



202 Eldorado Road, Suite B-3; Bloomington, Illinois

McLean County Republicans

March, 2026

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Communications, Connie Beard

Out With the Old, In With the New

I am pleased to share the newly revised McLean County Republicans Newsletter. Thank you to those who offered feedback on its direction. Our goal is to keep you informed on key issues, serve as a resource for upcoming elections, and highlight important developments within our community. Your continued input is welcome as we work to better serve our members.

During the election season, the newsletter will feature highlighted candidates, with links to all candidates available on our website. You can also expect contributions from young conservatives in our community, a featured columnist, letters to the editor, notices of upcoming events, and, in the future, updates from our current legislators.

We want to strengthen our organization with local leaders within the McLean County Republicans. Meaningful change begins with involvement. Increased voter participation, community engagement, and simple actions—such as encouraging others to vote or helping them get to the polls—can make a real difference.

We meet every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. to noon at our headquarters and welcome your participation and ideas. Involvement does not require an overwhelming commitment, but it does require focus and engagement. Our Volunteer Coordinator, Katrina Eames, would love to hear from you at volunteers@McLeanCountyRepublicans.org. If you are interested in contributing, please call or email me at Membership@McLeanCountyRepublicans.org or call 309-824-9394.

You'll find us to be a growing group with good-hearted people and a good vision for this county. Join us to be part of the change in Illinois.

Sincerely,

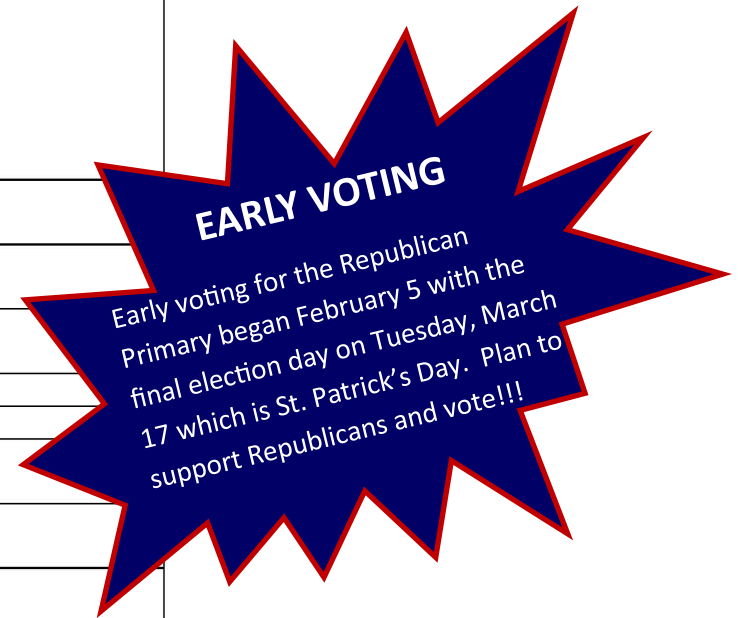
Connie Beard

Membership/Communications Chair

2026 Republican Candidates for McLean County

Office	Candidate
Governor/Lt Governor	Darren Bailey/Aaron Del Mar Ted Dabrowski/Carrie Mendosa Rick Heidner James Mendrick/Robert Renteriz Gregg Moore
US Senate	Cary Capparelli Casey Chlebek Casandra Claiborne Jeannie Evans John Goodman Pamela Denise Long Jimmy Lee Tilman II Don Tracy
16 th Congressional District	Darin LaHood John Kitover
17 th Congressional District	Dillan Vancil Julie Bickelhaupt
Secretary of State	Walter Adamcsyk Diane Harris
State Treasurer	Max Solomon
State Comptroller	Bryan Drew
State Attorney General	Bob Fioretti Andy Williams
State Senate	Sally Turner-44th Chris Balkema- 53 rd
State Representative	Bill Hauter – 87 th Regan Deering- 88 th Tim Ruestman- 105 th Jason Bunting- 106th
County Clerk	Kathy Michael
County Sheriff	Jon Albee
County Treasurer	Rebecca McNeil
Regional Education Superintendent	Molly Allen
County Board #1	Andy Ziebarth
County Board #2	Bill Friedrich
County Board #3	Brian Bangert
County Board #4	Jerry Klinkner
County Board #5	Jeff Lord
County Board #7	Geoff Tompkins
County Board #10	Matt Steinkoenig

You can learn all about the candidates and about voting times and locations at www.McLeanCountyRepublicans.org/2026_March_Primary_Republican_candidates



Precinct Committeemen Training
February 9, 2026

PC Training and Executive Board Planning

We had a great couple of meetings back-to-back on Monday, February 9. First, we packed the room with Precinct Committeemen learning and committing to get out the vote for our Republican candidates.

