

## WGLT ISSUES AND PROGRAMS First Quarter 2024

The following issues were addressed during WGLT Newscasts during MORNING EDITION from 5 to 9 am M-F and during ALL THINGS CONSIDERED from 3-7PM, M-F, and during WGLT's local news magazine show Sound Ideas, 5-5:30pm, M-F, January 2024-March 2024. The story lengths range from one minute to 22 minutes. Other examples of WGLT addressing community issues can be found at [www.wglt.org](http://www.wglt.org).

### Politics and Government

#### [Former Normal Mayor Kent Karraker passes away](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 25, 2024

Kent Karraker, who was in his 80s, grew up in southern Illinois and became an executive at the Illinois Farm Bureau. He was elected to the Normal Town Council in 1983 and elected mayor 10 years later.

#### ['It is difficult right now': Housing coalition cites ongoing challenges in Bloomington-Normal](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 22, 2024

It's getting harder, not easier, to find housing in Bloomington-Normal, according to an updated report from the McLean County Housing Coalition on area housing and homelessness.

#### [ISU political scientist dismisses idea that primaries presage outcome of general elections](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 21, 2024

A lot of pundits are looking at primary election results and suggesting the data show President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump have weaknesses in their core support that could haunt them in the fall. But an Illinois State University political scientist cautions against thinking the numbers are a harbinger of results in November.

#### [McLean County Board GOP primary results favor newcomers](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 19, 2024

Two newcomers won Republican primary races for McLean County Board on Tuesday in districts that cover the southern half of the county.

## **McGraw tops Crowl in 17th Congressional District GOP primary**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 19, 2024

Joe McGraw won the Republican primary in the 17th Congressional District of Illinois on Tuesday. The former judge from Rockford defeated Scott Crowl, a Milan area farmer and former union official.

## **Police militarization nothing new, says scholar coming to speak at ISU**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 15, 2024

Some worry about the militarization of police agencies nationwide as tactical units, automatic weapons, body armor, and armored vehicles proliferate to cities across the nation. A noted scholar who will appear at Illinois State University on March 28 said that's really nothing new.

## **21 Women Who Shaped B-N: Carol Reitan an energetic visionary with a finger on many pulses**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 14, 2024

Domestic violence, experimental theater, the corrections system, the environment, municipal government — you name it, Carol Reitan made it better. She was also the first female mayor of Normal.

## **Bloomington city manager is a top candidate for Arizona job**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 7, 2024

Bloomington City Manager Tim Gleason is the finalist for a job in Florence, Arizona. The Florence Town Council has an executive session scheduled about Gleason's candidacy Friday morning.

## **Normal mayor: Business balance a reason to consider smoke shop limit in Uptown**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 6, 2024

The mayor of Normal said a potential ban on more smoke shops in Uptown relates to the purpose of the district. Mayor Chris Koos said the idea behind Uptown is to have an area that gets used 18 hours a day, and not just by university students but by the community. That requires a mix of businesses.

## **Bloomington homeless problem could prompt emergency declaration and request for county services**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 4, 2024

The City of Bloomington may want more out of the sales tax money it sends to McLean County.

### **[Laborers Home Development tries again to put apartments on Coachman motel site in Bloomington](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 1, 2024

The Bloomington Planning Commission will take up a proposal next week for a 51-unit apartment project on the site of the old Coachman Motel at Washington and Gridley Streets downtown. The Laborer's Home Development Corporation (LHDC) has asked for a variance to reduce the amount of required parking.

### **[Bloomington moves to condemn landmark downtown building at Front and Center](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 29, 2024

The City of Bloomington has begun condemnation proceedings on the long-vacant Front N Center building downtown. The former Montgomery Ward department store building has been deteriorating for decades and been a matter of concern during the administrations of the last three mayors.

### **[Your TV may be watching you: Data privacy in a smart system world](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 28, 2024

Privacy and cybersecurity experts tell Bloomington-Normal residents they need to worry more about containing their information.

