

# Illinois Job Market Stalls, More Than 300,000 Left Looking For Work

By Glenn Minnis, The Center Square  
Illinois Policy Institute's Josh Bandoch points to Springfield when it comes to the state's outlier status on jobs, including the area having lost at least 100,000 posts over just the last six months.

New U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows the hard times left upward of 300,000 residents looking for work by the end of 2025, leaving roughly 1.4 workers competing for every job and making Illinois home to the seventh highest such ratio in the country.

"If you don't focus on having a pro-growth economy and a pro-growth yield code and a pro-growth fiscal structure, then you're not going to grow," Bandoch told The Center Square. "You're going to see businesses not grow as much here as they grow elsewhere and you're going to see that gap widen. You're going to see other places seem more appealing than Illinois. We can make different choices to create more opportunity, to create more jobs and create more growth."

With Illinois' workforce

shrinking by nearly 109,000 over a yearlong period ending in December 2025 and the state's labor force participation rate recently falling to 63.6, Bandoch worries the situation shows few signs of getting better anytime soon.

"Part of what's driving this is a challenging business environment, especially in Chicago, that's obviously a big driver of the Illinois economy" Bandoch said. "Businesses in Illinois are just highly regulated. Illinois is the fourth most regulated state and it has more than double the number of regulations on business or individuals in its legal code and it has more than eight times as many as the least regulated state. Over time that just catches up with you, catches up with businesses and individuals who want to create value and open businesses."

Bandoch points to the state's lingering outmigration issues and warns even more residents may be primed to leave if the state resists in making some of the kind of wholesale policy changes he feels are called for.

# Physicians Assistants Leave For Iowa Due To Licensing Wait Times In Illinois

By Jim Talamonti | The Center Square  
State lawmakers say physician assistants are leaving for Iowa because it takes so long to get licensed in Illinois.

Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation leaders discussed audit findings with members of the Legislative Audit Commission at the Illinois Capitol last week.

State Sen. Chapin Rose, R-Mahomet, said physician assistants recently told him they were going to Iowa to get licensed, because the process took six months in Illinois.

"That's six months of lost wages to those individuals. It's also six months of lost productivity to the state of Illinois. It's six months of lost tax revenues to the state of Illinois. If they go to Iowa, we'll never get them back. At the end of the day, it's six months of less health care to the constituents that we all represent," Rose said.

State Rep. Natalie Manley, D-Joliet, said she also met with the PAs.

"Is there anything we can do to think outside the box, like a tem-

porary license or something that can be issued so we don't lose this talent?" Manley asked.

IFPR Secretary Mario Treto Jr. said his agency is working to implement a new licensing system.

"The creation of a license for six months might create more work in terms of balancing the implementation of that new system that we might find resolution within those six months," Treto said.

Treto said he hopes to have the agency's new system for licensed professionals fully implemented by the end of the year.

Manley wondered how professionals in other states got licenses more quickly.

"Every state is different," Treto said.

Rose said he understood that Treto inherited a "heck of a mess" when he took over the agency in 2021.

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"I always wanted to be somebody, but now I realize I should have been more specific."

- Lily Tomlin

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## Fun Fact

The comet **31/ATLAS** is traveling through our solar system at a staggering 130,000 miles per hour, which is the highest velocity ever recorded for a solar system visitor. The gravitational "slingshot" effect (from stars and nebulae the comet passes) gives it added momentum, increasing its speed. No one knows where it has come from.

Sources: science.nasa.gov  
www.scientificamerican.com

## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Makes a choice
- 5 Pear-shaped fruit
- 8 "The Black Prince" author Murdoch
- 12 High point
- 13 Hostel
- 14 Central point
- 15 "Citadel" actress Chopra
- 17 Only
- 18 Brooch
- 19 Rappers' improvisations
- 21 Signaled "Hi!"
- 24 - Bator
- 25 Battery fluid
- 26 Female royal
- 30 Roulette bet
- 31 Carried on, as war
- 32 Pickles on "Rugrats"
- 33 Inmate
- 35 Chorus syllables
- 36 "I dropped the fruitcake!"
- 37 How distant stars shine
- 38 Politico Nancy
- 41 Parcel of land
- 42 Latin 101 word

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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51				52				53		

- 43 Archbishops, e.g.
- 48 Get overemotional
- 49 Slithery fish
- 50 Prime-time hour
- 51 Villa d' -
- 52 Tofu source
- 53 Bigfoot's cousin
- 5 Twain hero
- 6 Squid squirt
- 7 More knotted, as a tree
- 8 Harmonious
- 9 Leeway
- 10 Between jobs
- 11 Beholds
- 16 Help
- 20 Royal flush, e.g.
- 21 Get bent out of shape
- 22 Computer brand
- 23 Caesar's "I saw"
- 24 Implores
- 26 Primitive flutes
- 27 Wax-coated cheese
- 28 Ledge
- 29 Do in
- 31 Courts
- 34 Mollify
- 35 Lengthy list
- 37 - Perignon
- 38 Leaf
- 39 Flightless birds
- 40 Endure
- 41 Easter bloom
- 44 Classic car
- 45 Dead heat
- 46 Sinusitis doc
- 47 Six, in Sicily

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## COUNTY CLERK ANNOUNCES EARLY/ GRACE PERIOD VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Jill M. Kenyon, Marshall County Clerk, announced that eligible voters can vote early starting February 20th without having to offer a reason or an excuse for wanting to vote early.

The early voting law allows voters to cast a ballot.

Early voting will be conducted in the Clerk's office during regular business hours, weekdays.

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; excluding Holidays.

The law prohibits a person who voted during the early voting/grace period from voting at their regular polling place on March 17th, 2026. The votes cast during the early voting/grace period will be counted on Election Day.

Prior to 2006, voters who wanted to vote early had to request an absentee ballot and offer a reason such as being physically incapacitated or out of the county on Election Day.

The last day for voter registration is February 17th, 2026. (Excluding Grace Period)

Grace Period will begin February 18th through March 17th, 2026, in the office of the Marshall County Clerk & Recorder. You will need to bring 2 pieces of mail showing your current address as well a current driver's license, a state-issued ID card or another government-issued ID with a photograph.

For information about Early Voting or Grace Period, contact the Clerk's office 309-246-6325 Press 2 then 1 at 122 N. Prairie, PO Box 328, Lacon, IL 61540.