We met our candidate for the 10th County Board seat, Matt Steinkoenig, a firefighter for Normal and a father whose concerns about the community moved him to run for office.

That meeting was followed by the Executive Board of the McLean County Party laying groundwork for the work ahead. Plans for the Food Drive at the end of February were laid out as well as work on voter turnout for the primary. We also discussed the party convention on April 15 where party leadership will be voted on by the precinct committeemen. Plans are already in place for a big celebration in the last week of May. "Freedom" Week will mark the 170th anniversary of the Illinois Republican Party which was founded right here in Bloomington. Details will be coming soon.

Want to learn how you can help restore sanity to our community? Send an email to info@mcleancountyRepublicans.org.



MEET THE CANDIDATES

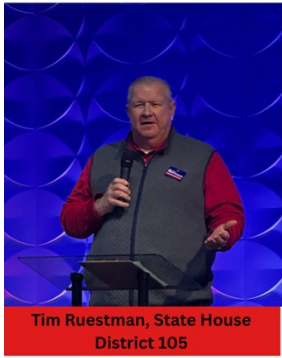


2026 Candidate Forum
January 31, 2026

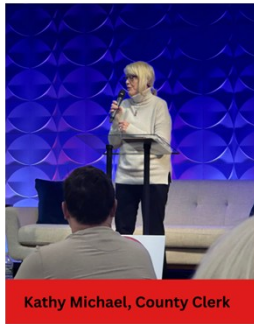


2026 Candidate Townhall

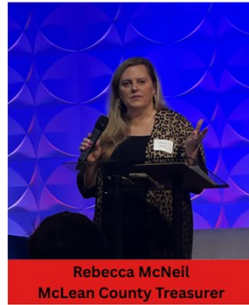
The 2026 Candidate Townhall was a wonderful success, with more than 80 community members attending to hear from eight outstanding Republican candidates. Each spoke sincerely about their commitment to serving McLean County and strengthening our community. United by fiscal responsibility and common-sense leadership, these candidates shared their vision for restoring safety, protecting property rights, and bringing stability and accountability to county and state government.



Tim Ruestman, State House
District 105



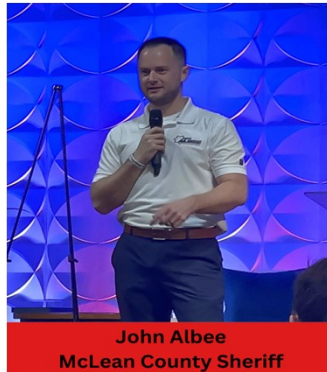
Kathy Michael, County Clerk



Rebecca McNeil
McLean County Treasurer



Molly Allen, Regional
Superintendent of Schools,
District 17



John Albee
McLean County Sheriff

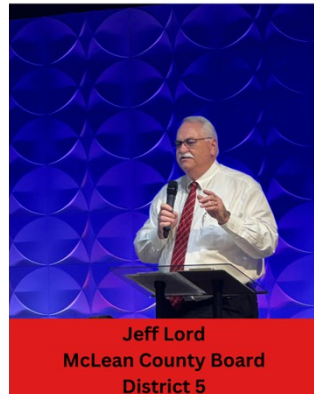
Those who addressed the audience included Tim Ruestman, candidate for the 105th State House District; Kathy Michael, seeking reelection as County Clerk; Rebecca McNeil, running for reelection as County Treasurer; Jon Albee, candidate for County Sheriff; Molly Allen candidate for Regional Education Superintendent; Jerry Klinkner; Jeff Lord, seeking election for the 4th and 5th county districts respectively ; and Geoff Tompkins, seeking reelection for the 7th district county seat .



Jerry Klinkner, County Board
District 4



Geoff Tompkins
McLean County Board
District 7



Jeff Lord
McLean County Board
District 5

To learn more about these dedicated candidates, visit www.McLeanCountyRepublicans.org



Press Conference with Desi Anderson
on the Department of Education In-
vestigation into Universities



Election 2026 Candidate Forum: Candidates Address Key Issues

By Carl J. Wenning, McLean County Republicans

Voters in the Twin Cities heard from candidates for nine state and federal offices during a January 31 forum at the DoubleTree by Hilton Conference Center in Bloomington. More than 100 citizens attended the breakfast event sponsored by the McLean County Republicans (MCGOP).

Connie Beard, MCGOP Vice Chair at Large, welcomed attendees and said 2026 presents strong opportunities for Republican candidates, citing growing dissatisfaction with Democratic leadership in Illinois. "It's the best of times if you are running on the Republican ticket; it's the worst of times if you live in Illinois," she said.

