

## Illinois Future of Work Task Force Meeting 3 Brief

### The Current State of Tech

Technology is rapidly advancing throughout the world, only quickened by the pandemic, and will continue to shape the future of work. Artificial intelligence, algorithmic decision making, machine labor are just a few of the changes affecting business and employees. While Covid-19 has highlighted the benefits of technology, allowing workers new communication channels and remote work options, automation has concurrently displaced and worsened jobs for low-income workers and intensified current social inequalities.

The public opinion of technological advancement is largely pessimistic among Americans. The latest [Pew Research study in 2019](#) found that 3 out of 4 people said the technology would exacerbate income inequality, and 1 in 2 people say job automation has hurt workers. We are at a pivotal moment to shape how tech affects Illinois and craft policy that allows innovation to benefit us all.

We still do not have a complete picture of how automation and technology are affecting the workforce. The [Government Accountability Office](#) in 2019, recommended the Secretary of Labor charge the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) with collecting more robust data regarding the workforce development and technological change. The two departments have implemented the recommendation, which will garner better data for policymakers to generate recommendations. Illinois also lacks the data to fully understand and track how the explosion of technology has affected workers.

### Tech in the Industry

The digital revolution has upended all industries leaving employers to grapple with the changes, often at the expense of their employees. The rise of machine labor has displaced workers and moved to employees contingent classification, without benefits and good pay. Furthermore, while high-skill jobs in technology are growing rapidly, [marginalized workers, especially people of color, are losing their jobs to automation, increasing segregation in the technology workforce.](#) A [UC Berkeley Labor Center study](#) explains that retail and manufacturing sector employers are using new surveillance technology to monitor employees' daily tasks, which are quantified, and used as data for decisions on discipline, promotion, and termination of employees. The extreme and inhumane surveillance and high output expectations often lead to intense and hazardous working conditions.

The algorithms created to monitor workers and make decisions are as biased as the humans who create them. Even before working at a job, [Upturn's study](#) of hiring practices across major industries found companies discriminated against young people, people of color, and disabled people. The current hiring processes by corporations are opaque and inflate employer power, leaving many applicants struggling to find employment. Further, algorithms require data, which employers mine from workers, often without their knowledge or consent, and can be used for discriminatory means [such as identifying employees who may be likely to organize a union.](#) MIT

researchers also warn policy makers to regulate AI functions because [“unrecognized biases embedded in the underlying data or algorithms may exacerbate discriminatory practices that already exist due to broadly shared and unexamined social attitudes.”](#)

### **Future of Tech**

Technology does not have to destroy the future of work. We can shape innovation to be beneficial. Technology can and will improve our workforce and businesses if we put forth practical solutions. Policymakers can envision a world where machines and humans work in collaboration and create better jobs for workers. Technology has the [potential to reduce monotonous and draining work, allowing employees to focus on complex tasks and customer service](#) that result in more meaningful jobs. In the retail industry, policymakers and business owners look to a future [where employees provide specialized services for customers or run mini-warehouse fulfillment centers](#). Or in the trucking industry, instead of replacing drivers with self-driving trucks and displacing thousands of drivers, [workers could run fleets of independent trucks](#). With creative solutions from business leaders, policymakers, non-profits, and workers we can move technology to improve job quality without major job loss.

We already have examples of technology changing work for the better. Working from home has allowed a new age of workers, [Digital nomads](#), who work remotely and travel the world, technology freeing them to explore their passions. [Technology startups are also leading in green energy in Chicago and Illinois](#).

### **Potential Solutions**

Experts studying the future of work and technology explain that government regulation and enforcement of new technologies have not kept pace with implementation. [UC Berkley Labor Center](#), [Upturn](#), and Professor of Economics [Darrell West](#) all recommend stronger enforcement mechanisms to avoid discrimination against workers, sharing worker data, and unsafe conditions from strict AI monitoring systems.

It is a reality that technology is going to replace jobs, especially in the short term. Creating programs for displaced workers, through social programs and companies will be essential in helping employees and for Illinois to keep pace with the newer innovations. [West](#) and [UC Berkeley Labor Center](#) further argue that providing workers with portable benefits, not tied to employment, will help workers as they move across sectors with the changing landscape of employment. Another solution policymakers have proposed is [universal basic income](#), which allows workers a safety net as they transition through their careers to keep pace with the technological changes in the workforce.

[Illinois is poised to be a leader in the tech industry](#), growing the state economy and we have a chance to create solutions that foster growth and benefit our communities.

### **Guiding Questions:**

1. How could technological change improve jobs rather than displace or devalue them?

2. What are the potential risks of technological change to the economy and Illinois workers?
3. What ways can we use technology to leverage and improve business practices?
4. What is the role of workers, businesses, and community leaders in shaping solutions?

**Reports Listed:**

1. [Darrell West- The Future of Work: Robots, AI, and Automation](#)
2. [MIT Future of Work- Factories of the Future: Technology, Skills, and Digital Innovation at Large Manufacturing Firms](#)
3. [MIT, J-PAL, and NBER- Preparing for the Future of Work](#)
4. [UC Berkeley Labor Center- Change and Uncertainty Not Apocalypse: Technological Change and Store-Based Retail](#)
5. [UC Berkeley Labor Center- Data and Algorithms at Work: The Case for Worker Technology Rights](#)
6. [Upturn- Essential Work: Analyzing the Hiring Technologies of Large Hourly Employers](#)
7. [Working Partnership USA- DRIVERLESS? Autonomous Trucks and the Future of the American Trucker](#)

**November 30th Future of Work Task Force Meeting Agenda:**

I. Call to Order

II. Welcome

- Welcome from Senator DeWitte (task force co-chair)
- Welcome from Elgin Community College President, Dr. Sam
- Approval of the agenda
- Approval of the October minutes

III. New Challenges and Technologies Reshaping Work

- Darrell West, Brookings Institute
- Aaron Rieke, Upturn

IV. Task Force Member Discussion

*Break to grab lunch*

V. Businesses leading the way forward (Presentations, followed by Q&A)

- Kate Gebo, Executive Vice President of Human Resources and Labor Relations, United Airlines
- Nicole Overley, Senior Manager on Future of Work, Deloitte

VI. Public Comment

VII. Close