

OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

Judy Baar Topinka is the seventh State Comptroller since the office was created in 1970 with adoption of the new Illinois State Constitution. Prior to 1970, the financial reporting functions of the state were the responsibility of the Auditor of Public Accounts, an office dating back to 1812 when Illinois first became a territory.

The Comptroller is the chief fiscal control officer for Illinois government, charged with maintaining the state's central fiscal accounts and ordering payments into and out of the appropriate funds. As part of pension reforms passed by the General Assembly in 2009, the Comptroller became a member of the Illinois State Board of Investment, which manages the pension assets of the General Assembly, Judges' and State Employees' Retirement Systems. The legislation also designated the Comptroller as chair of the State Employees' Retirement System Board.

The Illinois Constitution empowers the Comptroller to record transactions, pre-audit expenditures and contracts, issue financial reports and provide leadership on the fiscal affairs of the state. The office processes more than 16 million transactions annually, and serves as a "fiscal watchdog" to ensure that all state payments meet the requirements of the law.

The Comptroller's primary focus is the management of state funds — revenue receipts and spending. The office provides current and accurate fiscal information to the Governor, the General Assembly, local government officials and the public. In addition, financial impact analyses and other studies are published to assist the Governor and lawmakers in making better budget decisions.

Fiscal Leadership

The Comptroller's office provides meaningful and timely fiscal information to help state policymakers adopt effective policies. One measurement of the state's fiscal health is the rating issued by bond-rating companies. Key components of the bond rating are cash balances and outstanding payables. The Comptroller's office is involved in the management of both components as well as the approval of any short-term borrowing by the state.



Judy Baar Topinka was sworn in as State Comptroller in January 2011, becoming the first woman in state history to be elected to two constitutional offices.



Comptroller Topinka testifies along with state Senator Toi Hutchinson and Assistant Comptroller Steve Valasek on legislation to provide resources and counsel to small and minority-owned businesses.

The office continually seeks new ways to improve how it serves the public. Upon taking office, Topinka relaunched the Comptroller's website to include easy-to-access state financial records and reports, office program and service information, enhanced search capabilities and links to social network newsfeeds. In 2012, Comptroller Topinka set a new standard for state government transparency by unveiling *The Ledger*, an online financial database that allows taxpayers to click their way through everything from the state's daily receipts and bill backlog numbers to state agency budgets and expenses. The portal also provides a state employees database, allowing taxpayers to view all public salaries and recent additions to Illinois' payroll.

Comptroller Topinka's commitment to efficiency was demonstrated by her support of Direct Deposit legislation. Initiated by Topinka and overwhelmingly passed by the General Assembly, the legislation requires electronic deposits for those who receive frequent payments from the state, and ends the inefficient practice of sending low-dollar interest checks — sometimes literally for cents — from the state to its vendors. The legislation sets a minimum threshold of \$5 for any interest check issued. Interest checks for greater dollar values will continue to be made, ensuring that those most impacted by payment delays are appropriately compensated.

With a goal of developing a completely paperless structure, Comptroller Topinka is pioneering the integration of technology with the day-to-day operations of the office. Through those efforts, waste and duplication have been dramatically reduced. Ultimately, Topinka seeks to reduce the office's paper footprint 30 percent by 2014.

Financial Reporting

The Comptroller's office is required to report periodically on the fiscal status of the state to the constitutional offices and the General Assembly. At the end of each year, the Comptroller's office prepares an account of the state's financial affairs called the *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report*. The report is published according to generally

accepted accounting principles and standards set by the Government Accounting Standards Board.