Four candidates for statewide office spoke: Andy Williams Jr. and Bob Fioretti, both running for Attorney General; Brian Drew for State Comptroller; and Diane Lane Harris for Secretary of State. Each outlined their background and platform, highlighting concerns about crime policy, high taxes, population loss, education challenges, and economic decline. Several criticized policies enacted by the Democratic-controlled legislature, pointing to residents and businesses leaving the state.

Seven federal candidates also addressed the crowd. Julie Bickelhaupt and Dillan Vancil are running in the 17th Congressional District. U.S. Senate candidates included Casey Chlebeck, Jeannie Evans, Dr. Pamela Denise Long, Jimmy Lee Tillman, and Don Tracy. They focused on national issues such as public safety, immigration, inflation, health care, unemployment, and tax reform, pledging to advance common-sense solutions and represent all Illinois residents.

The forum gave voters an opportunity to compare candidates, ask questions, and engage directly on issues ranging from education to infrastructure ahead of the Illinois Primary, which begins February 5 and concludes March 17.



Casey Chlebeck
U.S. Senate Candidate



Dr. Pamela Denise Long
U.S. Senate Candidate



Jeannie Evans
U.S. Senate Candidate



Don Tracy
U.S. Senate Candidate



Jimmy Lee Tillman
U.S. Senate Candidate



Diane Harris
Illinois Secretary of State
Candidate



Bryan Drew
Illinois State Comptroller
Candidate



Julie Bickelhaupt
U.S. Congressional
Candidate 17th District



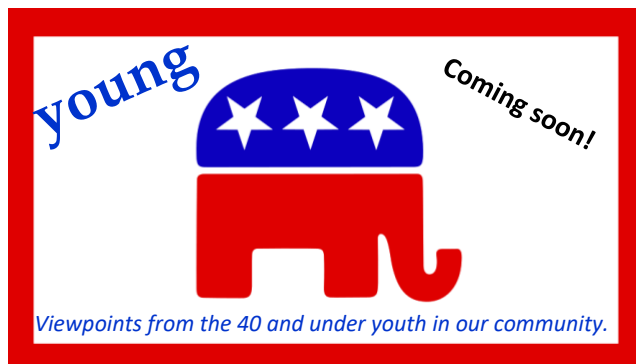
Bob Fioretti
Illinois State Attorney
General Candidate



Andy Williams
State Attorney General
Candidate



Dillan Vancil
U.S. Congressional
Candidate 17th District



Six Day of Impact Food Drive!

The McLean County Republicans recently demonstrated their commitment to community service by hosting a successful food drive, “Six Days of Impact,” on behalf of the Midwest Food Bank. Over the course of over 40 hours last week, dedicated volunteers staffed Republican Headquarters in Bloomington, welcoming supporters who donated non-perishable food items to help local families in need.

Thanks to the generosity of the community and the hard work of volunteers, more than 500 pounds of food were collected. Sponsors for the event included Darin LaHood, Sally Turner, Regan Deering, Nayak Farms, and 17th Congressional District candidate Dillan Vancil.

We finished our food drive with a work session at the Midwest Food Bank warehouse where our volunteers joined others in preparing packs of food to be distributed. We delivered the donations from our supporters and had a good time packing food to meet needs of food pantries across the nation.

Fellow Republican Leaders,

I am writing to share a concern many of us have witnessed firsthand and to ask for your partnership in improving the culture within the Illinois Republican Party. Across our state, there is a growing perception that our party is fractured and struggling to win. Persistent infighting and an inability to find common ground have created a circular firing squad—causing self-inflicted damage, weakening credibility, and draining limited resources.

Voters are discouraged by what they see on social media and in public discourse. Name-calling, hostile rhetoric, and personal attacks have created an environment where expressing an opinion or supporting a candidate invites condemnation. While spirited debate is natural, the hostility of recent years has become excessive and counterproductive. When people disengage, they stop voting—and we cannot afford that.

A cultural shift is urgently needed, and it must begin with us. As leaders, we set the tone. How we communicate will determine whether we rebuild trust and foster respect while upholding our shared conservative principles. When disagreements arise, address them directly and respectfully. Pick up the phone. Meet face-to-face. Listen to understand. We are independent thinkers shaped by different experiences; that diversity is a strength. Focus on shared priorities, give credit where it is due, and approach differences with compassion.

After the primary, we must unite behind our nominees and work tirelessly through November. Refusing to support the chosen candidate harms our mission and values.

