



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

McLean County Republicans

April, 2026

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**McLean County Republicans
Central Committee Executive Board**

Chairman
Dennis Grundler

Vice Chair
John Parrott

Secretary
Bruce Hany

Treasurer
Rita Eschmann

Division Chairs
Carol Anderson, Blm South
Lis Hiltabrand, Blm North
Jerry Klinkner, Normal
Annette Thompson, County West
Chelsie Leffelman, County East

Vice Chairs At Large
Chad Berck
David Paul Blumenshine
Jim Snyder

Pillar Leaders
Community Outreach, Jim Fisher
Fundraising, Connie Beard
Elections, Kim Miller
Communications, Connie Beard

We Need Your Support to Make This a Success

MCLEAN COUNTY REPUBLICAN PARTY
BECOME A COMMUNITY CHAMPION
FREEDOM WEEK SPONSORSHIPS

FREEDOM WEEK MAY 25 - MAY 30

CELEBRATING THE 170TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ILLINOIS REPUBLICAN PARTY
KICK OFF A SUMMER HONORING AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY
LOCATION: AMERICAN HUNGARIAN CLUB, BLOOMINGTON

MEMORIAL DAY PARADE- MAY 25
FREEDOM TRAIN SPONSOR- \$100

SPONSOR THE DEBUT OF OUR 15 PASSENGER FREEDOM TRAIN
RECOGNITION ONLINE, IN PROMOTIONS AND ON THE TRAIN SIGNAGE

FUN-D VETS MUSIC- TUESDAY MAY 26
MUSIC BINGO FUND RAISER AT CHEEKS RESTAURANT -\$100
SPONSOR AN EVENING OF FUN AND RAISING MONEY TO SUPPORT OUR VETS.
RECEIVE RECOGNITION IN PROMOTIONS AND AT THE EVENT

FREEDOM FEST - SATURDAY MAY 30
12:00PM- 10:00PM
TICKETED EVENTS WITH FREE ADMISSION FOR VETERANS
LIVE MUSIC - GAMES - FOOD TRUCKS -FAMILY ACTIVITIES
RAFFLES - ESSAY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS- PATRIOTIC COSTUME CONTEST
EVENING DANCE AND DINNER

SPONSORSHIP DEADLINE: APRIL 30

CELEBRATION SPONSOR- \$200
HELP TO FUND OUR FOOD AND FUN
SPONSORS LISTED ON SPONSOR POSTERS
FREE ADMISSION FOR THE FULL EVENT FOR 2

WASHINGTON SPONSOR- \$500
DEDICATED INFORMATION/PRODUCT TABLE
REPEATED STAGE RECOGNITION
MENTION IN PROMOTIONS
LISTING ON SPONSORSHIP POSTER
FREE ADMISSION FOR THE FULL EVENT FOR 2

FREEDOM SPONSOR- \$300
STAGE RECOGNITION
LISTING ON SPONSORSHIP POSTER
YARD SIGN/LEAFLETS AT MCGOP TABLE
FREE ADMISSION FOR THE FULL EVENT FOR 2

FREEDOM ESSAY SCHOLARSHIP SPONSOR-\$ 750
RECOGNIZED IN PROMOTIONS AND ON SPONSOR POSTERS
PRESENT AWARDS TO ESSAY WINNERS ON STAGE
FREE ADMISSION FOR THE FULL EVENT FOR 3

LINCOLN SPONSOR- \$1,000
• DEDICATED INFORMATION/PRODUCT TABLE
• 10 MINUTES SPEAKING OPPORTUNITY IF CANDIDATE
• NAME ON WELCOME BANNER
LISTING ON SPONSORSHIP POSTER
• MENTION IN PROMOTIONS AND ADS
• FREE ADMISSION FOR THE FULL EVENT FOR 4

WHY SPONSOR?
COMMUNITY VISIBILITY- CIVIC LEADERSHIP-DIRECT VOTER ENGAGEMENT
SUPPORT FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

TO BECOME A SPONSOR CONTACT CONNIE BEARD, EVENT CHAIRMAN
EVENTS@MCLEANCOUNTYREPUBLICANS.ORG OR CALL 309-824-9394

County Convention

The McLean County Republican Party will hold its 2026 county convention on Wednesday, April 15, bringing together newly elected precinct committeemen to shape party leadership for the next two years. Following the March 17 primary, these grassroots representatives will elect the party's executive board, including chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, and secretary, along with division chairs representing five geographic areas.

Connie Beard is seeking to return as chairman after a three-year hiatus, having remained active in communications, membership, and fundraising efforts. Delegates will also vote for State Central Committeeman candidates in the 16th and 17th districts. Those elected will serve as part of the guiding force of the Illinois Republican Party.