The Comptroller's office also publishes *Fiscal Focus*, a periodic magazine containing updates of key state fiscal facts and in-depth articles about timely issues. The annual *Illinois Traditional Budgetary Financial Report* provides summaries of revenues, expenditures and year-end balances by fund and category. The *Tax Expenditures Report* highlights state tax incentives, while the *Fiscal Responsibility Report Card* provides an annual report on the financial status of local governments in Illinois. Other annual financial reports prepared by the office include the *Appropriation Report*; *Detailed Annual Report of Revenues and Expenditures*; *Fee Imposition Report*; *Public Accountability Report*; *Locally Held Funds Report*; and the *Long-term Obligations Report*. Since adoption of the Illinois State Collection Act of 1986, the Office of the Comptroller has published the *Receivables Report*, a compilation of the state's receivables and an analysis of debt-collection efforts by agencies and the Comptroller's office.

Illinois Bill Backlog Management

With Illinois consistently facing a multi-billion bill backlog, Comptroller Topinka implemented a policy of prioritizing payments for nonprofit and service agencies that addresses the needs of the state's most vulnerable residents. In summer 2012, Comptroller Topinka embarked on an "Illinois Has Heart" tour of the state's nonprofit agencies to raise awareness of the fiscal challenges facing service organizations. The initiative encouraged service organization leaders to immediately contact the Comptroller's office if they were on the verge of closing their doors or slashing services due to state payment delays.

Comptroller Topinka later launched the Illinois Nonprofit Advisory Council. Comprised of individuals and organizations dedicated to serving the state's elderly, youth, developmentally disabled and other populations, the council meets regularly with the Comptroller's office to identify solutions to the financial challenges facing nonprofit organizations.

Local Government Fiscal Accountability & Assistance

The Comptroller's office receives Annual Financial Reports, Audits and Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Reports from approximately 5,200 local governments, as required by state statute. The office uses the information to produce an annual Fiscal Responsibility Report Card for the legislature. In 2012, Topinka successfully advocated legislation requiring local governments to file reports electronically and implementing fines for late reports. The following spring, she successfully worked to pass similar legislation for TIF Districts. Through those and other outreach efforts, Comptroller Topinka successfully increased local government compliance in the first three years as Comptroller.

In October 2013, Topinka unveiled *The Warehouse*, an online portal that puts local financial information and reports at a single location for taxpayer inspection. *The Warehouse* allows users to "follow the money" and search for annual financial reports, annual audits and TIF reports on any local government unit in Illinois in real time. This financial data previously was available in print upon request.

Comptroller Topinka directed creation of the Illinois Local Debt Recovery Program. Authorized through legislation, the initiative allows the state to enter into partnerships with public entities to collect revenue owed to local governments. In the first two years of the program, nearly \$32 million was recovered for more than 80 participating local governments.



Comptroller Topinka and her staff donated school supplies to children at the State of Illinois Child Development Center in October 2012. The center provides nurturing and educational child-care services for families.

Pre-need Funeral & Cemetery Licensing

The Comptroller's office is most often associated with the state's fiscal matters. A lesser-known function is the licensure of certain private cemeteries that accept care funds, as well as businesses such as cemeteries and funeral homes that sell pre-need funeral goods and services to consumers. Although the Comptroller's office has limited authority involving the death-care industry, staff members are available to assist consumers through a toll-free hotline at 877-203-3401.

Public Accountability & Service

As part of her commitment to constituent service, Comptroller Topinka created the Consumer Affairs Division. The division serves as a resource for taxpayers by answering public inquiries regarding the Comptroller's office and state government services through a toll-free hotline at 855-IL-ASK-US (452-7587).

The division also operates the Check for Cash program, which assists taxpayers in determining if they are owed money by the state. Thousands of state checks payable to taxpayers go uncashed each year. Staff members are available to search for checks for individual taxpayers and put them on the path to reclaiming their money. In light of the recent economic recession, the division also provides "Take Charge Illinois" workshops throughout the state, advising taxpayers on how to regain fiscal stability.

Comptroller Topinka is committed to delivering the highest level of service to taxpayers and strengthening efficiency, transparency and accountability, both internally and throughout state government. From ground-breaking online transparency initiatives such as *The Ledger* and *The Warehouse* to creation of the Consumer Affairs Division, the Comptroller's office serves as a resource for Illinois citizens to access information at all levels of state government.

Comptroller's Staff Members



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