



WORKERS' COMPENSATION

AND SAFETY CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 6, 2025

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Speakers



Dr. Bogdan Savych

Senior Policy Analyst, Workers Compensation Research Institute

Dr. Savych analyzes issues related to labor and health economics, dispute resolution, and the design of income benefit systems. He currently conducts research that examines self-reported outcomes of injured workers and adequacy and efficacy of workers' compensation benefits. His research also explores the role of provider choice policies in worker outcomes and compares payments for ambulatory surgery centers across states. In addition, he examines the performance of the workers' compensation system in Virginia as part of the CompScope™ benchmarking studies. Dr. Savych received his Ph.D. from Pardee RAND Graduate School.



Adam Cox

Partner, Nyhan, Bambrick, Kinzie, & Lowry, P.C.

As a Partner with Nyhan, Adam Cox's (he/him) practice primarily focuses on workers' compensation trial defenses but it quickly expands in scope. Adam is a seasoned trial attorney, representing the interests of employers throughout Illinois for over two decades. He prides himself in handling complicated and high-exposure claims, while tailoring his skills to the unique demands, goals, and priorities of each client and situation.

In addition to his law practice, Adam also serves as the Executive Director of the Illinois Self-Insurers' Association (ISIA), playing an integral role in directing "the voice" of Illinois self-insurers and businesses in workers' compensation matters.



Lisa Azoory-Keller

Partner, Nyhan, Bambrick, Kinzie, & Lowry, P.C.

Lisa Azoory-Keller (she/her) concentrates her practice exclusively on workers' compensation matters with a passion for representing employers across the state of Illinois. Lisa has extensive trial experience, enjoys tackling complex cases, and values learning about developing areas of workers' compensation law. She has more than a decade of experience defending employers, and has also represented an injured worker at her former firm. Lisa's former experience as a petitioner's attorney has given her unique insight into the motivations of injured workers and attorneys, which aids in her defense strategy.



John Campbell

Partner, Keefe Campbell Biery & Associates

John Campbell received his JD from Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1999 and co-founded the Keefe, Campbell, Biery & Associates firm in 2003. John's area of concentration is in workers' compensation as well as employment and OSHA citation defense. John enjoys teaching as an adjunct professor of workers' compensation law as well. JD from Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1999 and co-founded the Keefe, Campbell, Biery & Associates firm in 2003. John's area of concentration is in workers' compensation as well as employment and OSHA citation defense. John enjoys teaching as an adjunct professor of workers' compensation law. In addition to

his work as a courtroom litigator, John is also an adjunct law professor and regular speaker regarding workers' compensation and employment law issues.



Kevin Deuschle

Vice President, IFMK Law

Kevin J. Deuschle joined IFMK Law from Inman & Fitzgibbons (I&F) where he was a Partner, Shareholder, and member of the Executive Committee. He was also and remains Chair of the firm's Client Education Committee and Information Technology Practice Management group, including the Committee on Digital Ethics.

Kevin is primarily known for his Workers' Compensation Defense practice, representing insurance carriers, self-insured businesses, risk management associations, third-party administrators, and municipalities in industries that include transportation, health care, food service, and

manufacturing. He is also an experienced litigator who has consulted with clients on risk management and employment issues, enforcement of clients' subrogation rights, Medicare Secondary Payer compliance issues and matters related to general insurance defense.



Joseph Belmonte, C.R.C.

President, Vocamotive, Inc.

Joseph Belmonte is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Certified Ergonomics Assessment Specialist, and Founder and President of Vocamotive, Inc.

Vocamotive is a dedicated vocational rehabilitation counseling firm serving the Illinois Worker's Compensation community for more than 30 years. Vocamotive provides vocational evaluation, rehabilitation and expert witness services in Workers Compensation, Personal Injury, Family Law (Divorce), Education (Special Needs Students), and Employment Law.



Brian Weitzman

Senior Vice President, Marsh

Brian Weitzman is a Senior Vice President and client advisor, managing the Alternative Credit Solutions team within Marsh's Credit Specialties division. In this role, he provides solutions for complex, non-traditional credit risks to solve issues including, but not limited to regulatory capital requirements, collateral requirements, securitization and enterprise risk management. Brian and the team also provide credit risk consulting services to several clients through ongoing credit monitoring and analysis of their portfolios, utilizing rating agency probability of default models and credit market research to help clients reduce potential losses and more quickly detect risks.



Michael J. Brennan

Chairman, Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission

Michael J. Brennan was appointed as Chairman of the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission by Governor JB Pritzker in 2019. On March 13, 2023, he was reappointed as Chairman, by Governor Pritzker. He previously served as a Public Member Commissioner from 2013 to 2018.

As Chairman he has executed procedural changes leading to the creation and implementation of a paperless filing system for the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission, as well as a virtual process for the appearance of parties at monthly status calls and pre-trial hearings.

Mr. Brennan earned both his Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctorate Degrees at De Paul University. He has practiced law in Illinois and has litigated numerous cases reported by the Illinois Appellate Court, the Illinois Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court. From 1991 through 2013, Mr. Brennan was engaged in a private law practice, with an emphasis on Workers' Compensation. Previously, he served as an Illinois Assistant Attorney General, from 1977 through 1991, where he prosecuted Civil Revenue and Criminal Medicaid Fraud cases, before becoming the Chief of the then Industrial Commission Division.

He was among the principal authors of Larson's Illinois Workers' Compensation Handbook and published numerous articles dealing with Illinois Workers' Compensation issues for Quinlan's, Thomson West and Reuters. He has been qualified and testified as an expert on Workers' Compensation matters and has lectured extensively on the topic. He has been elected by his peers as a Martindale-Hubbell Rated AV Preeminent Attorney for over Twenty Years, an Illinois Super Lawyer, an Illinois Leading Lawyer, named as among the Best Lawyers of America and among the Top Attorneys in Illinois by Chicago Magazine. In March of 2024, he was inducted as a Fellow of the College of Workers' Compensation Lawyers. He is a member of Chicago Bar Association and Workers' Compensation Lawyers' Association.