Similar conventions will be held statewide on April 15 as required by statute. The executive board plays a critical role in candidate recruitment, voter outreach, and fundraising—especially as local party operations rely heavily on community support rather than state or national funding.

2026 Republican Candidates for McLean County

Office	Candidate
Governor/Lt Governor	Darren Bailey/Aaron Del Mar
US Senate	Don Tracy
16 th Congressional District	Darin LaHood
17 th Congressional District	Dillan Vancil
Secretary of State	Diane Harris
State Treasurer	Max Solomon
State Comptroller	Bryan Drew
State Attorney General	Bob Fioretti
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- 106 th
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



Impact Project

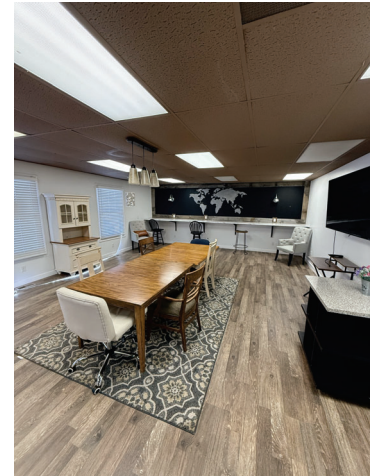
We are growing!! More members, more precinct committeemen, more volunteers calls for more space! We are expanding into an additional office space and with your help we can make it truly a remarkable outreach center to voters in our county.

The McLean County Republicans are launching the Impact Project, an exciting initiative to expand and enhance our office space to better serve our growing team of volunteers, elected officials, and supporters. As our organization continues to gain momentum, our current space is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of meetings, training, and outreach efforts.

This project will create a more functional and welcoming environment, including dedicated volunteer work areas, improved meeting space, and a centralized hub for fundraising and operations. These upgrades will allow us to better organize, collaborate, and mobilize as we work toward shared goals across McLean County.

The Impact Project is more than an expansion—it is an investment in our future. With your support, we can build a space that strengthens our mission and increases our effectiveness. Together, we are creating a foundation for continued growth, stronger engagement, and lasting impact in our community.

You can help with a single donation at www.McleanCountyRepublicans.org/impact_project



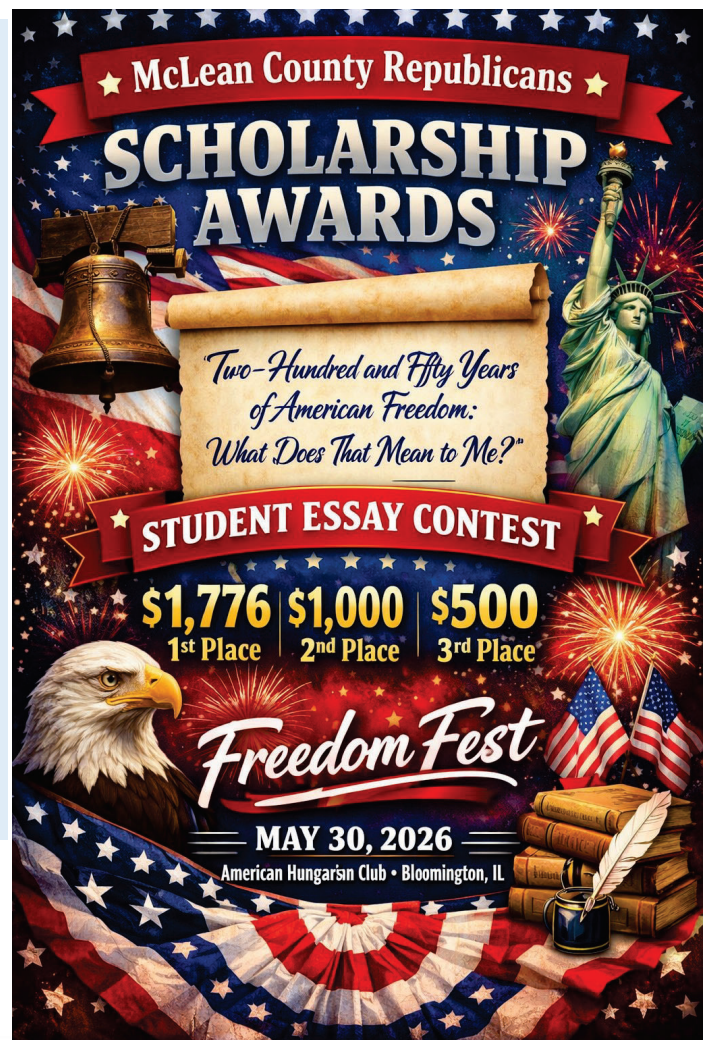
Scholarship Award Program

The McLean County Republicans have announced a student essay scholarship program to commemorate the nation’s upcoming 250th anniversary. The awards will be presented Saturday, May 30, during a Freedom Fest kickoff celebration at the American Hungarian Club, 1520 Calhoun, Bloomington

High school students in grades 11-12 who reside in McLean County are invited to submit a 400-500-word essay on the topic: “Two-hundred and fifty years of American Freedom—What does that mean to me?” The competition offers three prizes: \$1,776 for first place, \$1,000 for second, and \$500 for third.