### **[Normal city manager: Housing planning changes can't happen quickly despite need](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 24, 2024

The city manager of Normal said the issues raised by proposed state legislation to eliminate single family zoning are important to the town even though the measure would only affect cities that are larger than Bloomington and Normal.

### **[Normal Library asbestos removal and renovation bid \\$5.1 million](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 23, 2024

The price tag to remove asbestos from the Normal Public Library and renovate the facility in Uptown is now up to \$5.1 million.

## **Wendt faces primary opponent for McLean County Board seat**

Charlie Schlenker February 19, 2024

George Wendt has served the largely rural and very Republican leaning McLean County Board District three for 14 years. In an unusual event, Wendt faces a primary challenge from Brian Loeffler, a farmer in the southern and western part of the county.

## **McLean County has high potential for work-from-home permanence**

Charlie Schlenker February 16, 2024

McLean County had a huge shift to work-from-home employment during the pandemic. In fact, a bigger percentage change than in all but two other counties in Illinois.

## **Expired terms leave Bloomington Human Relations Commission idle for six months**

Charlie Schlenker February 16, 2024

The mayor of Bloomington acknowledged in a WGLT interview that the city's Human Relations Commission needs new people on it. The terms of all but two of the current seven members have expired.

## **Owner of Clinton nuclear power plant files license extension application**

Charlie Schlenker February 15, 2024

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will review the proposal from Constellation Energy to allow the plant to operate another 20 years, through 2047.

## **These are the Illinois 2024 primary races to watch**

February 8, 2024

From the hotly contested Cook County state's attorney race to a referendum in Chicago on money for the homeless, here are the important local decisions on your ballot.

## **Lack of housing saps B-N growth, increases social service needs**

Charlie Schlenker January 26, 2024

The lack of housing and affordable housing means Bloomington-Normal is losing out on some of the economic benefits created by Rivian. The shortage also is increasing the number of unhoused people in the community and has the potential to cause an exponential growth in homelessness.

## **New economic development financing tool comes to McLean County**

Charlie Schlenker January 26, 2024

An organization that tries to stimulate economic development in central Illinois says it can help address the housing shortage in McLean County. The Tri-County River Valley Development Authority (TRVDA) helps issue lower cost bonds.

## **Fairview senior affordable housing project fails to advance**

Charlie Schlenker January 23, 2024

A hoped-for affordable housing project for senior citizens in Normal will not go forward. The Laborers Home Development Corporation, an offshoot of the Laborers' International Union, had proposed a 46-unit complex that depended in part on tax credits to finance construction.

## **One thing is certain with developing a housing incentive policy: It's complicated**

Charlie Schlenker January 23, 2024

Bloomington-Normal leaders have different views whether or how government should be involved in breaking the logjam of factors that has slowed the pace of new housing construction.

## **Senate confirms Chris Koos to Amtrak board**

Charlie Schlenker January 23, 2024

After nearly four years of waiting and nominations by two different presidents, the mayor of Normal has a seat on the board of the nation's passenger rail service.

## **Illinois Wesleyan University gains \$5 million in state equity funding**

Charlie Schlenker January 23, 2024

The Illinois Board of Higher Education is handing Illinois Wesleyan University more than \$5 million for infrastructure. Illinois Wesleyan says it's not sure yet exactly how it will use the money.

## **Bloomington-Normal industrial park moves forward near Central Illinois Regional Airport**

Charlie Schlenker January 22, 2024

There will be major progress this year toward the creation of an industrial park on the southeast side of Bloomington.

## **Bloomington mayor says migrant arrivals are an opportunity**

Charlie Schlenker January 16, 2024

The mayor of Bloomington said he's glad the community had the discussion about spending public dollars on services to migrants who might be bused from the border to central Illinois. Mboka Mwilambwe said he's also pleased the McLean County Board rejected the proposed ban on such spending last week.

