

## In Focus

### ***In Focus: Welcome!***

Welcome to the sixth edition of *In Focus*, Vision for Illinois Agriculture's (VIA) periodic electronic newsletter. The goal of this newsletter is to keep you informed of VIA developments, and help your organization provide input to gain benefit throughout Illinois agriculture. Add our address to your email software to ensure consistent delivery! And please forward this newsletter to colleagues, or add addresses to the mailing list by emailing [abeasley@iffb.org](mailto:abeasley@iffb.org).

### **Illinois SmartAgenda® Spreads Message to Allies**

Members of the Business Climate team have been busy spreading the message of the Smart Agenda to several key organizations and individuals around the state. That message suggests a focus on a broad framework of issues to be addressed that would provide a more supportive business climate in the state to assure future economic prosperity. Some of the groups contacted include the Illinois Development Council, Illinois Business Roundtable, Illinois Chamber of Commerce, Illinois Manufacturers Association and Laborers International Union of North America. Response has been positive according to VIA Coordinator Vern McGinnis. "Most groups have asked what they can do to help," he said. "Discussions with other individuals and organizations around the state will be an ongoing effort in 2010."

### **Working to Increase Attention to Ag Sector Workforce**

Vision Workforce Development team members comprised about one-third of an agriculture sector-wide task force appointed by the Illinois Workforce Investment Board to work with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to increase attention and activity to assure an adequate and qualified workforce for the future of the agricultural industry.

The group met eight times from March to December and developed a report that described the workforce makeup of the industry, identified key workforce issues facing the industry and recommended initial strategies to address the issues. The report was accepted and approved by the Workforce Investment Board on Dec. 10. The report will be used by the DCEO to develop future work plans to address these key issues. A copy of the report can be found at [www.illinoisagriculturevision.org](http://www.illinoisagriculturevision.org).

The group also worked with Illinois Worknet to develop a new portal for Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources on their Key Industries website ([www.illinoisworknet.com](http://www.illinoisworknet.com), click on key industries). This website highlights five key industries in the state from a workforce perspective: Agriculture, Healthcare, IT, Logistics and Manufacturing. The website features career pathways and available positions throughout the state.

### **'Getting Back to Work' White Paper Advocates Streamlining Environmental Permitting Process**

Members of the Business Climate Task Force have focused their SmartAgenda® action items on streamlining the environmental permitting process in Illinois, and have created a white paper with specific recommendations on moving forward. The paper has been distributed to gubernatorial candidates in Illinois and outlines how the permitting recommendations for improvement could assist in job creation in Illinois. The five-item list includes: streamlining all environmental permitting processes; investigating rule permits for small emitters; developing online permitting tracking systems; developing an online permit application process; and reviewing the staffing and funding needs of Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) with the regulated community. In addition, members of the team are meeting with IEPA directly to influence reduction of time for permitting approval.

#### **Of note:**

*Randy Rollinson, LBL Strategies, has offered use of his software management program, MAPPWare, to help VIA measure progress toward goals and strategic themes.*

*Jeff Galle, John Woods Community College, plans to conduct a study on agriculture careers and education plans, interviewing current students enrolled in agricultural majors. The study, to be conducted in early 2010, will be similar to the one conducted at Illinois State University last spring.*

January 2010



### **Best Wishes for a Successful 2010!**

#### **Upcoming VIA Meetings**

VIA Planning Committee

Wednesday, January 27, 2010, 9 a.m., Illinois Farm Bureau Offices

For more information, please contact Chris Magnuson at [cmagnuson@iffb.org](mailto:cmagnuson@iffb.org) or

#### **Learn More!**

For more information about the Illinois Agriculture Vision, please visit our website at [www.illinoisagriculturevision.org](http://www.illinoisagriculturevision.org).

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