

2025 Local Government Priorities

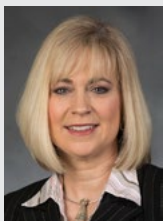
Identifying local government priorities to foster support and drive engagement for agriculture



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Our Mission

To improve county Farm Bureau® influence in local government issues and advance county Farm Bureau leaders' awareness, capability, and involvement in local government through information and assistance in understanding and planning on local government issues.

Call to Action

We encourage you to share LINK with county Farm Bureau leadership and membership.

We invite you to share this publication with your local officials. This information may be a LINK to their success.

Upcoming Dates & Events

February 18:

Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference (GALC)
www.ilfb.org/get-involved/events/galc-2025

February 25:

Consolidated Primary Elections

February 26-27:

Rural Community and Economic Development Conference
www.iira.org/conferences-trainings-and-workshops/rcedc

March 14-15:

Farm Bureau Advantage Conference
www.ilfb.org/get-involved/events/farm-bureau-advantage-conference

March 19:

Rural Partners Illinois Legislative Reception

April 1:

Consolidated Elections

April 8:

Annual Town Meeting



In Conversation with Mark Tuttle

By John Lock

Mark Tuttle is a DeKalb County farmer, the Illinois Farm Bureau District 1 Director and the chairman of the Illinois Government Committee. LINK sat down with Mark to talk about the 2025 IFB local government priorities, the importance of relationships and more.

Outside of IFB, what is your background in local government?

I've served 26 years as a trustee for the fire district. It's oversight of the money. We're a taxing body, so we have a responsibility to be fair to both the who we're representing and also the taxpayer. There is a fine line there. Sometimes, we need to ask for more money, but we have to be responsible with the money.

When you look at this year's local government priorities, what stands out to you?

We have to be engaged. That's the main thing. There are a lot of decisions being made. We hear about them all the time. Zoning is back in force again. Up in my district in Northeast Illinois, there is more construction getting started. Some of the county boards are overreaching on zoning, and it's reaching out into agriculture. We need to be there to represent ourselves on that overreach.

How important is building relationships?

Allies in Agriculture is a great start, but you have to attend the meetings and let them know who you are. It's important that the managers have representation, but it's not just the

managers; it's the farmers themselves. They need to tell their history and their personal stories. When there's an opportunity to provide testimony, we need to be there.



Mark Tuttle

How important is Allies in Agriculture?

This needs to be a priority for every county. The counties who haven't done it need to really give it a hard look. Other counties have experience with it, and they can work with them. We need all 102 counties involved.

Have you heard success stories of counties?

It opens the dialogue so much easier. There are many counties that advertise that they are successful with agriculture. Where we've done it, there are opportunities for discussion because we are already at the table.

How can the local government team help counties form local policy?

There's a lot of experience. The managers are trained well, and we have the best people. They work very hard. They're very good at lobbying, whether that's Springfield or the local level. We have hired some people with great expertise, and it's for the counties to reach in and tap into that knowledge. It will help position them for the challenges that will come up in the near future.





LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

2025



ALLIES IN AGRICULTURE

The local government team will work with county Farm Bureaus to promote and enhance the Allies in Agriculture program to cultivate relationships between county Farm Bureaus and units of local government by:

- Communicating with county Farm Bureaus on the importance of the Pro-Agriculture Resolution and coordinating efforts to increase the adoption or renewal of the Pro-Agriculture Resolution by county governments.
- Encouraging county Farm Bureaus to "Grow Allies" and expand their partnerships with local officials by 1) having these officials engage in county Farm Bureau events and ag-related activities and 2) gaining a deeper understanding of local government roles and responsibilities.
- Exploring county Farm Bureau relationships with other units of local government, with an initial focus on municipalities, to determine the viability of expanding the Allies in Agriculture program beyond counties.
- Supporting local policy development by county Farm Bureaus to use when interacting with units of local government.

