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### **ICC Holds Fourth Annual Supplier Diversity Policy Session**

CHICAGO – On Tuesday, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) held its fourth annual supplier diversity policy session to discuss and review Illinois utilities’ 2016 procurement activities and spend with women, minority and veteran-owned businesses.

“Embracing and encouraging diversity is a continuous effort, and one the Illinois Commerce Commission is proud to lead,” said ICC Chairman Brien J. Sheahan. “Governor Rauner has been a trailblazer in promoting diversity, and I truly believe diversity makes organizations fundamentally better. Today’s forum not only satisfies the legal requirement, but also presents an opportunity for us to hear personally from senior leaders on the topic of sustained and improved supplier diversity initiatives in Illinois.”

[Section 5-117 of the Public Utilities Act](#) requires gas, electric and water companies with 100,000 customers or more to submit to the Commission an annual report by April 15 on all procurement goals and actual spending with diverse businesses in the previous calendar year. The law also requires the Commission to hold an annual workshop on the state of supplier diversity to “collaboratively seek solutions to structural impediments to achieving stated goals.”

The session kicked off with remarks from ICC Commissioners and Illinois government officials who emphasized the importance of the state’s diversity initiatives. “We have seen that diversity brings a competitive advantage,” said Ennedy Rivera, General Counsel to Illinois Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti. “This is the primary reason for a direct focus on minority, women, disabled and veteran populations in the state of Illinois. Business diversity is good for everyone.”

State Representative Marcus Evans, Jr. applauded the Commission and the utilities for their efforts. “I strongly support any efforts made by businesses to help diversify the economy. I am excited to see that [stakeholders] have been striving to meet the goals set out by the legislature. It is always encouraging to see a piece of legislation affect real, positive, and lasting change for the people of our state.”

Supplier diversity advocates and business executives also contributed to the dialogue, offering remarks about their personal experiences working with utilities to improve supplier diversity. “Changing corporate culture is rarely, if ever, an easy thing,” said Beth Doria, Executive Director of the Federation of Women Contractors. “It is something that requires a firm commitment from the top, down. I believe the numbers that we have seen

reported the past few years have shown that there has been an earnest effort to provide procurement opportunities for diverse firms.”

The Illinois Utilities Business Diversity Council (IUBDC), a forum for best practice sharing and information exchange among Illinois utilities, also presented. “Over the past three year, IUBDC members have spent more than \$2 billion dollars with Illinois-based minority, women and veteran owned businesses, driving direct spend into the Illinois economy,” said Melvin Williams, President, Nicor Gas and IUBDC Chair. Williams shared the Council’s continued plans for improvement, including its 2017 strategic goals and initiatives.

During the afternoon session, Dr. Fred Coleman III, a neutral, third-party expert, provided an overview and assessment of the utilities’ reports, concluding significant progress in diversity utilization and spend initiatives had been made by all utilities. As a suggestion for continued improvement, Dr. Coleman discussed recommendations such as greater uniformity in reporting format and content, and a proposed future methodology through which the Commission could track and rate utilities’ performance.

Leaders from Illinois’ five largest regulated public utilities, Ameren Illinois, Commonwealth Edison (ComEd), Illinois American Water, Nicor Gas, Peoples and North Shore Gas then presented an overview of their individual company’s procurement goals and actual spending with diverse businesses during 2016, including outreach efforts, economic impact within diverse communities, the challenges faced and future plans for continued improvement.

The policy session ended with a roundtable discussion on current trends in supplier diversity, procurement challenges and triumphs, and best practices for increasing and sustaining the pool of qualified vendors.

Session speakers included State Representative Marcus Evans, Jr. (D-33); Marcos Peterson, Deputy Director of the Business Enterprise Program at the Illinois Department of Central Management Services; Eneedy Rivera, General Counsel to Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti; Melvin Williams, Senior Vice President of Southern Company Gas, President of Nicor Gas and IUBDC Chair; Dr. Fred Coleman, III, President of Coleman & Associates; Richard Mark, President of Ameren Illinois; Anne Pramaggiore, President and CEO of ComEd; Bruce Hauk, President of Illinois American Water Company (IAWC); and Charles Matthews, President of Peoples and North Shore Gas.

Presentations from the session are available on the Commission’s website [here](#).

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### ***About the Illinois Commerce Commission***

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is a quasi-judicial body made up of five Commissioners. Through its Public Utility Program, the Commission oversees the provision of adequate, reliable, efficient and safe utility services at the least possible cost to Illinois citizens served by electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water and sewer public utility companies. Through its Transportation Regulatory Program, the Commission oversees public safety and consumer protection programs with regard to intrastate commercial motor carriers of general freight, household goods movers, relocation towers, safety towers, personal property warehouses and repossession agencies. The Commission’s Rail Safety Program also inspects and regulates the general safety of railroad tracks, facilities and equipment in the state.

To learn more about the Commission, its offices and bureaus, click [here](#). If you are a consumer who needs help resolving a utility dispute call 800-524-0795 or file an online complaint [here](#). For a complaint related to transportation, call 217-782-6448.

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