

# Illinois Extends Enrollment Deadline For Health Plans Beginning Feb. 1

**Expired federal subsidies cause significant price increases for millions of consumers**

by Jenna Schweikert, Capitol News Illinois  
Customers still shopping for health insurance coverage through Illinois' state-run marketplace now have more time to choose a plan.

Officials at Get Covered Illinois announced Monday they would extend the open enrollment deadline by 16 days. For coverage beginning Feb. 1, 2026, consumers must enroll by Jan. 31.

Independent from the federal marketplace at Healthcare.gov, Get Covered Illinois allows Illinois residents to shop for plans under the Affordable Care Act.

"We are seeing record numbers of customers finding more affordable coverage by taking the time to shop for and compare plans," Morgan Winters, director of Get Covered Illinois, said in a statement. "As a state-based marketplace, not only do we now have the authority to offer this special enrollment extension, but we also have more resources to support our customers in finding affordable health coverage options."

Federal subsidies enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic expired on Dec. 31, 2025. That has resulted in significantly higher premiums in 2026 for millions of consumers nationwide.

Data released by the federal government suggests that premium payments may more than double without the subsidies, according to analysis conducted by healthcare policy nonprofit KFF.

The U.S. House passed a bill with bipartisan support in January that would provide a three-year subsidy extension despite objections from GOP leaders, but it still must pass the Senate and receive a signature

from the president to become law.

To apply for a plan, Illinois residents can visit GetCoveredIllinois.gov or call the Customer Assistance Center at 1-866-311-1119 (TTY: 711).

Navigators and brokers across the state, available through Get Covered Illinois, provide free plan recommendations and guidance through the enrollment and application process. They are funded by grants from the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services and the Department of Insurance.

## Quick Hits: Illinois

**Two officer-involved shootings over weekend**

Illinois State Police are investigating two officer-involved shootings that happened over the weekend.

ISP says Springfield police attempted to conduct a traffic stop Saturday on Neil Road when four people with firearms exited the vehicle, shots were fired and one person suffered serious injuries.

St. Clair County deputies responded to a report of a domestic incident in Swansea Sunday morning when a subject displayed a firearm, one deputy discharged his weapon and the subject was injured. No officers were injured in either incident.

**Illinois near bottom for best places to retire**

A new list ranking the best and worst places to retire in 2026 has Illinois ranked ninth from the bottom.

CareScout compared nine data points across three categories: affordability, quality of life, and health care. Wyoming topped the list, followed by New Hampshire and Vermont. New Jersey ranked last, due to high costs of living and personal income tax burdens.

## Three Sheets in The Wind . . . by Mary

Go Bears! Anyone who knows me, is related to me or has passed by me in the grocery store knows I'm not a football fan. I don't watch it. I don't listen to it on the radio. I don't go out of town to sit on the bleachers to see it. On the other hand, I have to confess that I have never taken the time to understand the game. I guess it's best to say I don't understand it so I won't say that I don't like it.

If you are surprised that I said, "go Bears," don't be. I may not know the game, but I know it's the home state team and I'm home state loyal.

Apparently the game played Saturday night in Chicago was an important game, a playoff game, one more step to the BIG game and possible championship. Unfortunately, although it was televised, it was not televised to everyone. Only those who subscribe to Amazon Prime could actually see the game in real time.

Streaming, satellite viewing, channels that charge, this is the way of watching TV these days. I guess the channel that pays the most gets the biggest shows and events. Anyone remember "rabbit ears?" We thought we had it made when "cable TV" came on the scene. Not so sure now.

We're a few short weeks into the New Year, and I realize that since New Year's Day I've been

complaining about how fast the "2025 holiday" season was for me.

I have been feeling that I missed something.

I didn't. I had dinners with family Thanksgiving and Christmas. I saw beautifully decorated homes and businesses. I heard wonderful seasonal music, visited with friends and witnessed the community's generosity.

As if to let our little part of the world know that Christmas was near, Mother Nature gave us a beautiful snow which covered our grounds fit for a perfect Christmas Card. As I look back on the season, I know I didn't miss it. I simply added the two ingredients that this and every other event doesn't need. Worry and Impatience.

