



**46th Annual Training Conference**

**IPELRA**

**Illinois Public Employer Labor Relations Association**

**October 19-22, 2025**

**Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa, Galena, IL**

*Changing  
Landscapes*

Join us for a powerful reset — connect, recharge, and lead with clarity as we navigate the changing landscapes of labor and local government. Galena awaits!



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**46th Annual  
Training Conference**  
October 19-22, 2025

# Conference Schedule

Sunday October 19	Monday October 20	Tuesday October 21	Wednesday October 22
<p><i>Arrive, check in, and get ready for an amazing conference experience!</i></p>	Registration Desk Open Daily		
	7:30-8:30 a.m. Breakfast	8-9 a.m. Breakfast	8-9 a.m. Annual Business Meeting with Breakfast Buffet
	8:30-9 a.m. Welcome and Introduction	9-10:30 a.m. Plenary Session	9-10:15 a.m. Closing Keynote
	9-10:30 a.m. Keynote Address		
	10:30-10:45 a.m. Break		10:15-10:30 a.m. Break
3-6 p.m. Conference Registration	10:45-12 p.m. Concurrent Sessions	10:45 a.m.-12 p.m. Concurrent Sessions	10:30-11:45 a.m. Concurrent Sessions
4-4:45 p.m. IPELRA Monthly Board Meeting	12-1 p.m. Luncheon	12-1:30 p.m. Awards Luncheon & Sponsor Recognition	11:50 a.m.-12 p.m. Raffle Drawing Win a FREE registration to 2026 IPELRA Conference, 2026 NPELRA Conference, and more! Must be present to win.
5-6 p.m. President's Welcome Reception (appetizers, refreshments)	1-2:15 p.m. Concurrent Sessions	1:30-2:45 p.m. Concurrent Sessions	
	2:15-2:30 p.m. Break	2:45-3 p.m. Break	
	2:30-3:45 p.m. Concurrent Sessions	3-4 p.m. Practitioners Roundtable	
6-8 p.m. NEW! IPELRA Game Night <i>Network, meet first-time attendees, and enjoy a casual night of games, food, and fun!</i>	6-9:30 p.m. Reception, Dinner, Entertainment, and FUN!	5-7 p.m. Reception in Dubuque (appetizers, refreshments)	<p><i>Leave refreshed, renewed, and eager to apply everything you learned at the conference!</i></p>



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# Registration

	<b>Register Before 9/15/2025</b>	<b>After 9/15/2025</b>
<b>Members</b> (and organizational associates of members)	\$495	\$595
<b>Retiree Members</b>	\$367	\$467
<b>Non-Member</b>	\$595	\$695
<b>Single Day</b> (Monday/Tuesday)	\$325/each (\$265/retiree)	
<b>Guest</b> (meals and events)	\$200	

Register online at:

<http://bit.ly/45Di0s1>

Register 5 people from the same employer, take \$50 off the 6th registration.



**Register Online**  
**By October 13, 2025**

Cancellations must be submitted in writing to [ipelra1978@gmail.com](mailto:ipelra1978@gmail.com) by October 13, 2025, to receive a refund. Cancellations received after October 13 and no-shows are non-refundable.

# Reservations

<b>Room Type</b>	<b>Rate/Night</b> (+resort fee, taxes)
Inn Room	\$179
1-Bedroom Villa	\$209
2-Bedroom Villa	\$279
3-Bedroom Villa	\$319
Contact Eagle Ridge for pricing and availability of other accommodation sizes and styles.	

Call Eagle Ridge Resort at

800-892-2269 by

September 23, 2025,

to make overnight reservations.



Refer to Group No. 69C3S0 to take advantage of these special room rates within IPELRA's reserved block.

Space is limited — the special conference rates may not be available after September 23, 2025.

## Recertification Credits Pending

**SHRM-CP<sup>SM</sup>/SHRM-SCP<sup>SM</sup>**

**12.75 Professional  
Development Credits**

**HRCI**

**12.75 Recertification Credit Hours**

**Attorneys**

**9 Continuing Legal  
Education Credits**

Final program numbers and sign-in instructions will be announced at the conference. Contact [ipelra1978@gmail.com](mailto:ipelra1978@gmail.com) following the conference to request a certificate of attendance for other CEU programs.



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# Monday, October 20



## 8:30-9 a.m. Welcome

Tameika Jones, IPELRA President  
Roxanne Bonner, NPELRA President



## 9-10:30 a.m. Keynote Address

### Life is Messy - Be Less Sucky: A Neuroscience Look at Showing Up Better in Times of Change and Uncertainty

**Dr. Steve L. Robbins**

Keynote Speaker, Author, Neuroscientist, Consultant  
Founder and Owner of [S. L. Robbins and Associates](#)

Life is messy. Change and uncertainty messes with our heads — and our behavior. Even the most seasoned professionals can find themselves overwhelmed, reactive, or just plain off their game when the ground beneath them starts to shift. That's not a character flaw. It's brain science.

