

Quinn: Illinois workers' comp rates to fall 5.5 percent in 2015

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It looks like workers' compensation insurance rates — a key item for many Illinois employers, particularly manufacturers — will be dropping 5.5 percent next year.

Gov. Pat Quinn is set to announce this evening that the 5.5 percent cut in rates is being recommended by the National Council on Compensation Insurance, which annually reviews payments and fees and proposes new premium figures.

If enacted, the reduction would be the third in a row since **workers' comp reforms were enacted in 2011** and would represent a cumulative 18 percent cut since then, according to the Quinn administration.

"We've been getting the job done on workers' compensation reform and now that reform is generating hundreds of millions in dollars in dividends for Illinois businesses and workers," Mr. Quinn said in a statement. "Illinois is making a comeback and historic reforms like these will keep it going strong, driving our economy forward."

Illinois Manufacturers' Association President Greg Baise was considerably more restrained but still welcomed the news.

"More work needs to be done," said Mr. Baise, whose organization has become a major supporter of GOP gubernatorial nominee Bruce Rauner. "We applaud this news, but rates need to come down more if Illinois is to be competitive with competing Midwestern states."

Mr. Quinn said the latest cut would save Illinois employers an estimated \$143 million in 2015, with savings totaling \$450 million over the past three years combined.

The workers' comp system, which pays health expenses for injured workers, raises and spends about \$3 billion a year, Mr. Baise said, so a savings of \$450 million over three years would be only a fraction of that cost.

Mr. Rauner has called for deeper cuts, but any changes would have to be enacted by a Democratic-majority Legislature. Unions have resisted any changes at all in the workers comp system.

Illinois now has the fourth-highest workers' comp rates of the 50 states, down from third-highest in 2011, according to the Manufacturers' Association.

Another association official, Chief Operating Officer Mark Denzler, said he's concerned that some medical fees already are rising, threatening progress made in the 2011 deal.