



# MCLEAN COUNTY REPUBLICANS

— ★ NEWSLETTER ★ —

202 S. Eldorado Road, Suite C-1, Bloomington Illinois

May, 2026

## 2026 McLean County Republican Convention

This year's county convention was held on Wednesday, April 15 in Bloomington. The elected precinct committeemen came together and cast votes for the next Executive Board.

Connie Beard was elected unanimously as the chairman of the board. This will be a two year term starting immediately. The rest of the Executive Board Officers were also elected; John Parrott, Jr. returning as Vice-Chairman, Rita Eschmann as Treasurer and Carol Anderson as Secretary.

Beard is returning to the role of chairman, having stepped down as chairman at the end of 2023 which had been necessitated due to a move and family illness. "I stepped down after serving for 2 full terms and did so knowing I left unfinished business in the party", said Beard. She had returned to the executive board in the last term period to help with membership and fundraising. "We have grown our membership 20% in the last year as well as a good increase in our fundraising. Most people don't realize that our county party does not receive any funding from national or state Republican organizations. We don't have out of town money pouring into our coffers. Our work is supported by the local working families and voters of McLean County. I am excited about our prospects for this coming election. We have gained people who have left the Democratic party in dissatisfaction at the failed policies we see at work. This year we are working to regain control on the county board to get a handle on how well our tax money is handled, how supportive we are of our law enforcement, to stop any effort to create a sanctuary county and to establish true transparency in government. I look forward to this year as our momentum grows."

In addition to the top Executive Officers, the precinct committeemen elected Division Chairs who will represent the 5 geographic divisions of the county. Their role is to assist the precinct committeemen within their division in their voter outreach. They also serve on the Executive Board.

Chairman Beard under the authority of the by-laws of the party chose 3 Pillar Chairs to head the work of the party as a whole. These 3 chairs are Dave Nayak- Fundraising/ Membership Chair; Kim Miller- Precinct Affairs Chair; Jim Fisher- Community Outreach Chair. Filling the rest of the Pillar Chairs will be an ongoing task.

"A key component to success will be the recruitment of additional precinct committeemen, who are the grassroot workers of any political organization. I will focus a great deal of energy on that task as well as an expanded "get out the vote" plan. We will expand our office space in May to accommodate the increased training and voter outreach that will be taking place.", said Beard.

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### McLean County Republicans Central Committee Executive Board

#### Chairman

Connie Beard

#### Vice Chair

John Parrott

#### Secretary

Carol Anderson

#### Treasurer

Rita Eschmann

#### Division Chairs

Don Handzo, Blm South  
Lis Hiltabrand, Blm North  
Jerry Klinkner, Normal  
Annette Thompson, County West  
Chelsie Leffelman, County East

#### Pillar Chairs

Membership, Dave Nayak  
Precinct Affairs, Kim Miller  
Outreach, Jim Fisher



Newly elected precinct committeemen met to hold the 2026 McLean County Republican Convention. Elected officials such as Kathy Michael, our county clerk, plus Andy Ziebarth, a county board member for District 1 attended.



### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

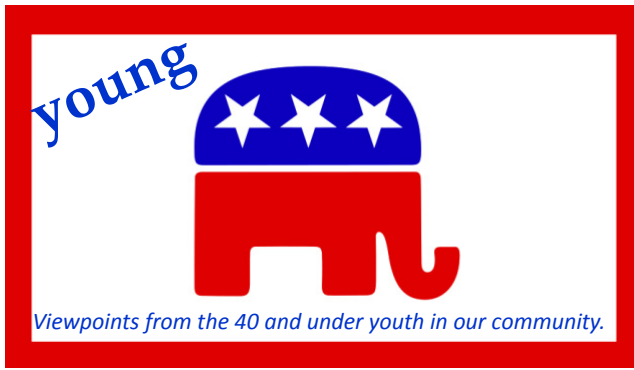
Our biggest event ever! That's what the Freedom Week is shaping up to be. Walk with us in the parade. Have fun and raise funds for vets. Mark the 170th anniversary of our Illinois Republican Party. End the week with a huge birthday party for America!