LAND-USE REGULATIONS AND AUTHORITY

The local government team will work with county Farm Bureaus, utilizing the newly developed database and mapping tool, to monitor and evaluate county and municipal land-use regulations and authority, including local ordinances impacting agriculture. We will assist county Farm Bureaus by:

- Providing the tools to identify and address county government overreach when regulating agriculture.

- Encouraging counties and municipalities that have zoning to maintain a relevant definition and understanding of agriculture and agritourism.
- Encouraging counties and municipalities that have zoning to adopt ag-friendly language and code administration that supports agriculture and agritourism.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The local government team, working with county Farm Bureaus and other stakeholders, will focus on rural community development and quality of life issues in rural areas. These efforts will include:

- Facilitating county Farm Bureau participation with rural development organizations and events.
- Partnering with organizations focused on rural issues at the local, state and federal levels.
- Continuing support for rural areas through the Rural Development Grant Program, encouraging county Farm Bureau engagement with the grant projects, and collaborating with the county Farm Bureaus to recognize grant recipients.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE AND FISCAL TRANSPARENCY

The local government team, working with county Farm Bureaus, will advocate for a stronger understanding of local government finance and promotion of local government financial transparency. This will include:

- Working with county Farm Bureau staff and leadership on Illinois' overall tax policy, property assessment process and taxation.
- Communicating the relationship between property assessment and property taxes.
- Tracking trends in local government funding across county and state boundaries.

ALLIES IN AGRICULTURE

2025 to Focus on Enhancing Local Partnerships

Local government serves as the level of government closest to the people whose choices and policies directly impact the daily lives of residents. Whether it's zoning ordinances, environmental regulations, or property taxes, the policies adopted by local governments directly impact farmers and agricultural operations. Therefore, the relationships you form with your local officials are critically important in ensuring that agricultural and rural interests are reflected in local policy decisions.

That is why in 2025 we are prioritizing the promotion and enhancement of the Allies in Agriculture program. This program is a partnership effort between county Farm Bureaus and county government officials designed to assist county Farm Bureaus as they navigate this unit of government's roles and responsibilities while also explaining the role of county Farm Bureaus. The first step for a local government to be considered one of our Allies in Agriculture is the adoption of a Pro-Agriculture Resolution. For more information, please see the [December 2024 issue of LINK](#).

This year, we will communicate the importance of the Pro-Agriculture Resolution and coordinate efforts to increase the adoption or renewal of the resolution by county governments, even if the county has previously adopted one. This is because the

county board seated after the November 2024 General Election is not bound by the decisions, policies, or formally adopted positions of the county board seated prior to the election, even if the elected officials on the board did not change. It is also an opportunity to adopt a resolution with updated information about the role of agriculture in the county and build upon already established relationships with your elected officials.

On the topic of building strong relationships, we will encourage county Farm Bureaus to "Grow Allies" once a county adopts or readopts the resolution by having these officials engage in county Farm Bureau events and activities. This could include inviting these officials to one of your county Farm Bureau board meetings, or hosting an appreciation event such as a luncheon, dinner, or an on-the-farm cookout for local officials and members. This could also include setting up family-friendly visits to livestock farms (where appropriate), a ride on the combine during harvest, or seasonal gatherings with specialty crop producers.

Although the Allies in Agriculture program is currently focused on partnerships between farmers and their county governments, we will also prioritize working with county Farm Bureaus to expand this program to other units of local government that work



directly and positively with county Farm Bureaus to resolve issues impacting agricultural interests.

Finally, we will also support and assist with local policy development by county Farm Bureaus to use when interacting with units of local government. By adopting local policies, county Farm Bureaus provide consistency and direction to their board, staff, members, and elected officials when faced with any number of topics that may arise in local government. Having local policies also helps bolster consistency in your county Farm Bureau's approach to varying situations and gives your organization a formal voice in local government operations.