Raychel A. Wesley

Commissioner, Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission

Raychel A. Wesley has served with the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission since her appointment in 2020. She received both her undergraduate degree and law degree from DePaul University. Her initial role at the Commission was as an Arbitrator, and she received her appointment to Commissioner in 2024.

Early in her legal career, Wesley experienced a memorable encounter with a senior attorney who angrily declared that she had not been designated to "carry the moral scepter" for the firm. This striking phrase left a lasting impression on her, and years later, she finds it both amusing and fitting that she now wants to tackle the not-so-user-friendly subject of civility.

Her background includes many years practicing as a workers' compensation attorney and domestic violence attorney, as well as 20 years working for a prestigious workers' compensation firm. Ms. Wesley is married to her best friend, John, and lives in the southwest suburbs.



Dr. Leon Benson

Chief Medical Officer, Illinois Bone & Joint Institute

Dr. Leon S. Benson began his medical career in Evanston, Illinois, the town where he was born and raised. After graduating as valedictorian of his high school class, he continued as a chemistry major at Northwestern University. In 1981, he began medical school at Northwestern University in downtown Chicago and completed a five-year residency in orthopedic surgery at Northwestern before pursuing an extra year of specialty training in hand and upper extremity surgery at Harvard. Dr. Benson has worked for Illinois Bone & Joint Institute since 1991 and currently resides as the Chief Medical Officer.

He has additionally been active in clinical research relating to hand surgery. His scholarly production includes more than 20 articles in peer-reviewed journals, a single-authored text on teaching orthopedics, ten book chapters, and more than 40 scientific presentations to national audiences. Dr. Benson also serves as an associate editor for The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery (American Volume), and he writes a regular column for a national hand surgery newsletter. Dr. Benson does academic consulting work for the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery by writing questions for the national certifying examination in orthopedic surgery as well as for the certifying examination in hand surgery. He currently holds the rank of Professor of Clinical Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.

Dr. Benson spends much of his free time training his Portuguese Water Dog, Cruise. In addition to training his owner, Cruise participates in the sports of dog agility, obedience, water work, lure-coursing, and also works in the clinical setting as a certified therapy dog.



Ramiro Hernandez

Executive Director, Tax Institute & Municipal and County Affairs, Illinois Chamber of Commerce

With over 10 years of legislative, public policy, and communications experience at the City of Chicago, Cook County, and State of Illinois levels of government, Ramiro has developed, shaped, and advocated for pro-business legislation in the areas of economic development, finance, tax law, labor law, workforce development, healthcare, energy, and education. Prior to joining the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, Ramiro served as the Director of Government Relations and Public Policy for the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce where he helped lead the advocacy efforts of the regional Chamber, representing the interests of chamber members of every size, sector, and industry in the Chicagoland region before Chicago's City Hall, the Cook County Board of Commissioners, and the Illinois General Assembly. Ramiro has also held the position of Senior Legislative Analyst for the legislative staff of former Illinois House Minority Leader, Jim Durkin, working as the lead staffer on taxation, revenue, and labor issues. Ramiro earned his bachelor's degree in history from DePaul University in 2014. Ramiro was born and raised in Chicago where he currently lives with his wife, Alyson.



William A. "Bill" Lowry

President and Shareholder, Nyhan, Bambrick, Kinzie, & Lowry, P.C.

Bill Lowry is president of Nyhan and is responsible for law firm policies, hiring, financial planning, attorney education, and strategic planning. He concentrates his trial and appellate practice on Workers' Compensation and Employer Liability on behalf of self-insured and insured businesses. He collaborates with members of the business caucus and members of the General Assembly in Springfield to draft workers' compensation legislation. Committed to growing the communities of Chicagoland, including the legal community, Bill is a sought-after speaker and board member. Bill also publishes on topics germane to his practice and to the community at large.



State Senator Chris Balkema

Illinois Senator, 53rd District

Senator Chris Balkema was sworn into office in January 2025. Before joining the Senate, he served on the Grundy County Board, where he chaired the body since 2016. Senator Balkema spent 31 years at Caterpillar, where he held leadership roles in Human Resources, Operations, Logistics, and Purchasing. Beyond his professional career, he has contributed to local and educational initiatives, serving on the Grundy County Economic Development Council and advising Taylor University's Business Advisory Council.

Senator Balkema earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Systems from Taylor University and an MBA from Bradley University. He and his wife reside in Channahon and are the parents of two sons.



State Representative Joyce Mason

Illinois State Representative, 61st District

Representative Joyce Mason has served in the Illinois House since 2019, representing the 61st District in Northern Illinois. A member of the Labor and Commerce Committee and former human resources consultant, she brings extensive experience in workplace policy and compliance.



State Representative Dan Ugaste

Illinois State Representative, 65th District

Representative Dan Ugaste was first elected to the Illinois House in 2018. He represents the 65th District, which includes the far western suburbs of Chicagoland, including the areas in and around Campton Hills, Elburn, Elgin, Geneva, Lily Lake, South Elgin, St. Charles and Wayne.

Ugaste is a former shareholder and attorney at the firm of Nyhan, Bambrick, Kinzie and Lowry, specializing in workers' compensation defense and other relation litigation. He works every day to protect businesses from over-zealous advocates in the court system and against a system of

regulations and red tape that hamper efforts to create their product, deliver a valuable service and provide good paying jobs for workers and their families.