In this engaging and science-rich keynote, Dr. Steve offers a powerful yet practical roadmap for navigating those messy moments. This keynote invites audiences to shift from reactive to reflective, from rigid to adaptive, from guarded to grounded. It's not just about coping with change — it's about showing up as someone others can trust, follow, and grow with when it matters most. And that starts in the brain.

Whether leading a team, navigating personal uncertainty, or just tired of feeling emotionally hijacked when life gets unpredictable, Dr. Steve will give you the tools to do better — to *be* better — to be less sucky.

# Session Tracks

**NEW** this year! Each breakout session includes a solutions track icon. Use these icons for an at-a-glance look to help you select the sessions that will maximize your conference experience!



**Growth & Leadership**

Personal and professional growth and organizational leadership principles.



**HR Practices**

Human resources laws and practices.



**Labor Relations**

Labor relations and collective bargaining.



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# Monday, October 20

## 10:45 a.m.-12 p.m. Concurrent Sessions



**Dr. Steve L. Robbins**  
Founder and Owner of  
[S. L. Robbins and Associates](#)



### **Life is Messy – Be Less Sucky: A Deeper Dive**

Take a deeper dive into the neuroscience of behavior patterns in uncertain times and learn skills to show up better and stay composed, curious, and connected in difficult and chaotic moments. Join Dr. Steve Robbins for an engaging breakout session expanding on the morning's keynote. Get ready to reflect, build your metacognitive skills, grow, and have fun!



**Abigail Rogers**  
Partner

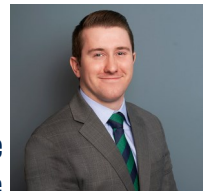
[Engler Callaway Baasten & Sraga, LLC](#)



### **Back to Basics: Clarifying Concepts Around Workplace Conflict**

Managing employees is challenging! Particularly when there is conflict. When workplace tensions flare, taking a step back to basics helps provide clarity for moving forward. This presentation explores definitions of basic concepts we hear in heated moments: "hostile work environment," "due process," "union rights." We will share tools managers have to respond to the underlying employee concern and help managers understand how to address legal risk.

**Ryan J. Gillespie**  
Associate



## 1-2:15 p.m. Concurrent Sessions



**Thomas Melody**  
Partner, [Klein, Thorpe & Jenkins](#)



### **The FLSA Revisited**

This seminar tackles key FLSA challenges in the public sector, including white collar exemptions, compensable time (like canine officer pay), and interactions with FMLA, PLAWA, and other leave laws. Gain tools to identify liability risks, manage enforcement, and stay ahead of recurring wage and hour issues affecting public employees.



**Jennifer Dunn**  
Partner



**Caroline Kane**  
Partner

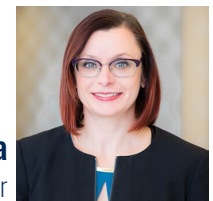
[Franczek P.C.](#)



### **Defending ULPs and Grievances**

Is that a grievance or ULP on your desk? How you respond – your research, evidence, and written reply – matters. This session covers strategies and timelines for defending grievances and ULPs under the Illinois Public Labor Relations Act, helping you achieve a successful outcome for your organization.

**Melissa Sobota**  
Partner



**Rachel Domash**  
Associate





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# Monday, October 20

## 2:30-3:45 p.m. Concurrent Sessions



**Yvette Heintzelman**

Member  
[Clark Hill PLC](#)



**Ann Everhart**  
[HR Consultant](#)



**Peter Berk**  
Senior Attorney  
[Clark Hill PLC](#)



**Pete Varney**  
Director of  
Transportation &  
Building Services,  
Facilities &  
Services

[University of Illinois,  
Urbana-Champaign](#)



**Jason Ensign**  
Director of Dining  
Services,  
University  
Housing



**Julie Dillard**  
Assistant Director  
for Labor and  
Employee Relations,  
Illinois Human  
Resources



### To Infinity and Beyond: The Changing Landscape of the Workplace in AI, DEI, Immigration, and ...

2025 has brought rapid workplace change with no sign of slowing. As the landscape around AI, diversity and inclusion policies, immigration, and more continues to shift, what challenges lie ahead—and how should employers respond? Join this engaging discussion for insights and strategies to stay competitive. Discover how your organization can innovate while maintaining consistency, morale, and compliance with evolving legal requirements.



### Strike Planning in Action: A Case Study on Operational Continuity

If a strike occurs, is your organization ready to respond? Gain firsthand insights from the University of Illinois bargaining team—featuring two management representatives and the chief negotiator—who played key roles during a recent labor strike. They'll share their experiences, challenges, and lessons learned throughout the negotiation and strike process. The session offers practical strategies for effective strike planning and response, with a focus on the critical roles of management and the chief negotiator.



## 6-9:30 p.m. Reception, Dinner, Entertainment, and FUN!

Join us for an unforgettable evening of connection and celebration! The reception begins with canapes and conversation, followed by a delicious local-flavors dinner. Then enjoy lively entertainment sure to spark laughter and fun. It's the perfect chance to unwind, reconnect with colleagues, and forge new friendships in a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. Don't miss this conference highlight!



