

Meet the Democratic Party of McHenry County's 2026 Primary Winners

The Democratic Party of McHenry County is proud to congratulate the awesome set of nominees, winners of the March 17th, 2026, primary election, who will be on our ballot in this November's general election. Their backgrounds in community service, health care, education, technology, military service, and environmental stewardship represent the diversity and experiences of our big tent party.

We endorse these dedicated candidates who place residents above political agendas. We look forward to bringing balance, fiscal responsibility, and dedication to public service back to our county government.

Get to know our great slate of nominees for county board and county-wide offices:



McHenry County Clerk - **Bill McNeese** - Bill is a father of three, a U.S. Navy veteran, and a small business owner, having a bachelor's in business administration with a focus on Economics and an MBA in small business. He brings a record of service, accountability, and hands-on leadership along with a commitment to running an efficient, transparent Clerk's Office that makes county services more accessible to every resident.

votemcneese.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



McHenry County Regional Superintendent of Schools - **Bridget Belcastro** - For 32 years, Dr. Bridget Belcastro has dedicated her career to ensuring every student has access to quality education. As a 24-year McHenry County resident and the 2024 Illinois Elementary Principal of the Year, Bridget has the experience, expertise, and commitment to lead the Regional Office of Education into the future. Bridget will support our schools, empower our educators, and advocate for the resources our children deserve.

bridgetbelcastro.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



McHenry County Treasurer - **Amin Karim** - A resident of Crystal Lake, McHenry County, for the past 22 years, and a proud father of four and grandfather of three. Amin is an engineer by profession with an MBA in Finance and a 30-year career in corporate management, including a proven track record of leading and executing Lean Six Sigma Black Belt Projects.

aminkarim.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



County Board District 1 - **Deanna "Dee" Darling** – Dee is currently serving as a Cary District 26 School Board Member. She is focused on advocating for social services, championing public education, affordable housing availability, protecting natural resources, and transparency and accessibility.

vote4darling.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#) - [Dee's flyer](#)



County Board District 2 - **Gloria Van Hof** - Current County Board Member for District 2 and a 50-year resident of McHenry County. A mom, teacher, writer, previous business-owner, licensed Nursing Home Administrator, an Underground Railroad researcher and lecturer, and a volunteer and board member of numerous groups. Dedicated to improving communication, transparency, economic vitality, community identity and effective management of our resources.

citizensforgloriavanhof.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



County Board District 3 - **Carolyn "Lyn" Campbell** - Current County Board Member for District 3 and long-time advocate for the protection of our natural and agricultural resources, Carolyn has proven her support for our mental health community, for common sense transportation solutions, public safety, and effective senior services. A former local government finance and administration professional, she is an advocate for a strong local economy as a means of reducing the overall tax burden on property owners.

carolynlyncampbell.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



County Board District 4 - **Edward "Bud" Bowie** - Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel and former sanitation industry CEO. Bud will use the analytical and planning skills honed by a long career in both government and private industry to ensure transparent fiscal responsibility, protect our Conservation Districts, preserve agriculture, promote responsible economic growth, and support fair-minded, unbiased County leadership that represents the interests of all residents.

bowiedist4@gmail.com



County Board District 5 - **Austin May** - Born and raised in McHenry County and a dedicated public servant, his background includes service in AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and currently as a US Army Reserve officer. Austin is focused on lowering our property taxes through improving infrastructure, supporting community health, and fiscal responsibility.

abetterwaymc.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



County Board District 6 - **Sheryl Lindenbaum** - Sheryl has worked in the health insurance industry for over 40 years. Her focus is on resources and affordability of elder-care, assistance for family caregivers, women's health, support for local farmers, sustainable growth, and creating an environment where all individuals, regardless of background, can participate fully and equitably in McHenry County.

citizensforsheryl.com



County Board District 7 - **Patrick J. Shea** - Pat brings a wealth of management experience from a career in the construction industry, including project managing and acting as crew foreman. His vision is to build McHenry County's future with that practical experience, advocating for responsible growth, and respect for our land and water.

citizensforpatshea.com - [Email](#) - [Donate](#)



County Board District 8 - **Christy "Chris" Stevens** - Chris, a resident of McHenry County since 1981, has had a prior career in Information Technology, implementing e-Commerce websites for top 1000 retailers. Her experience also includes a home-building business, giving her insight into the lack of workforce housing in our county, water quality, open land and conservation, maintaining agriculture, property taxes, economic opportunity/development, global warming impacts, and sustainable growth.

