if the federal government rolls back or weakens any existing standards, IDOL is required to adopt those prior federal standards and apply them to all public-sector employees and employers in Illinois. If the federal government fully repeals any existing OSHA standards – meaning that there is no longer any federal standard in place dealing with a certain workplace hazard – then IDOL is required to adopt the prior federal standard and apply it to both public-sector and private-sector employees and employers.

To allow for enforcement, the Bill establishes a cause of action and penalties for violations. It also mandates that each state agency file an annual compliance report to the General Assembly detailing the agency's enforcement efforts and adherence to the law. State lawmakers passed SB 1976 in May 2025, with the Senate approving it on May 21 and the House on May 30. The Bill takes effect immediately upon being signed into law.

## **HB 1189: Illinois Expands Prevailing Wage Act to Federally Funded Projects**

Illinois HB 1189 amends the Prevailing Wage Act, 820 ILCS 130, to cover certain federally-funded construction projects. Specifically, the Bill expands the definition of “public works,” as used in Section 2 of that Act, to include federal projects administered by a public body, if the prevailing wage in Illinois is equal to or greater than the applicable prevailing wage determined by the U.S. Secretary of Labor. As a result, Illinois workers employed on federal projects that meet these criteria will be guaranteed the higher applicable wage rate, ensuring they receive compensation on par with, or exceeding, federal standards.

To align with this expanded definition, HB 1189 also amends Section 11 of the Act to specify that federal projects are subject to the Act when the criteria described in Section 2 are met.

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