Entries must include the student’s name, parent’s name, address, contact information, and registered school. Submissions may be emailed to scholarship@mcleancountyrepublicans.org or mailed to McLean County Republicans, 202 S. Eldorado, Suite C1, Bloomington.

The deadline to enter is May 15, 2026, with winners to be notified by May 20.



Looking Ahead to this Fall's General Election-Statewide

By Carl J Wenning

COLUMNIST

As Illinois approaches the November 2026 general election, voters are preparing for a high-stakes political season that could reshape the state's leadership for years to come. Major contests are expected to take center stage, including a highly anticipated U.S. Senate race to succeed long-serving Senator Dick Durbin, a dramatic rematch for the governor's office, and all 17 of the state's congressional districts featuring new or returning representatives. Beyond these main battles, key statewide offices like attorney general, secretary of state, and comptroller will also be on the ballot, giving Illinoisans the opportunity to influence policy and governance at every level. With primaries finished and nominees chosen, the stage is set for a fall election season filled with competitive campaigns, clear differences, and decisions that will impact the state for years to come.

For the U.S. Senate, the race will be between Democrat Juliana Stratton, the current lieutenant governor who won her party's nomination in the March 17 primary, and Republican Don Tracy, the former chair of the Illinois Republican Party who secured his nomination on the GOP side. These candidates will compete to fill the seat being vacated by five-term Democratic Senator Dick Durbin, who is not seeking re-election in 2026.

In the Illinois gubernatorial election, incumbent Democrat J.B. Pritzker runs for a third term and will face Republican Darren Bailey, the state senator and 2022 GOP gubernatorial nominee, in the general election. This race is a rematch of the 2022 governor's contest, with Pritzker again leading the Democratic ticket and Bailey the Republican ticket.

For the U.S. House of Representatives, all 17 of Illinois's congressional seats are up in 2026, and each district will have its own Democratic and Republican nominees in the general election. In our county we will have 2 districts we impact; the 17th District, which feature Republican Dillan Vancil Bost against incumbent Democrat Eric Sorenson, and in the 16th District, the general election matchup will be Republican incumbent Darin LaHood versus Democrat Paul Nolley. Many other districts will likewise have nominees from both major parties following the March primaries.

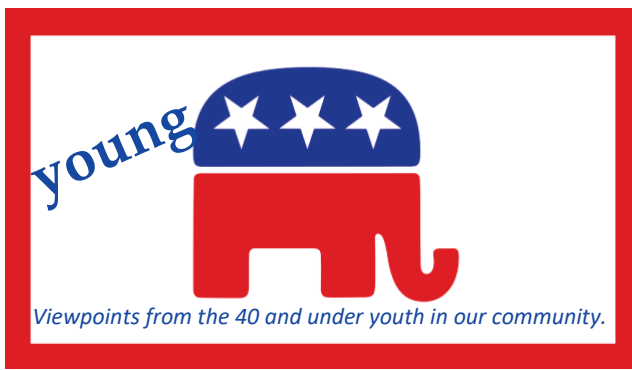
Additionally, in other statewide offices, such as the Illinois Attorney General, Democratic Attorney General Kwame Raoul is the Democratic nominee seeking re-election, and Republican Bob Fioretti is expected to be the Republican nominee in the general election. These races, along with those for secretary of state, comptroller, and state legislative seats, will also appear on Illinois ballots in November 2026.

In Illinois, Republicans often criticize the Democratic ticket on various issues, focusing their critiques on policy decisions, governance style, and ideological views instead of personal attacks. A common point of disagreement is taxes and fiscal policy. GOP leaders argue that Democratic officials, including Governor J.B. Pritzker and other statewide leaders, have contributed to Illinois having one of the highest tax burdens in the country. They claim that high income and property taxes have driven businesses and residents out of the state, leading to economic difficulties and slower growth. This criticism is also connected to concerns about state spending and the budget, with Republicans pointing out what they see as excessive spending and long-term fiscal mismanagement. Unfunded pension obligations, borrowing to cover programs and increasing state debt are often cited as proof that Democratic leadership has mismanaged Illinois's finances.