This year's local government priorities are designed to support county Farm Bureaus as they seek to establish and expand relationships with local officials. Through this engagement, county Farm Bureaus and farmers can ensure their voices are represented in the policies and decisions that directly affect the long-term prosperity of their industry, their livelihoods and their local communities. Contact Mitchell Remmert at MRemmert@ifb.org for questions, assistance or more information.

LAND-USE REGULATIONS AND AUTHORITY

Take a Priority Role in Monitoring Local Zoning Regulations

Understanding county and municipal government regulation of agriculture through land-use planning and zoning is one of our 2025 Local Government Priorities. Zoning is truly a local issue. While state statute has set some parameters, it leaves much of the application up to those county and municipal governments that have adopted it. To complicate matters, in counties or municipalities where zoning has been adopted, the regulation of agriculture is inconsistent – either through local application or statutory authority.

Since the zoning authority granted to counties and municipalities is very different when it comes to regulating agriculture, an understanding of those differences is where this 2025 priority begins.

County Regulation

In Illinois, only about half of our 102 counties are zoned. Apart from counties around St. Louis, most are in the northern half of the state. In counties that have adopted zoning, state law limits their ability to regulate agriculture by stating:

...“the powers in this section of statute shall not be exercised...so as to impose regulations or require permits with respect to land used or to be used for agricultural purposes...or with respect to ...buildings or structures used or to be used for agricultural purposes upon such land except that such buildings or structures...may be required to conform to building or set back lines...”

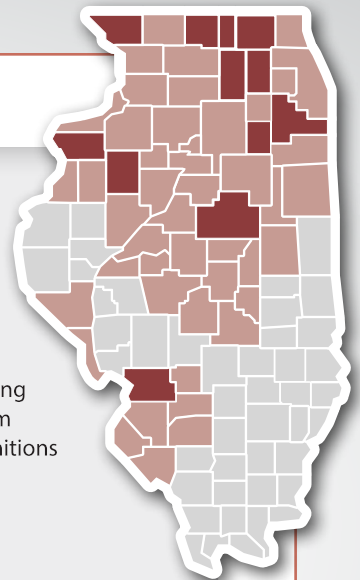
In other words, counties may not use zoning to regulate land and buildings used for agricultural purposes including limitations on size, location and design. The only exception to this is setback restrictions on agricultural buildings.

Municipal Regulation

Municipalities also have the authority to adopt zoning. However, as is the case with counties, not all of Illinois' nearly 1,300 municipalities have done so. Unlike counties, state law does not place the same limitations

A Map from the agriculture and agritourism zoning research project is hosted on the Illinois Farm Bureau's Leaders Portal. Users can click on their county to access a PDF (**as shown on page 10 of this publication**) to find information about their county's zoning code, agricultural districts, agritourism language, along with farmstand definitions and related requirements.

- Counties zoned in Illinois
- Counties zoned that include agritourism-related language in their zoning codes.



on municipal zoning authority, thereby granting them much more control over agriculture, agritourism and farming operations. This is often done through ordinances that define agriculture or agritourism as a permitted use or restrict it as a non-conforming use.

If a county is not zoned, a municipality may extend its zoning beyond its boundaries for up to 1.5 miles. This extension is allowed under extraterritorial jurisdiction authority. Through this reach, a municipality can control the use of property outside its boundaries, including farms. With this authority, even those county Farm Bureaus in counties that have not adopted zoning should consider monitoring the regulation of agriculture near municipalities.

Our Priorities

This type of diversity across the state creates inconsistencies, overreach and, on the flip side, omissions when regulating agricultural and agritourism development. We will work with county Farm Bureaus to address those concerns by providing tools to identify and limit county government overreach when regulating agriculture and encourage counties and municipalities that have zoning to adopt ag-friendly language and code administration that supports current agriculture and agritourism practices.

