

*Illinois Chamber of Commerce*

# INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COUNCIL

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The Illinois Chamber of Commerce launched the International Business Council (IBC) initiative in May 2013 to take a leadership role in international trade and increase Illinois business' import-export trading capabilities. Since then, the IBC has helped companies access, develop and implement international growth strategies and designed a "soft landing" strategy to bring foreign-based business to Illinois.

## ILLINOIS IS GLOBAL

With 80% of the world's purchasing power and 95% of its customers outside our borders, the global opportunities for Illinois companies to expand their customer base into international markets are vast. As the Chamber understands this is critical to its members and the future economic health of the state, the IBC works towards securing these opportunities for our companies through expanded partnerships, promotion of trade agreements, and a stable legislative environment that facilitates the movement of money, people and goods in the global economy.

## TRADE SERVICES

The IBC offers customized outbound and inbound trade services to develop and implement company-specific global strategies. Making Global Local and A.C.E. programs provide member companies select access to trade and investment leads as well as to large scale procurement opportunities through IBC's exclusive partnership with the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) and special connections with selected countries. The IBC Soft Landing Program facilitates foreign companies' establishment and presence in Illinois through our Doing Business in U.S. mentorship program, FDI support and industry referrals, and marketing programs.

### PROVIDING VALUE

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*Maxton International has only recently become a member of the IBC and the connections we have made already have far exceeded our expectations. Maxton has a deep understanding of all the member's capabilities and has done an amazing job of introducing Maxton to key members of various consulates and companies who have offered us new contacts. We are looking forward to continuing to grow our relationship with the IBC.*

*Matteo Lombardi  
Maxton International*

## **ADVOCACY**

The IBC provides a forum for members to better understand, develop and promote constructive federal, state and local public policies that are key to the advancement of international commerce. With a strong pro-trade agenda, the IBC has delivered ongoing support to multiple international initiatives to include immigration reform, Trade Promotion Authority, Trans Pacific (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnerships (TTIP), reauthorization of the Export Import Bank's lending authority, and expanding Illinois-Cuba trade relationships. IBC's most successful forum is The Langham Briefs: a series of country-focused economic talks on trade and investment with international high-level officials and executives.

## **CONNECTIVITY**

IBC's exclusive partnership with the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) to introduce foreign buyers to U.S. solutions made in Illinois is an example of how building key partnerships is crucial to open new markets. In a similar manner, IBC's strategic relationship with individual countries provides exclusive access to import, export and investment opportunities and information on market entry, industry practices, procurement and FDI incentives. As a result of these national and international partnerships with government agencies and business organizations, IBC helps members to enlarge their professional networks, establish and/or strengthen their presence abroad, and foster general trade and international commerce.

## **GLOBAL PARTNERS**

The IBC global network of partner organizations include:

**U.S. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (USTDA)**

**U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INTERNATIONAL DIVISION**

**U.S. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COALITION**

**BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING**

**US-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**AMERICA-GERMAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE**

**CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMISSIONER'S ASSOCIATION**

**UK TRADE & INVESTMENT**

**ENTERPRISE IRELAND**

**HONG KONG TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

**TAIPEI ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL OFFICE**

**PROMEXICO**

**PROEXPORT COLOMBIA**

**TRADE COMMISSION OF BRAZIL**

**ILLINOIS CUBA WORKING GROUP**

**ILLINOIS DEPT. OF COMMERCE & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

**SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL**

**KELLOGG SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**



### **LAURA ORTEGA**

Laura Ortega is the IBC's executive director. She is an EU attorney licensed to practice in Madrid with expertise in government relations and international public policy. Formerly with the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Laura served in the Legal Office for Consular Affairs and the Consulate General of Spain in Chicago. She also holds a master's degree from the Diplomatic School of Madrid.



## ILLINOIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### International Business Council Priorities:

- Supporting federal passage of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) remains important
- Ensuring the Export-Import (Ex-Im) Bank has the authority it needs for trade
- Continue working on Cuba-Illinois relations

The TPP is a potential trade agreement between the U.S. and a dozen Asian countries that would eliminate 18,000 tariffs on American-made goods, increase import of certain products and services and standardize a number of trade areas between them to include competition with state-owned enterprises, digital commerce and trade, IP rights, investment, labor and environmental rules. Later this year, the U.S. Congress is expected to take up the TPP in an up or down vote, which is the result of actions taken by Congress in 2015 that allowed Pres. Obama to negotiate the TPP in good faith.

The Illinois Chamber supports the TPP as trade with those dozen countries represents nearly 40 percent of the world's gross domestic product and supports millions of jobs across the U.S., including many here in Illinois. There are efforts taking place across the country led primarily by organized labor to tank the support of TPP due to what is perceived as an unfair agreement. However, signing the TPP will ensure that a large block of Asian countries establish labor standards similar to the U.S. and promote trade with us as opposed to China.

The Illinois Chamber and a number of our members worked tirelessly to ensure that the Ex-Im Bank was reauthorized in 2015. While our efforts were successful, the Ex-Im Bank is currently unable to complete its mission of providing loans for trade due to vacancies on its board. These vacancies require U.S. Senate confirmation and a number of Republicans remain committed to killing the Ex-Im Bank through any means necessary. As a result of these actions, hundreds of small and medium businesses across Illinois are unable to take advantage of its services and compete with businesses from one of the dozens of countries who can take advantage of their similar entities. We are working to ensure that the Senate confirms members of the board as soon as possible.

Over the last year the Illinois Chamber and our members have had the opportunity to participate in several trade missions to Cuba, which has only recently been opened up to American businesses. Illinois businesses were instrumental in opening up Cuba to trade through corn and soybean exports that originated here. While the door has been opened, a number of steps remain to be taken. We are continuing our efforts to ensure that Illinois businesses are in a strong position as Cuban-American relations continue to thaw.