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## 46th Annual Training Conference

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# Tuesday, October 21

## 9-10:30 a.m. Plenary Session



**Roxana M. Underwood**  
Partner, [Clark Baird Smith, LLP](#)



**Benjamin E. Gehrt**  
Partner, [Clark Baird Smith, LLP](#)



### Current Bargaining Trends and Developments

The landscape of collective bargaining and negotiations is evolving rapidly. IPELRA's General Counsel Roxana Underwood, along with Ben Gehrt, partners at Clark Baird Smith, LLP, will discuss current trends to watch for in collective bargaining and interest arbitration. This session will help you stay up to date on the latest laws and practices to help you navigate the dynamic landscape of labor relations in the municipal arena.

## 10:45 a.m.-12 p.m. Concurrent Sessions



**Margaret Sewell**  
Partner, [Clark Baird Smith, LLP](#)



### Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes: All the Basics for Addressing Your Employee's Workplace Safety and Health Complaints

What should you do when an employee raises a safety or health concern? This interactive session will walk you through how to respond quickly and effectively, from identifying reliable resources to addressing (abating) potential violations. You'll also gain practical guidance on handling employee complaints to Illinois OSHA—whether you're asked to conduct your own investigation or prepare for an on-site inspection. Real-world examples and audience participation will bring it all to life.



**Keri-Lyn J. Krafthefer**  
Equity Partner, [Ancel Glink](#)



### CBA Language Tricks and Traps

"That's not what we meant by . . ." After the collective bargaining agreement is settled, how many times have you said or heard that phrase? In this engaging session, you'll learn about common — and some not so common — collective bargaining agreement (CBA) language tricks and traps, as well as strategies to avoid them and develop shared understanding of CBA language.



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# Tuesday, October 21

## 1:30-2:45 p.m. Concurrent Sessions



**Kimberly Stevens**

Executive Director

[Illinois Labor Relations Board](#)



**James Arndt**

Owner, [Arndt Municipal Support, Inc.](#)



### Labor Board Trends

Are you curious about labor relations trends statewide? Join Kimberly Stevens, Executive Director of the Illinois Labor Relations Board, for insight into ILRB trends, and learn the nuts and bolts of ILRB processes for certification petitions and unfair labor practices.



### Hiring Veterans - A Field Guide

Veterans continue to serve in civilian public sector careers, and you want to hire them! But do you know how to effectively reach prospective veteran candidates? Can you translate a military resume into your organization's context? Can you identify the core skills used in a military position that will translate to a civilian role? Learn practical, actionable tips to help you better answer these questions and more, and get equipped to build your veteran recruitment strategy.

## 3-4 p.m. Practitioners Roundtable



Join practitioners and colleagues for a roundtable discussion about developing productive labor-management relationships, including insights into building the relationship, what makes for a successful relationship, handling strains in the relationship, and more! Practitioners will facilitate small group conversations in these dynamic and important conversations!

## 5-7 p.m. Adventures in Networking



**Buses leave Eagle Ridge at 4:25 p.m. and return at 7 and 9 p.m.**

Venture across the Mississippi to the historic [Millwork District](#) in Dubuque for an evening of networking at [Backpocket Dubuque](#). Enjoy light food, a variety of beverage options, duckpin bowling, shuffleboard, retro arcade games, and more! After networking, enjoy dinner in one of the many [nearby restaurants](#) if you wish. RSVP at registration.





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# Wednesday, October 22



### 8-9 a.m. Annual Business Meeting with Breakfast Buffet



### 9-10:15 a.m. Closing Keynote

### Thriving in Times of Change: Building Resilience, Agility, and Clarity in Unpredictable Environments

**Dr. Susy Francis Best, PsyD, MBA**

President and Founder, [Thrive Group International](#)

In today's rapidly changing world, HR leaders must navigate both external volatility and internal pressures with resilience and clarity. This keynote offers practical strategies to lead through uncertainty, build supportive systems, and foster trust, collaboration, and innovation—especially in unionized public environments. Attendees will gain actionable tools to strengthen leadership capacity, reduce confusion, and guide their teams through complexity with confidence, adaptability, and a renewed sense of strategic direction.

## 10:30-11:45 a.m. Concurrent Sessions



**Dr. Susy Francis Best, PsyD, MBA**

President and Founder, [Thrive Group International](#)



#### Thrive: A Deeper Dive

Join Dr. Susy Francis Best for an in-depth conversation on thriving in times of change and strategies to build personal and team resiliency. Building on her keynote presentation, Dr. Best will continue exploring strategies to create high-performing teams in the face of rapid and unpredictable change.



**Roberta Holzwarth**

Chair, Employment & Labor Group

[Holmstrom Kennedy](#)



#### Managing Leaves of Absence: FMLA, ADA, PWFA & Beyond

Illinois public employers must provide job-protected leave under a range of intersecting, overlapping, and distinct laws: FMLA, ADA, Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, Illinois Human Rights Act, VESSA, Paid Leave for All Workers Act, ISERRA, and USERRA. Compliance can be complex and confusing. This session offers tips and best practices for recognizing leave requests, processing them, managing intermittent leave, and handling extended leaves and return-to-work issues.



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*Thank you to our sponsors, who made this conference possible!*

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