As we develop and improve these tools, we will share them with the county Farm Bureaus. In turn, we ask that county Farm Bureaus connect with their county and municipal officials on their definition of agriculture and agritourism and determine if the definition being used can be applied to current farming practices.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Digging Deeper into Rural Development

Rural development became a Local Government Priority in 2023, meaning 2025 represents our third year focusing on work in this area. We first initiated this priority in order to put into practice Illinois Farm Bureau policy on rural development, which can be found on pages 85-86 in our [2025 Policy Resolutions](#).

Over the past two years, we've seen solid progress in:

- making rural development a high priority
- gaining insight on government and private rural development programs in which we can be engaged
- coordinating rural development activities within the state and county Farm Bureau levels
- identifying rural development initiatives we will support
- collaborating with county Farm Bureaus to provide guidance and encouragement on being involved with rural development efforts in their counties and communities.

During this time, we piloted and then fully launched a rural development grant program that has garnered significant interest across the state, supported county Farm Bureau manager participation in rural development conferences and events, and worked closely with other rural development organizations, becoming a trusted partner and resource.

As we developed our 2025 Local Government Priorities, it was clear that rural development should remain as one of them. However, our focus continues to evolve, particularly when it comes to how we define rural development. While community and economic development is one aspect of it, we are also focusing on quality of life needs in rural areas as well as how we can engage in rural issues more broadly.

This year, our efforts on rural development will include:

- 1** Facilitating county Farm Bureau participation with rural development organizations and events. Examples of this could include attending the upcoming [Rural Community and Economic Development Conference](#) or getting engaged as a member of [Rural Partners Illinois](#), including attending their legislative reception and community showcase.
- 2** Partnering with organizations focused on rural issues at the local, state and federal levels. We are actively involved with the [Governor's Rural Affairs Council](#), [Rural Partners Illinois](#), the [Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs](#), the [Illinois Rural Health Association](#) and [USDA Rural Development in Illinois](#). We want to continue to deepen these relationships and partner where possible.
- 3** Continuing support for rural areas through the [Rural Development Grant Program](#), including ongoing encouragement for county Farm Bureaus to engage with the grant projects and collaborating with the county Farm Bureaus to recognize grant recipients.

One of the things we have learned over the past two years is that there is an abundant amount of interest and pride in the rural communities across our state along with a strong and passionate desire to make them even better places to live. Farms and rural communities have a symbiotic relationship, and both benefit when the other is thriving. Illinois Farm Bureau, in partnership with our county Farm Bureaus and in collaboration with like-minded organizations, is committed to making a positive difference on rural issues for our members and all who call rural America home. We look forward to working together in the year ahead.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE & FISCAL TRANSPARENCY

Plans To Engage and Prioritize Local Government Finance Starts Now

As units of local government begin thinking about the new year, implementing budgeting is likely a priority. Resolutions made on this priority create discussions and decisions on valuable services impacting your security and comfort. Being a part of those discussions and decisions can pay dividends in services provided to farmers and rural members. Included in the 2025 Local Government Priorities are opportunities to better understand local government finance and engage in efforts to promote fiscal transparency. Work on this priority starts with identifying local government revenue sources and spending obligations.

On the revenue side, property tax, sales tax and state revenue sharing, in the form of income tax and motor fuel tax dollars, are the primary sources of general funding for many units of local government, especially counties, townships and municipalities. Of those, property tax is generally the largest contributor. This is a revenue source that provides more stability and local control compared to those other funding sources listed above.

However, tax revenue is not the only source of local government funding. Across the state, local units of government can fund specific projects and programs with grants and user fees. While these grants and fees are part of the larger revenue portfolio, these dollars often do not have flexibility in spending and are earmarked for designated expenditures. Units of local government have much more discretion with tax revenue.

So, with the stability and flexibility that comes with property tax revenue, it's no surprise that it is, and will likely continue to be, the primary revenue source for local governments, a large expense for property owners and a priority for local government engagement. That engagement begins now with making plans for participation and building

relationships in preparation for those budget discussions happening this fall in county board and committee rooms across that state.