christystevens.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



County Board District 9 - **Christine B. Hamm** - Christine Hamm is a nonprofit executive, community organizer, and advocate for inclusion and community empowerment who has called Huntley and McHenry County home for much of the past seventeen years.
christine-hamm.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)

Here are our Democratic nominees for State Representative and State Senator:



State Rep District 52 - **Maria Peterson** – Maria, a first-generation Mexican American, witnessed firsthand how her immigrant parents transformed their American Dream into reality through hard work and perseverance. As an attorney, Maria became a trusted advocate for Latino families facing discrimination, and served with the U.S. Department of Labor, where she litigated workplace safety and health violations and stood up for Black Lung victims who were being denied benefits by the coal mining companies they had dedicated their lives to serving.
mariafor52.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



State Rep District 64 - **AJ Johnson** - From a large Biloxi family with a long military tradition, AJ Johnson enlisted in the army at the first opportunity, finishing his career as a top recruiter. Since retiring from our armed services, he's brought his leadership skills to teaching ROTC in Lake County high schools.
ajjohnsonforstaterep.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#)



State Rep District 66 - **Suzanne Ness**, our Democratic incumbent, was first elected to the Illinois House in 2020, and is now running for her fourth term. Previously she served as a McHenry County Board Member. As a State Representative, Suzanne has brought more than \$34 million to the district and has passed 14 bills, including funding for the Longmeadow Parkway Bridge, eliminating the need for tolling. She advocates for the needs of her constituents and supports legislation that has made Illinois a leader in environmental sustainability, voting rights, and access to reproductive healthcare.
citizensforsuzannenness.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



State Rep District 69 - **Pete Janko** - Peter is the elected Democratic State Central Committeeman for Illinois's 11th Congressional District. He is known for turning advocacy into results, including helping secure funding for Rockford passenger rail and paving the way for the repeal of Illinois's grocery tax. A candidate for State Representative in Illinois's 69th District, he's focused on Illinois Care, a real-world transition plan for universal healthcare in Illinois and continuing to use his strong relationships with state and federal lawmakers to deliver real benefits for Illinois families.

pete4illinois.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



State Rep District 70 - **Veronica Garcia-Martinez** - Veronica is a mother of three teenagers, a 5th-grade teacher, a small business owner, and a long-time resident of DeKalb County. Born in Chicago and raised in the Pilsen neighborhood, she grew up in an immigrant household where she learned the true meaning of community. Veronica spent 17 years in the nonprofit sector and six years as a bilingual and dual language teacher, dedicating herself to students and families. Her platform reflects the values she lives every day - dignity and respect for all, responsible development, strong communities, and fair democracy.

veronica4il.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Instagram](#) - [Donate](#)



State Senate District 26 - **Nabeela Syed** - Currently state representative in the 51st district, Nabeela made history in 2022 as one of the youngest members ever elected to the Illinois legislature. She is now running to continue delivering bold, compassionate and common-sense leadership. She has built a strong record of fighting for working families, focusing on lowering costs, protecting access to healthcare and delivering real results. She's passed legislation to cap prescription drug costs, expand breast cancer screening, secure paid leave for organ donors and make voting more accessible to young people.

nabeelasyed.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



State Senate District 32 - **Karen Battaglia** - Karen Battaglia is a longtime emergency and trauma nurse, healthcare leader, and advocate for working families. She is the incoming President of the Illinois Emergency Nurses Association and has served for more than a decade on the Illinois ENA Government Affairs Committee, advocating for nursing and healthcare policy at both the state and federal levels. She is running for State Senate to fight for affordable and accessible healthcare at every stage of life, an economy that works for working families, and safe communities and workplaces.
karenforil32.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Donate](#)



State Senate District 33 - **Michele Clark** - Well-known in McHenry County as the proud owner of a large early child learning center, Michele later served as Chief Operating Officer of the Boys and Girls Club of Dundee Township during the COVID-19 pandemic—overseeing a multimillion-dollar budget and leading through a most difficult time for families and kids in our community. Today she serves as Director of Development for the District 300 Food Pantry, working to ensure that no children in our district go hungry. She brings nonprofit experience, business background, and passion for service—all in support of the next generation.
micheleforilsenate.com - [Email](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Instagram](#) - [Donate](#)



State Senate District 35 - **Sarah Mertens** - One of six kids from a working-class union household, Sarah acquired her work ethic early on, babysitting from a young age, working from the moment she turned 16, putting herself through college via jobs and loans. Holding a degree in education, with a specialization in teaching German, she's taught English as a second language. She has also worked in health care administration and the rollout of the Affordable Care Act. A working mom, in Springfield she plans to be a strong advocate for affordable housing and protecting our civil rights.
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