## **Bill Caisley, a longtime judge and former McLean County Board member, has died**

Charlie Schlenker January 13, 2024

At one time, Bill Caisley was the youngest judge in the state of Illinois, and when he retired, he was among the longest-serving members of the judiciary.

## **Connect Transit looking at simplifying fares, changing fare boxes**

Charlie Schlenker January 9, 2024

Connect Transit may change how much it charges for rides on the Bloomington-Normal bus system and modernize its fare boxes. A proposal will go board members at their February meeting. If approved, the draft package would be put out for the public to offer input before any formal adoption.

## **Board of review cuts estimated market value of Eastland Mall by 24%**

Charlie Schlenker January 8, 2024

The McLean County Board of Review has reduced the assessed value of Eastland Mall by a couple million dollars — from \$8.7 million to \$6.7 million. The assessed value is one third of the estimated market value of a property and is used to compute property taxes owed to governmental bodies such as municipalities, townships, and school districts.

## **Reece: Normal has a lot more planned for 2024**

Charlie Schlenker January 5, 2024

As the new year kicks off, the Town of Normal is looking forward to more capital projects, more equipment purchases, and more economic activity. City Manager Pam Reece said last year was a very busy one with capital improvements and a lot of accomplishments.

## **Remembering ISU and Bloomington-Normal community leader Betty Kinser**

Charlie Schlenker January 5, 2024

Longtime Bloomington-Normal leader Betty Kinser has died. The educator, political activist, and community servant shed a bright light for decades, one she cast as much with her energy as she did her personal warmth and vivid personality.

### **ISU study: Lawmakers' gender matters on gun laws**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 3, 2024

It turns out the more women there are in a state house of representatives, the more likely it is legislation will pass that deals with firearms. That's according to new scholarship by an Illinois State University economist.

### **Mission accomplished: Gleason reflects on his 6 years as city manager and why he's leaving Bloomington**

[Eric Stock](#) March 29, 2024

Bloomington City Manager Tim Gleason said the city of Decatur approached him “unexpectedly” about coming back, adding he pursued job in the Phoenix, Arizona area where he has family, but that fell through after he was named a finalist.

### **Bloomington City Manager Tim Gleason returning to former position in Decatur**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) March 28, 2024

Six years after leaving the top administrator job in Decatur, Bloomington City Manager Tim Gleason is set to return for a second act in the same position.

### **Pritzker eyes bigger piece of Illinois sports betting action after 4 booming years**

March 28, 2024

### **LaHood pushes employer incentives during tour of HCC's new Advanced Manufacturing Center**

### **McLean County Director of Behavioral Health Coordination resigns**

March 26, 2024

### **Bloomington council OKs relaxing parking minimums with elimination on the table**

[Adeline Schultz](#) March 25, 2024

The Bloomington City Council approved a move that may lead to the elimination of parking minimums in the city at its meeting Monday night.

## **[Durbin celebrates Senate confirmation of Normal Mayor Chris Koos to Amtrak board](#)**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) March 25, 2024

The U.S. Senate voted in January to confirm Normal Mayor Chris Koos' appointment to the Amtrak Board of Directors. Koos said he's already been to his first board meeting since then.

## **[Republican Joe McGraw pushes border security in competitive 17th Congressional District race](#)**

[Eric Stock](#) March 21, 2024

Joe McGraw handily defeated Scott Cowl in the Republican primary for the 17th Congressional District on Tuesday. He faces first-term Democratic congressman Eric Sorensen in the November election.

## **[For the most part, incumbents beat back challengers amid low primary turnout](#)**

[Peter Hancock](#) March 20, 2024

## **[McLean County GOP chair disappointed by low turnout in Illinois primary election](#)**

[Eric Stock](#) March 20, 2024

Dennis Grundler said he believes there's too much division within the Republican party in McLean County as some have strayed from fiscal conservatism.

## **[Regan Deering defeats Chuck Erickson in 88th Illinois House GOP primary](#)**

[Eric Stock](#) March 19, 2024

Regan Deering is poised to replace Dan Caulkins of Decatur, who chose not to seek a fourth term. No Democrats have filed for the seat in the general election.