While there is no uniform timeline for county budgeting, most counties' fiscal years run from January 1 to December 31. In that case, they begin their budget process in the fall, often in September or October. During that time, the finance committee in counties structured under the township form of government, or the committee as a whole in counties structured under the commission form of government prepares a tentative budget. These early meetings are open to the public and offer a great opportunity for transparency and information sharing on revenue needs and spending.

Over the course of the budget process, there are other opportunities for the public to engage including:

- A public hearing prior to approving the final budget
- Review of the published tax levy request and total amount budgeted for individual funds
- Attending Truth in Taxation meetings (required to be held if the proposed aggregate levy is greater than 5% of the previous year's tax extension)

Except for a few mandatory services, the expenditure side of the equation is largely driven by the wants and needs of citizens in the district. At the county level, these can include services addressing transportation, public health and safety needs and recreational interests. Opportunities to engage and manage expenses include:

- Promoting intergovernmental cooperation
- Advocating for spending on services that specifically address rural needs
- Encouraging your county government to adopt a Pro-Agriculture Resolution recognizing agriculture as an economic engine within the county and supporting the need for rural services and infrastructure

As we continue into the new year, county Farm Bureaus can play a significant role in advocating for local government fiscal responsibility and promotion of the 2025 Local Government Priorities.

Land-Use Zoning Tool for Illinois Counties

To better help county Farm Bureaus identify their county's authority in the areas of land-use planning and zoning, IFB created an interactive map highlighting each county. CFBs access this information and help achieve our 2025 local government priority of collecting and monitoring local zoning ordinances and definitions targeting agriculture and agritourism in the county.

This tool is designed to help raise awareness of the language currently being used in local ordinances and the potential impact those ordinances have on the county's farming community. This information is available on the Illinois Farm Bureau's Leaders Portal under the Local Government Resources tab.

See Graphic on Page 10



Welcome New Class of Think LINK Managers

The Local Government Team is happy to welcome the new class of Think LINK participants!

- Lindsey Vogt, *Clark and Jasper County Farm Bureaus*
- Kacie Claire, *Ford-Iroquois Farm Bureau*
- Parker Hutchcraft, *Franklin County Farm Bureau*
- Jayclynn Presutti, *Jackson County Farm Bureau*
- Korbin Collins, *Kankakee County Farm Bureau*
- Sydnee Shafer, *Piatt County Farm Bureau*
- Kenzie Dillow, *Union County Farm Bureau*

This new cohort of Think LINK will continue to focus on local government. We will work with the managers to build awareness, experience and understanding of local issues, local government structure and authorities, and to help them engage with local officials in their county and community. Through this process, participants will become more comfortable with—thus more involved in—local government. **This new class represents the eleventh group of managers to participate in Think LINK. Please offer them your congratulations.**



Lindsey Vogt



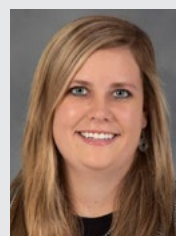
Kacie Claire



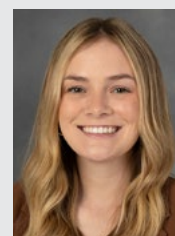
Parker Hutchcraft



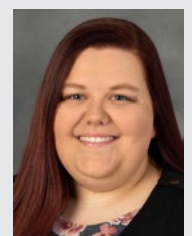
Jayclynn Presutti



Korbin Collins



Sydnee Shafer



Kenzie Dillow

Land-Use Zoning Tool for Illinois Counties

Continued from Page 9



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SAMPLE COUNTY



COUNTY ZONED?

Yes



AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS?

Yes

["A-1" Agriculture Preservation District](#)
["A-2" Agricultural District](#)



AGRITOURISM-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE?

Yes

Agritainment/Agritourism: A commercial operation in conjunction with a working farm for the recreation, education, enjoyment and entertainment of visitors that involves agriculturally based operation and activities on agricultural property, as defined in § 3-35 of the Use Tax Act. **AGRITAINMENT/AGRITOURISM** activities include, but are not limited to: historic, cultural, and on-site educational programs; guided and self-guided tours; petting zoos; crop mazes; U-pick operations; farm-related gift shop; estate distilling and winemaking; horseback or pony rides; and hayrides or sleigh rides. Accessory uses may include the sale of food and refreshment for consumption on site.



