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Leaders Across the Region Address Changing Economy

Community Forum to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the region.

Macomb, IL (Friday, September 21) –Western Illinois faces significant economic changes that most of the state and nation are grappling with. These changes include a shrinking manufacturing base, a growing low-wage service sector and a demand for a skilled workforce in critical sectors.

The Forum, *State of Working Illinois: Challenges and Opportunities*, is being held at the City Hall Community Room located at 232 East Jackson Street in Macomb on Friday, September 28 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and is a collaborative effort between the Workforce Investment Office of Western Illinois, the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability and the Illinois Works for the Future Campaign.

Mick Wislead, Mayor of Macomb and Chair of the Chief Elected Official Consortium of Western Illinois commented, “The economic vitality of Western Illinois is a priority and we look forward to hearing the details of this report and the opportunity to discuss and selectively address these concerns.”

In addition to bringing together key leaders in the region, the Community Forum will also feature information from *The State of Working Illinois* report, authored by the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability and Northern Illinois University, which, for the first time in Illinois, tracks economic and workforce trends across regions and throughout the state.

Since 2001, the West Central Region lost a staggering 4,447 manufacturing jobs. That’s a decline of over 32 percent of all manufacturing jobs in the area.

These economic trends are not unique to Western Illinois. From 1990 to 2005, Illinois lost 24.3 percent of its manufacturing jobs while three service industries (professional and business services, education and health services, and the leisure and hospitality industry) registered a 37.1 percent increase. All three of these high-growth service sector jobs pay less than the jobs being replaced.

“Illinois, a large, affluent state overall, has seen its economic competitiveness erode significantly over the last 15 years,” said Ralph Martire, of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability. “Based on current trends, this downward spiral is projected to continue, unless the state takes a thoughtful, bipartisan approach to economic and workforce development.”

The *State of Working Illinois: Challenges and Opportunities* will discuss issues of education and training, job quality and workforce well-being, and opportunities to work together in new ways in an effort to ensure that the West Central Illinois region has skilled workers, a strong economy and thriving community. The *State of*

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The forum co-sponsors include the *Workforce Investment Board of Western Illinois*, *Chief Elected Officials Consortium of Western Illinois*, *The Center for Tax and Budget Accountability* which is a non-partisan 501(C)(3) non-profit research and advocacy think tank that promotes fair, efficient and progressive tax, spending and economic policies, *Illinois Works for the Future* which is a shared project of the Chicago Jobs Council, the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability and the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. The campaign proposes to leverage state funds and workforce and economic development policy changes to benefit underserved communities and strengthen Illinois' economic competitiveness.

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