## **[With few contested races, McLean County primary turnout was just 17%](#)**

[Ryan Denham](#) March 19, 2024

Voter turnout fell to just 17% in McLean County, according to preliminary vote totals from the county clerk's office and the Bloomington Election Commission.

## **[Don Everhart wins GOP primary, setting up 5th term as McLean County circuit clerk](#)**

[Ryan Denham](#) March 19, 2024

McLean County Circuit Clerk Don Everhart easily fought off a GOP primary challenge Tuesday from one of his former employees, Jason Dazey, setting Everhart up for another term come November.

### **[Election results for McLean County and Illinois House and Senate races](#)**

[Ryan Denham](#) March 19, 2024

Polls are now closed for the Illinois primary election. The winners will advance to the Nov. 5 general election. See election results for several McLean County, state and congressional races that we're following.

### **[Bloomington council seeks flexibility in final draft of downtown streetscape plan](#)**

[Eric Stock](#) March 18, 2024

Last year, the city paid \$750,000 for an engineering firm to design the plan that includes improved walkability, lighting, expanded public art and significant infrastructure improvements.

### **[Normal council OKs adding traffic signals at Fort Jesse Road intersections](#)**

[Jack Podlesnik](#) March 18, 2024

Traffic signals will be installed at the intersections of Fort Jesse Road and Landmark Drive, and Fort Jesse and Greenbriar Drive, following approval Monday by the Normal Town Council.

### **[Illinois high court asked to review law limiting venue in constitutional challenges](#)**

[Peter Hancock](#) March 18, 2024

### **[Fewer Illinois residents using payday lenders after state capped interest rates](#)**

[Amy Yee](#) March 15, 2024

High-cost consumer loans with interest as high as 200% have plummeted since a state law passed in March 2021 put a ceiling on interest rates at 36%.

### **[Future of Lincoln's Logan Correctional Center is in flux under rebuild plan](#)**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) March 15, 2024

A state plan to rebuild two aging prisons has some state and local government leaders in Logan County concerned about the future of a facility that provides nearly 500 jobs in the area.

## **[McLean County Board approves funding for area's only certified rape crisis center](#)**

[Melissa Ellin](#) March 15, 2024

YWCA Stepping Stones in Bloomington outlined in its proposal that it will use the funds to hire a new counselor and continue paying for six months of a current staff member's salary in the hope of bringing down a wait list that reached up to 65 people when the group recently lost annual federal funding it typically received.

## **[What we know so far about Behavioral Health Coordinating Council meetings being suspended](#)**

[Melissa Ellin](#) March 13, 2024

McLean County Board Chair Catherine Metsker suspended meetings for the behavioral health advisory committee. She's given little detail about what that might mean for committee members or the public. Here's what WGLT knows so far.

## **[Thousands of immigrants in Illinois to lose health care coverage](#)**

[Alex Degman](#) March 12, 2024

Programs offering insurance to undocumented — and some documented — residents are undergoing some cost-saving changes.

## **[County Board to vote on contentious grant for Bloomington rape crisis center](#)**

[Melissa Ellin](#) March 12, 2024

A request for \$100,000 in stopgap funding for YWCA McLean County's Stepping Stones has proved contentious, with multiple County Board meetings mired by discussing proper protocol and procedure. Despite this, two boards approved the proposal and the full County Board is set to vote on it Thursday.

## **[Look up candidates for Congress, Illinois General Assembly on your 2024 primary ballot](#)**

[Matt Kiefer](#) March 12, 2024

This tool, based on data from the Illinois State Board of Elections, helps voters understand who is running for office in some of the key races during this election. Enter your address to see who will appear on your ballot.

## **[Sen. Turner pushes back on taxes and immigrant healthcare in role on budget negotiation team](#)**

[Eric Stock](#) March 11, 2024

Illinois Senate Republicans are accusing the Pritzker administration of not being transparent about how much the state is spending on services for migrants. The governor's proposed budget calls for \$182 million to support the influx of asylum seekers.