FARMSTANDS INFORMATION

Definition:
[Roadside sales: grown on premises](#)

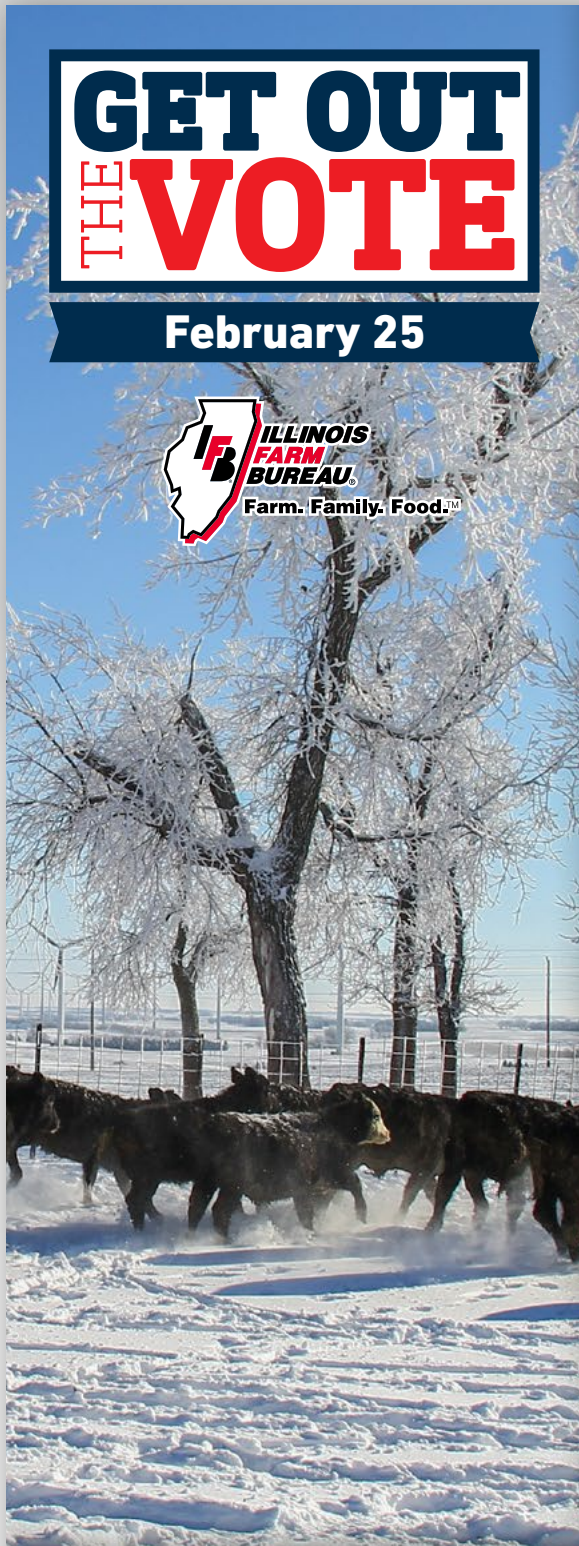
Districts permitted in, and other requirements:
[Temporary use in "A-1", "A-2", "R-R" and Conservation Districts.](#)
[Temporary use regulations:](#)

In "A-1", "A-2", and "RR" Districts, permit will be issued for one stand on parcels with at least one acre and road frontage of 250 feet. Sales areas, including the stand, shall be set back a minimum of 30 feet from the nearest right-of-way of any street or highway.

If the site is used for growing a minimum of 50% of the farm produce sold, the owner of the site may import farm product not grown on the site for seasonal sale.

Max use permit shall be for a six-month period.