Saturday, May 30 is the biggest part of this week as we offer so many activities and entertainment for families. It is a huge fundraiser to help us get candidates to victory in November. We need your help.

Contact our Volunteer Coordinator Katrina Eames at [katrina52303@gmail.com](mailto:katrina52303@gmail.com) .

Volunteers get free admission into the fest. PLEASE consider this opportunity.

***See Mark Your Calendar pages for more details of upcoming events during Freedom Week!***



FEATURED

## COLUMNIST

### Baseball Season is Here

By Carl Hinshaw

Both baseball and political seasons are well underway in the state of Illinois. Just like baseball, political fans need to keep their “eye on the ball.”

Democrats like to blame Trump for an “affordability” crisis that was actually created by the Biden administration during the reckless Covid era spending on the “inflation reduction act” and billions of taxpayer dollars left on a palate to appease Iran. In addition, illegal aliens have cost taxpayers billions. Don’t take your eye off the ball here, it takes a while to unwind all this mess.

Governor JB tries to throw us a curve ball by blaming local taxing bodies like school districts for bloated property tax bills. That may be partially true but JB is the one who promised property tax and pension reform when he was first elected. The Democrat-controlled legislature in Springfield has complete control over the amount of exemptions allowed on your tax bill and have chosen to do nothing. They set all the rules that County Assessors must follow. Nothing has been changed or indexed for years. Good ideas have been proposed by the GOP for property tax relief but none have advanced to the floor for a vote.

JB tries to appeal to taxpayer’s compassion and emotions to embrace “illegal immigrants”. Don’t be fooled. He is like a pitcher throwing a “balk” just trying to pick you off base. LEGAL immigration needs to be the goal. Taxpaying legal citizens need to be the focus and have long been ignored by the super-majority in Springfield.

Democrats may be swift afoot but we must catch them stealing base in the fraud and abuse category in Illinois just as they have in Minnesota and elsewhere. Our state budget wreaks of wasteful and reckless spending!

While blaming everything on Trump, JB wants to try to slide into the White House in a couple years while he claims to want another term in Illinois. Don’t let him steal a base in either Springfield or D.C. Time to pick him off base and send him back to the political dugout!

Time to send a good pinch-hitter to the plate to go to bat for hard- working, LEGAL, taxpaying citizens. Let’s all help Darren Bailey get across home plate next November!

### McLean County Young Republicans in Springfield

[McLean County Young Republicans](#) joined other Young Republicans at the [Americans for Prosperity Illinois](#) Legislative Day at the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield. It was a great opportunity to meet with legislators and advocate for policies that promote freedom and opportunity in Illinois.



### Illinois College Republicans Gather Before Finals

Eighteen gathered for a cookout at the home of Connie and David Beard to celebrate a good year. Outgoing president, Ross Vancil reviewed the year and introduced incoming president Lia Kemnetz.





# Mark Your Calendar

## McLean County Republicans to Host Founder’s Day Celebration Honoring 170th Anniversary of the Illinois Republican Party

The McLean County Republicans invite the community to attend the Illinois Republican Founder’s Day Celebration on Friday, May 29, 2026, at 9:00 AM at Withers Park, 204 E. Washington Street, Bloomington, to commemorate the 170th Anniversary of the first Republican convention in Illinois.

This historic occasion honors the founding of the Illinois Republican Party and the convention that helped launch the political career of Abraham Lincoln, one of the most influential leaders in American history.

The event will bring together community members, local leaders, and supporters to reflect on the principles of freedom, opportunity, and constitutional government that shaped the early Republican Party and continue to guide civic leadership today.

“This celebration is an opportunity to honor the roots of our party and the enduring values that helped shape both Illinois and our nation,” organizers said. “As we approach America’s 250th Birthday, it is especially meaningful to remember the leaders and moments in history that helped preserve liberty and strengthen our republic.”