### **[McLean County behavioral health council meetings suspended indefinitely for not fulfilling their 'mission'](#)**

[Melissa Ellin](#) March 8, 2024

McLean County Board's Behavioral Health Coordinating Council (BHCC) meetings were indefinitely suspended Friday because it has not been fulfilling the goals set out in 2016, according to an email obtained by WGLT from County Administrator Cassy Taylor. The email said it was "sent on behalf of the County Board Chair" Catherine Metsker.

### **[Ambitious plan unveiled to boost college spending in Illinois -- and more fairly distribute money](#)**

[Lisa Kurian Philip](#) March 7, 2024

The plan would increase spending at Illinois four-year campuses by \$1.4 billion over the next 10 or 15 years and drive money to schools with higher need students.

### **[Democracy's Future podcast: How college Democrats and socialists view the upcoming election](#)**

[Megan Spoerlein](#) March 6, 2024

In the latest episode of the WGLT/Vidette podcast series Democracy's Future, you'll hear from a Democrat and from a socialist in central Illinois about how they're viewing the 2024 election.

### **[Two Republicans vying for spot on November ballot in Illinois' 17th Congressional District](#)**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) March 6, 2024

Joe McGraw, left, and Scott Crowl are running in the 17th Congressional District Republican primary March 19. The winner will face Democrat Eric Sorensen in November.

### **[Bloomington rape crisis center seeks financial aid from McLean County to decrease client waitlist](#)**

[Melissa Ellin](#) March 4, 2024

Stepping Stones is asking for \$100,000 one-year stop-gap funding primarily to hire an additional counselor that will bring down the waitlist, and the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council (BHCC) is set to vote on the proposal Friday.

## **21 Women Who Shaped B-N: Eva Jones, more than the 'first'**

Melissa Ellin March 1, 2024

Eva Jones was the first woman and person of color to make the District 87 school board. That was in 1971. Six years later, she became president and three years after that she was on the Bloomington City Council.

## **Convicted aide to former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan will see his six-figure pension suspended**

Dave McKinney February 29, 2024

Timothy Mapes was convicted of lying to a federal grand jury as part of an effort to thwart the feds' probe into former House Speaker Michael Madigan.

## **Cook County judge kicks Trump off Illinois ballot — but puts her own order on hold**

Dave McKinney February 29, 2024

The judge's decision comes as Illinois' primary is less than three weeks away. It's likely to be appealed.

## **New birth center to open on Chicago's South Side as Pritzker touts proposed maternal health spending**

Dilpreet Raju February 27, 2024

State and community leaders on Monday celebrated the planned opening of a new freestanding birth center on Chicago's South Side while emphasizing proposed maternal health spending increases in Gov. JB Pritzker's budget.

## **Council vote means long-delayed \$14.6M Fox Creek Road bridge project could begin this year**

Michele Steinbacher February 27, 2024

The Bloomington City Council voted Monday to finalize construction plans for major work on Fox Creek Road and a bridge crossing the Union Pacific Railroad. City leaders also voted to spend another \$2 million on this year's road and sidewalk maintenance programs.

## **Central Illinois lawmakers split on Pritzker's budget proposal**

Camryn Cutinello February 21, 2024

Pritzker's proposed total expenditure for the upcoming fiscal year is \$52.697 billion, with a surplus of \$128 million. Pritzker praised the state's development over the last few years and pledged to pass a balanced budget.

## **Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker's \$52.7B budget proposal would revamp state's pension system**

Tina Sfondeles February 21, 2024

Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Wednesday unveiled a \$52.7 billion spending plan that includes the blueprint for a pension overhaul, funding for the migrant crisis and the creation of a child tax credit.