Primary Election Information



Scan the QR code to visit our webpage for more information.

Source: State of Illinois 2025 Candidate's Guide
Issued by the Illinois State Board of Elections

2025 LOCAL ELECTIONS

Consolidated Primary - February 25

Date	Description
January 16	Early voting begins, vote by mail ballots mailed
January 28	Regular voter registration ends
January 29	Grace period voter registration and voting begins
February 9	Online voter registration ends
February 20	Last day for vote by mail applications through mail
February 24	Last day for vote by mail applications in person, early voting ends
February 25 6am-7pm	Primary Election Day

ESTABLISHED POLITICAL PARTIES:

OFFICERS TO BE NOMINATED AT THE PRIMARY

MUNICIPAL – municipalities with population over 5,000 and/or special charter districts

- Mayor or President
- Municipal Treasurer
- Municipal Clerk
- Aldermen or Trustees

**Municipalities with a population under 5,000 may determine by ordinance that political parties shall nominate candidates by primary.*

**Villages that have nominated and elected candidates for president and trustees in partisan elections prior to 1992, may continue to hold partisan elections.*

TOWNSHIPS

- Township Supervisor
- Township Clerk
- Township Assessor, Multi-Township Assessor
- Highway Commissioner
- Township Collector (if elected) – township organized counties with population of over 100,000, except Cook County, may conduct a referendum to discontinue the office of collector
- Township Trustees
- Primary may be conducted for the following if township central committee approved by August 15, 2024
 - Townships in Cook County
 - Townships and Multi-Township Assessment Districts, with a population of more than 15,000 outside of Cook County.
 - Townships of 5,000 population coterminous or wholly within cities/villages not under commission from of government.

NONPARTISAN:

OFFICERS TO BE NOMINATED AT THE PRIMARY

- Municipal – Council-Manager form
 - Mayor or President
 - Clerk
 - Treasurer
 - Council Members, Trustees or Aldermen

General Election Information

GET OUT THE VOTE

April 1



Scan the QR code to visit our webpage for more information.

Source: State of Illinois 2025 Candidate's Guide
Issued by the Illinois State Board of Elections

2025 LOCAL ELECTIONS

Consolidated Election - April 1

Date	Description
February 20	Early voting begins, vote by mail ballots mailed
March 4	Regular voter registration ends
March 5	Grace period voter registration and voting begins
March 7	Early voting begins <i>if a primary was held</i> , vote by mail ballots mailed
March 16	Online voter registration ends
March 27	Last day for vote by mail applications through mail
March 31	Last day for vote by mail applications in person, early voting ends
April 1 6am–7pm	Election Day

ESTABLISHED POLITICAL PARTIES, INDEPENDENT, AND NEW POLITICAL PARTY OFFICERS TO BE ELECTED:

- Mayor or President
- Municipal Clerk
- Municipal Alderman or Trustee
- Township Clerk
- Township Assessor or Multi-Township Assessor
- Highway Commissioner
- Township Collector (if elected) – township organized counties with population of over 100,000, except Cook County, may conduct a referendum to discontinue the office of collector
- Municipal Treasurer
- Township Supervisor

NONPARTISAN OFFICERS TO BE ELECTED (General Summary):

- Municipal - Council-Manager form and Commission form
- Mayor or President
- Municipal Clerk
- Municipal Treasurer (Council-Manager only)
- Municipal Council Members, Commissioners, or Trustees, or Aldermen
- Municipal – City of Chicago (run—off elections if required)
- Park District – Commissioners and Trustees
- Public Library District – Trustees
- Township and Municipal Library – Trustees
- Regional Board of School Trustees – Trustees
- School District – Board Members and School Directors
- Community College District – Trustees
- Township Land Commissioners (in counties under 220,000 population)
- Fire Protection District – Commissioners
- Road District – Clerk and Commissioners
- Springfield Metropolitan Exposition and Auditorium Authority – Commissioners
- Other special purpose districts (see applicable statutes)