The Founder’s Day Celebration is part of Freedom Week, a countywide series of events taking place May 25–30 that celebrates freedom in our community and across the nation. Freedom Week includes the Memorial Day Parade Freedom Train on May 25, FUN-d Vets Music Bingo supporting veterans on May 26, and concludes with Freedom Fest on May 30 featuring live music, family entertainment, food, and community celebration.

The public is encouraged to attend and join in marking this important historic milestone while reaffirming a shared commitment to the principles of service, leadership, and freedom.



## McLean County Republicans to Host Official Ribbon Cutting for Expanded Headquarters on May 1

The McLean County Republicans will celebrate the official ribbon cutting of their expanded headquarters on **Friday, May 1, 2026, at 12:00 PM**, marking an exciting new chapter of growth and community engagement for the organization.

The event will take place at **202 S. Eldorado, Suite C1, Bloomington, IL**, where party leaders, volunteers, elected officials, candidates, and community members will gather to commemorate the addition of **1,400 square feet of new office space** designed to strengthen local efforts in training, fundraising, and voter outreach.

The expansion reflects the organization’s continued commitment to serving McLean County residents by providing additional room for volunteer coordination, campaign preparation, grassroots organizing, and leadership development.

“This office expansion is an investment in our future and in the people of McLean County,” said representatives of the McLean County Republicans. “We are building stronger opportunities for community involvement, civic engagement, and conservative leadership throughout our county.”

The ribbon cutting ceremony will include a light lunch and guided tours of the newly expanded headquarters. Guests will have the opportunity to meet local leaders, learn about volunteer opportunities, and see firsthand how the organization is preparing for the upcoming election season.

The public is warmly invited to attend, and RSVPs are requested to help with planning.

To RSVP, visit:

[www.McLeanCountyRepublicans.org/ribbon\\_cutting\\_may\\_1](http://www.McLeanCountyRepublicans.org/ribbon_cutting_may_1)

## McLean County Republicans to Host FUN-d Vets Music Bingo Night Supporting Veterans

BLOOMINGTON, IL — The McLean County Republicans invite the community to join them for FUN-d Vets Music Bingo Night on Tuesday, May 26, 2026, for an evening of fun, music, and meaningful support for local veterans.

The event will take place from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM at Cheeks Bar & Grill and is part of the larger Freedom Week celebration happening May 25–30 throughout McLean County.

FUN-d Vets Music Bingo combines the excitement of music trivia and bingo with a mission to support veterans through outdoor experiences and community engagement. Guests will enjoy a lively atmosphere filled with music, prizes, laughter, and fellowship while helping raise awareness and support for those who have served our country.

“This event is about bringing people together for a great cause,” organizers said. “Our veterans have given so much in service to our nation, and this is an opportunity for the community to show appreciation while enjoying a fun and memorable evening.”

The event is designed to be family-friendly and welcoming to everyone who wants to support local veterans and participate in Freedom Week activities.

FUN-d Vets Music Bingo follows the Memorial Day Parade Freedom Train kickoff on May 25 and leads into additional Freedom Week events, including the 170th Anniversary Celebration of the Illinois Republican Party on May 29 and Freedom Fest on May 30. Freedom Week celebrates freedom in our county and our country while helping prepare for America’s upcoming 250th Birthday..

The public is encouraged to attend, invite friends, and help make a difference for local veterans.



## McLean County Republicans to Host Freedom Fest 2026 Celebrating America’s 250th Birthday

The McLean County Republicans invite the community to join Freedom Fest 2026 on Saturday, May 30, at the American Hungarian Club, 1520 Calhoun Street in Bloomington, for a full day of patriotic celebration, family entertainment, and community fellowship as part of Freedom Week.

Freedom Fest serves as the grand finale of Freedom Week, a countywide celebration held May 25–30 honoring freedom in our nation and community while commemorating the approaching 250th Anniversary of America’s founding.

Festival hours will run from 12:00 PM to 9:00 PM and will feature live entertainment, family activities, food, games, raffles, and a special evening Dinner and Dance.

