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Film industry brought \$184M to Illinois in 2012

CHICAGO (AP) - Tax incentives to draw movie and TV productions to Illinois have led to a record \$184 million in spending last year by production crews working on shows like "Chicago Fire" and "Boss," Gov. Pat Quinn said Friday.

Quinn touted the benefits of more movie and TV work in the state during a visit to the Chicago set of the science fiction film "Divergent," which will feature Kate Winslet. Besides the money spent, Quinn said such productions also lead to hundreds of jobs.

"Our talented crews, iconic shooting locations and world class sound stages and studios have helped make 2012 a banner year for the Illinois film industry," Quinn said in a written statement.

Dozens of states have competed vigorously to lure movie and TV projects away from California and New York, employing ever higher tax breaks and leading some policy experts to wonder if taxpayers are coming out ahead in such deals.

In 2011, Quinn signed a 10-year extension of the Illinois Film Tax Credit, which provides a 30 percent tax credit to filmmakers for money spent on Illinois goods and services. That includes wages paid to Illinois residents.

The governor's office says that has paved the way for more productions in Illinois, including a higher number of television shows that helped boost last year's record spending figures.

Those programs included "Chicago Fire," "Boss," "Mob Doctor" and "Underemployed." Together, those four shows generated \$92 million in spending last year, according to Quinn's office.

The previous Illinois record for yearly spending, set in 2010, was \$161 million.

"Divergent" began filming earlier this month at Cinespace Chicago Film Studios. The film is based on the first book of a three-book series by Chicago author Veronica Roth.

The film, scheduled for release in March 2014, also will star Aaron Eckhart and Shailene Woodley. Director Neil Burger is known for "The Illusionist," "The Lucky Ones" and "Limitless."

Roth wrote the futuristic action-adventure story when she was a student at Northwestern University. It was published in May 2011.