## **Bloomington's proposed budget puts \$90M into capital projects, mostly focused on streets and water**

Michele Steinbacher February 20, 2024

Bloomington leaders gathered Monday to dig into \$90 million of proposed capital projects for the upcoming year. All the plans are tentative, listed as part of a proposed \$332 million fiscal 2025 budget. Bloomington City Council votes on that document April 8.

## **Pritzker to mull tightening fiscal landscape in budget address this week**

Jerry Nowicki February 19, 2024

Gov. JB Pritzker will give his sixth state budget address this week, laying out his plan for a fiscal year that government forecasters in November predicted is on pace for a near-\$900 million deficit unless corrective action is taken.

## **After Illinois banned assault weapons, rural gun owners registered very few of them**

Mawa Iqbal February 19, 2024

A new law allowed gun owners to keep assault weapons if they disclosed them. Illinois county registration rates ranged from 0.5% to 1.8%.

## **A battle between 2 Republicans in McLean County District 2 primary**

Melissa Ellin February 19, 2024

McLean County District 2 Republican Jim Soeldner will not run for a fifth term. Here's a look at the two Republicans vying for a chance at the McLean County District 2 seat.

### **Unions target far-right Illinois state representatives**

Alex Degman February 16, 2024

Unions representing teachers, laborers and police officers are spending big bucks to try primarying southern Illinois Republicans.

### **McLean County Board advances proposal for 2nd waste transfer site**

Michele Steinbacher February 15, 2024

The McLean County Board voted 11-6 in favor of an application for a waste transfer site in south Bloomington. Next, the proposal needs approval from the state's pollution control board.

### **Deering, Erickson push conservative credentials in 88th Illinois House race**

Eric Stock February 15, 2024

Chuck Erickson of Bloomington and Regan Deering of Decatur are competing in the 88th Illinois House District to replace Dan Caulkins, a Republican from Decatur who is not seeking re-election after serving since 2019.

### **Without city help, Pritzker and Preckwinkle to ask for \$250 million more to help fund migrant crisis**

Tina Sfondeles February 15, 2024

Gov. J.B. Pritzker and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle's funding agreement is noticeably missing a key partner: the city of Chicago. And it comes after Pritzker, Preckwinkle and Mayor Brandon Johnson met in January and this month to discuss how to further fund the crisis.

### **McLean County to open Family Treatment Court**

Melissa Ellin February 14, 2024

Family Treatment Court is a problem-solving court aimed at helping families with substance use within the child welfare system.

### **Millions of gallons of fossil fuel could move through a new pipeline under the Great Lakes**

Juanpablo Ramirez-Franco February 14, 2024

Midwest tribal leaders are challenging a pipeline that pumps a million gallons of oil daily beneath a gap between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron.

### **LaHood and Sorensen split in Secretary Mayorkas impeachment vote**

[Ryan Denham](#) February 14, 2024

The two U.S. House members who represent Bloomington-Normal and Peoria split their votes on the impeachment of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

### **McLean County circuit clerk faces primary challenge from a former employee**

[Ryan Denham](#) February 13, 2024

The official record-keeper for McLean County's court system, Don Everhart, is running for a fifth term in this year's election. But first he'll have to survive a primary challenge from one of his former employees, Jason Dazey.

### **Ex-Madigan aide sentenced to 30 months in prison for obstruction of justice attempt, perjury**

[Hannah Meisel](#) February 13, 2024

Judge tells Mapes his 'loyalty was greatly misguided' in lying to grand jury investigating former speaker.

### **Preview of next year's Bloomington budget is heavy on public safety spending**

[Michele Steinbacher](#) February 12, 2024

Bloomington projects a nearly \$332 million budget next year, about 14% higher than its current plan, the city council heard during its meeting Monday. Nearly half of the next budget — roughly \$159 million — is dedicated to public safety and capital projects, including work on streets and sewers.

### **McCann trial delayed another day as he cancels plan to represent himself**

[Peter Hancock](#) February 12, 2024

The federal corruption trial of former Republican state Sen. Sam McCann was delayed again on Monday, but this time for only one day to allow a court-appointed standby attorney time to take over his defense.