Lead by example. Monitor your tone, encourage constructive dialogue, and correct divisive behavior. As John Adams warned, liberty depends on decency and respect. Before we can restore Illinois, we must first restore the Illinois Republican Party—and that begins with each of us.

Jim Rule, Chairman

Tazewell County Republican Central Committee



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Submit your letters of 150 words or less to CommunicationsDirector@McLeanCountyRepublicans.org

“One Party System Doesn’t Work”

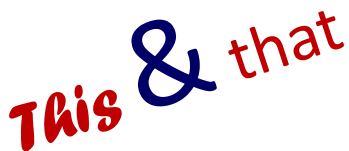
By Carl Hinshaw

Windmill and solar farms are gobbling up McLean County farmland at an alarming rate. Any traditional power sources are off the political discussion table. All this construction is at taxpayer expense yet power bills continue to climb aggressively and shortages may soon appear. The Governor and his supermajority party dictate all energy policy in Illinois.

Much needed public pension and property tax reforms were totally ignored by this same supermajority once again in the Fall Veto Session. Can't pay your property tax bill due to illness or job loss? Too bad, the state can confiscate your home in Illinois with a tax sale. Medicaid funding is prioritized to illegal aliens over taxpaying Illinois citizens. Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson recently stated “The Illinois legislature has a lot more work to do on tax increases”. Just seems like the “little guy” and his wallet are ignored by the powerful elite in Illinois. One party has no voice and the other dominate party, will not listen.

Very often, legislation in Springfield is passed in the middle of the night on the last day of a session. No negotiating or dissenting opinions are allowed. Gerrymandering has all but guaranteed a one party system in Illinois with the taxpaying minority being their bottomless “ATM machine”. Getting the “little guy” out to vote more might help. However, we may have crossed that critical line where the number of voters in Illinois who are on the “take” now outnumber the voters who are left to pay all the bills.

It may well be true that “liberalism is a great idea until you run out of other people’s money”. A lot of that money has already left the state. We have witnessed several “No King” rallies in recent months. I suggest that “Kings” are quite dominate all over the Illinois political system.



Volunteers Needed to Expand Office Hours

We have yard signs for various candidates, and we want to make them available to Republican voters. To help in that effort we want to expand our office hours to include Saturday from 11:00-1:00. We also want to add one more volunteer to our regular office hours, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11:00 – 1PM. This will give supporters more options to pick up signs and literature. If you can help on a please go to this Sign-Up Genius Link and indicate when you can help. You will be contacted with details.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10COC4FAFAB2DA7F5C25-61496413-2026>

Press Release on Department of Education

On Saturday, February 7, the McLean County Republican Executive Board held a press conference addressing the U.S. Department of Education’s February 5 announcement that it has opened an investigation into Tufts University and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to determine whether participation in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) resulted in violations of student privacy under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

The McLean County Republican Executive Board has supported the investigative work that led to the Department’s decision. While the Department of Education is beginning its review with Tufts University, local leaders voiced hope that the investigation will also examine Illinois State University (ISU), where similar concerns and evidence of potential privacy violations have been identified. The student data disclosed was used for political purposes.

During the press conference, Desi Anderson detailed findings she and her husband, Nick Anderson, uncovered through extensive research and public records. Their findings, along with related investigations nationwide, contributed to increased scrutiny of university agreements with NSLVE. Illinois State University is reported to have maintained an agreement with NSLVE similar to the one currently under review at Tufts University.

Congressman Darin LaHood has supported efforts to gather evidence and pursue accountability from universities regarding the handling of student data. He issued the following statement:

“Universities in Illinois and across the country should not share students’ personal data without clear consent,” said Rep. LaHood. “Providing that information to third-party organizations, especially for political purposes, raises serious privacy concerns.”

In response to these concerns, Congresswoman Mary Miller, Congressman LaHood, and Congressman Mike Bost are introducing legislation aimed at preventing third-party organizations, such as NSLVE, from having unrestricted access to private student data. The McLean County Republican Party strongly endorses this legislative effort and calls for full transparency and accountability from institutions of higher education regarding the handling of student information.



Mark Your Calendar

★ FREEDOM FEST ★

Saturday, May 30
Noon – 10:00 PM

🎵 Live Music ★ 🎯 Games ★ 🎁 Prizes ★ 🎈 Fun for Children & Adults

Bloomington, Illinois

Part of “Freedom Week” hosted
by the **McLean County Republicans**

★ SAVE THE DATE! ★

join
us

Every Tuesday Morning



FREE - FUN- INFORMATIVE

10:00am - 12:00pm

McLean County Republican Headquarters
202 S. Eldorado Suite B3, Bloomington