Another major point of Republican criticism involves crime and public safety. GOP candidates often argue that Democratic policies, especially in Chicago, have been too lenient on crime. They assert that bail reform and other measures supported by Democrats have weakened law enforcement, leaving suburban and rural communities vulnerable to rising crime rates. Similarly, Republicans criticize Democratic priorities in education, focusing on school funding, curriculum choices, and urban district management. They contend that Democrats favor bureaucratic or ideologically driven reforms over traditional academic achievement and that policies like school closures or teacher strikes have negatively affected students and families.

Social and cultural policies also play a major role in Republican critiques. Illinois Democrats' positions on reproductive rights, gun control, and environmental rules are often portrayed by GOP candidates as too progressive or activist, out of sync with many voters' values. Beyond policy details, Republicans often focus on a broader critique of Democratic governance, characterizing the party as deeply entrenched, arrogant, and disconnected from downstate communities. They contend that Democratic leadership, mainly centered in Chicago and Springfield, favors urban interests while ignoring suburban and rural concerns, reinforcing a perception that the party is out of touch with much of Illinois.

Overall, Illinois Republicans combine these critiques—covering taxes, spending, public safety, education, social issues, and perceived governance flaws—into a broader narrative that Democratic control has harmed both economic growth and citizen well-being. These criticisms form the basis of GOP messaging in statewide, congressional, and legislative campaigns, especially as candidates gear up for the 2026 general election.



McLean County Young Republicans- “Connecting with Young Voters”

How do we get young people involved in civic life? More importantly, why does it matter?

In McLean County, the answer has been simple: give young people a place to belong, a voice to be heard, and real opportunities to make a difference. That’s exactly what the McLean County Young Republicans have worked to build over the past year.

What began as an effort to gather just ten founding members quickly grew into a network of more than 40 engaged young people in just six months. But growth is only part of the story—what matters is what those members have done.

Our group has been active across the community. We’ve walked in the Labor Day parade distributing over 100 pocket Constitutions, worked shifts at the McLean County Fair engaging voters and families, and hosted interactive civics activities for kids during community events. We’ve organized and promoted events that bring people together—like “Pizza, Putts, and Politics,” which drew over 50 attendees for direct conversations with local candidates.

We’ve also played a meaningful role in the democratic process. Our members helped connect with over 2,500 voters, supported petition drives, and promoted candidate forums and legislative updates to keep the public informed. We’ve attend-ed town halls, candidate forums, and policy discussions to ensure young voices are present in the rooms where decisions are being discussed.

Beyond politics, we’ve worked to serve our community. From hosting a Thanksgiving donation drive to participating in educational efforts on issues like human trafficking, our members understand that civic engagement is about more than elections—it’s about responsibility.

Just as importantly, we’ve built a community of our own. Through regular meetings, consistent outreach on social media, and partnerships with local and student organizations, we’ve created a space where young people feel welcomed, informed, and empowered to participate.

That’s why this work matters.

Too many young people feel disconnected from the political process, believing their voices won’t make a difference. But when they’re given real opportunities to lead, they prove otherwise. They become informed voters, engaged citizens, and future leaders.

If we want a stronger McLean County—and a stronger country—we cannot afford to wait until the next generation is “ready.” We have to invite them in now.

The solution isn’t complicated: create opportunities, build community, and trust young people to step up.

That’s how you grow an organization. More importantly, that’s how you strengthen a democracy.

McLean County Republican Races

Republican candidates for McLean County offices are set to appear on the November 3, 2026, general election ballot following an uncontested primary season. Local Republicans fielded candidates for key countywide positions, including sheriff, county clerk, and treasurer, as well as multiple County Board districts.

Among the countywide races, Lt. Jon Albee (sheriff), Kathy Michael (county clerk), and Rebecca McNeil (treasurer) advanced without primary opposition and will be on the November ballot.

County Board races will also be a focal point, with Republican candidates such as Andy Ziebarth (District 1), William Friedrich (District 2), Brian Bangert (District 3), and Geoff Tompkins (District 7) who are all incumbent. Matt Steinkoenig (District 10), Jerry Klinkner (District 4), and Jeff Lord (District 5) are seeking election for first terms.

There is still a possibility of slating Republican candidates to run in Districts 6, 8 and 9. The deadline for slating candidates by the party is June 1.

While the primary featured few contested races, several County Board seats are expected to be competitive in November, setting the stage for a closely watched local election.



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!** ★

THIS & THAT

Volunteers Needed to Expand Office Hours

If you are willing to help us reach voters and develop connections with our community then contact our Volunteer Coordinator Katrina Eames today at: volunteers@McLeanCountyRepublicans.org

JOIN US Every Tuesday Morning



FREE - FUN- INFORMATIVE

10:00am - 12:00pm
 McLean County Republican Headquarters
 202 S. Eldorado Suite B3, Bloomington