I worried that I had fixed enough food; as if one more dish on an already laden table would make a bit of difference. I wore myself out trying to decide what would be the perfect clothes to wear; as if my outfit mattered. I nagged about things that I wanted perfect when anyone with a clue knows nothing is ever perfect.

Oh, I was busy, busy, busy. And the next day, when the celebrations were over, did the worry and the impatience make any difference or make anything better? Not one bit.

My cheese ball was lumpy. I spilled coffee on my shirt. The crowd was gone when I final-

ly went for cookies and punch. I missed the Santa Claus Parade. I forgot to wear my fancy shoes and I didn't get to do much shopping, but in spite of me, it was a great holiday season.

I don't make New Year resolutions, but this year, 2026, I'm not going to impatiently worry the holidays away. I'm going to sit back and enjoy. Wish me good luck with that!

## Illinois Unemployment Rate Is Unchanged

The Illinois Department of Employment Security announced Tuesday that the state's unemployment rate was 4.4% in November, unchanged from September.

November's rate was down .05 percentage point from the same month, one year ago, based on data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Total nonfarm payrolls were down 0.2% in November.

## King Crossword — Answers

**Solution time: 22 mins.**

N	A	T	O		B	I	O		P	E	C	K		
I	D	A	R	E	Y	O	U		O	T	O	E		
L	O	S	E	S	Q	U	I		I	O	L	Y		
					G	A	B		L	E	N	S	E	
A	F	I	O	U		A	I	N	I					
U	D	O	N		O	M	N	I	B	U	S			
S	G	T		C	U	P	F	D		P	F	A		
Y	A	C	H	T	E	D		C	O	A	L			
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S	I	C	E	S	T	A		M	O	A				
E	H	I	C		G	I	V	E	S	O	U	I		
L	A	N	A		E	S	P	R	E	S	S	O		
A	S	S	N		O	C	S		D	E	A	N		



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## PETS OF THE WEEK

For more information call The A.R.K. 477 State Route 26, Lacon, at 309-246-4275, or email us at [arkanimalshelter@yahoo.com](mailto:arkanimalshelter@yahoo.com).





**Antea**  
This little punkin' is Antea and, at only four months old, she is 11 pounds of sweetness and fun. As a puppy she'll need all the puppy things: your time, patience, guidance, company and training. In return she will give you her lifetime of companionship and joy. She is spayed, micro-chipped and current on all her shots.



**Boots**  
Baby Boots was born in April 2025, so he is still just a kitten. Unlike his brother Boomer (who is entirely blue, and is also available), Boots is blue with his paws dipped in white. They like to pounce and play together and get along great with other kitties. They are also already neutered, micro-chipped and current on all their shots.

# Help Lacon-Sparland Ambulance Save Lives



Join us for a fun night to raise money for essential, up-to-date life-saving equipment for our dedicated Lacon-Sparland Ambulance Service! Your support ensures our first responders have the best tools ready when our community needs them most.

**CASH DONATIONS & RAFFLE ITEM DRIVE!**

We are seeking cash donations and donations of raffle items (baskets, gift certificates, merchandise, etc.) to make this our most successful event yet!

**To Donate Raffle items, please drop them off at the Lacon Ambulance Service or contact Kelsey Fitschen at (309) 472-7665 before the event.**



**WHISKERZ PUB, Lacon**  
**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 4:00**

**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

- ♦ **BINGO** will start at 5:00 p.m. and continue through the evening. Please join in at any time
- ♦ Play Bingo to help raise money and win fantastic prizes!
  - ♦ Raffle Drawings!
  - ♦ Pulled Pork and fixings until gone.

**YOUR DONATION DIRECTLY EQUIPS OUR AMBULANCES!**

Thank you for being a vital part of our life-saving team!  
If you would like to send a donation directly, please send to:

**Lacon-Sparland Ambulance**  
PO Box 52, 921 Fifth Street, Lacon, IL 61540