Featured entertainment includes a live performance by nationally recognized entertainer Eddy Koroza Jr. from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM. Known for his appearances in major productions including Home Alone and numerous national television appearances, Koroza brings an energetic and family-friendly performance that has delighted audiences across the country.

Families attending Freedom Fest will also enjoy bounce houses, face painting, balloon fun, games, raffles, and a costume contest designed to make the event welcoming for all ages.

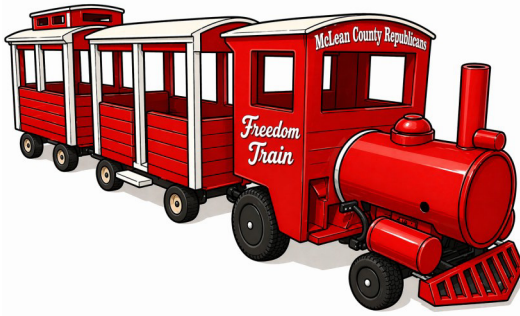
Beginning at 5:00 PM, guests can enjoy a barbecue dinner provided by Prairie Fire and Grill followed by Dinner and Dance under the stars featuring live music by Sweetwater Band from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM.



General admission tickets are \$5 for ages 4-12 and \$10 for above age 13. Veterans and children ages 3 and under receive free admission for the day event. The evening dinner tickets are \$15

Freedom Fest is designed to celebrate the values of freedom, community, and service while bringing residents together for an unforgettable kickoff to summer. “This is a celebration for the entire community,” organizers said. “As we prepare to honor America’s 250th Birthday, Freedom Fest gives us the opportunity to come together, celebrate our shared freedoms, support local families, and enjoy a day filled with music, fun, and patriotism.”

The public is encouraged to attend and bring family and friends for this special event.



## McLean County Republicans Invite Community to Join the Memorial Day Parade on the Freedom Train

The McLean County Republicans invite the community to honor America’s fallen heroes by joining the Freedom Train in the Bloomington Memorial Day Parade on Monday, May 25, 2026, as part of Freedom Week celebrations.

Participants are encouraged to gather at 8:00 AM, with parade step-off beginning promptly at 9:00 AM.

The Freedom Train, a red-and-white old-fashioned parade train proudly carrying the spirit of patriotism and remembrance, will serve as a special feature in this year’s

Memorial Day Parade. Community members are invited to ride along and help honor the brave men and women whose sacrifice secured the freedoms we enjoy today.

The Memorial Day Parade serves as the official kickoff of Freedom Week, a countywide celebration taking place May 25–30, culminating in Freedom Fest on Saturday, May 30.

“This is more than a parade—it is a moment of remembrance and gratitude,” organizers said. “Memorial Day reminds us that freedom is never free. As we approach America’s 250th Birthday, it is especially important that we pause to honor those who gave everything to preserve our nation and our liberty.” Families, veterans, volunteers, and community members of all ages are encouraged to participate and celebrate together. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early to secure their seat on the Freedom Train and take part in this meaningful tradition of remembrance and patriotism.

The weeklong Freedom Week celebration also includes Music Bingo supporting veterans on May 26, the 170th Anniversary Celebration of the Illinois Republican Party on May 29, and Freedom Fest on May 30 featuring live music, food, family fun, and community celebration.

### Prayer & Coffee – All Are Welcome



Join us for a **non-denominational gathering** as we come together in prayer for our community and our nation.

**First Wednesday of Each Month**

**9:00 AM – 10:00 AM**

**McLean County Republican Headquarters**

202 S. Eldorado, Suite C1

Bloomington, IL 61705

This special time of fellowship is focused on:

- ★ Praying for our elected officials (local, state, and national)
- ★ Lifting up our government and judicial system
- ★ Sharing in both **silent and spoken prayers**

Whether you prefer quiet reflection or joining in group prayer, all are welcome.

Let’s gather in unity as we lead up to the election and seek wisdom, guidance, and strength for our leaders and our country.

Coffee will be available – bring a friend!

**This & that**

**JOIN US** Every Tuesday Morning



**FREE - FUN- INFORMATIVE**

10:00am - 12:00pm

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