## **Normal seeks public feedback on future environmental priorities**

Lyndsay Jones February 12, 2024

The Town of Normal is seeking input via a survey aimed at gauging what environmental priorities community members want the town to focus on in future development projects.

## **‘Contentious and exhausting’: Group gets approval to save McLean’s old water tower**

Eric Stock February 12, 2024

A nonprofit group wanting to preserve the old water tower in McLean urged the village to let volunteers take it over and clean it up.

## **Twin City labor leader invited to White House summit on infrastructure investment**

Lauren Warnecke February 9, 2024

Labor leader Mike Matejka returned late last week from a trip to the White House as part of a delegation invited to discuss infrastructure investments in Illinois and Indiana.

## **Should Illinois become 11th state to adopt 'right to die' legislation?**

Tina Sfondeles February 9, 2024

A bill filed on Thursday would allow qualified individuals, not medical professionals, to self-administer a medication to end their lives. There is of course opposition to such measures, specifically from the Catholic and evangelical communities.

## **Democracy's Future podcast: How a young person's political views can transform over time**

Megan Spoerlein February 8, 2024

In Episode 2 of the WGLT and Vidette podcast Democracy's Future, sophomore history education major Chloe Yost from Manhattan, Illinois, says she believes extreme polarization in U.S. politics is putting democracy at risk.

## **Judge rules the Illinois challenge to Donald Trump’s candidacy won’t be delayed**

Dave McKinney February 8, 2024

The Cook County judge denied Trump’s request to stay the challenge until after the U.S. Supreme Court weighs in on similar challenges in other states, setting a Feb. 16 next court date.

## **Former GOP candidate for governor Darren Bailey running to unseat Mike Bost in 12th District**

Alex Degman February 7, 2024

The Republican primary in the state's most conservative congressional district is between two candidates who were endorsed by former President Donald Trump in separate races two years ago.

## **Normal budget proposal reflects conservative strategy for the future**

Colin Hardman February 5, 2024

The town's spending will increase in several areas under the proposed budget, with fire and police pensions and road infrastructure receiving special attention.

## **Former GOP lawmaker's trial again delayed amid last-minute hospitalization**

Hannah Meisel February 5, 2024

Instead of laying out his defense in his long-awaited federal corruption trial on Monday morning, former State Sen. Sam McCann was hospitalized in Missouri after a weekend of feeling unwell, according to his wife and a standby attorney.

## **Bloomington schedules 2nd open house for streetscape plan**

Eric Stock February 5, 2024

The plans, rolled out during an open house last October, are intended to make Bloomington's downtown more friendly for pedestrians and bicyclists.

## **McLean County needs residents' help securing funds to expand broadband**

Melissa Ellin February 2, 2024

McLean County wants residents to test their broadband speed to get a realistic idea of who's lacking quality internet — or access altogether. The goal is to secure state funding for broadband expansion.

## **In Illinois politics, remaps keep the powerful in power**

Tina Sfondeles February 2, 2024

The maps Illinois Democrats approved in 2021 sealed in their political power for a decade — adding one Hispanic-majority blue seat in Congress and forcing two Republicans out of their districts.

### **[With hockey team in place, Bloomington looks to bring arena back to life](#)**

[Eric Stock](#) February 1, 2024

Now that the City of Bloomington has a new anchor tenant for Grossinger Motors Arena, the city is looking for a new name for the downtown venue.

### **[New legislation could change Illinois' estate tax for family farm operations](#)**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) January 31, 2024

Two Democratic legislators with parts of McLean County in their districts — State Sen. Dave Koehler and State Rep. Sharon Chung — are spearheading the legislative efforts in the Senate and House. So far, the bill has received bipartisan support in both chambers.

### **[Stratton's 'We Chats' stops in Bloomington, listening to what women need for businesses to thrive](#)**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 31, 2024

Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton visited Bloomington recently as her We Thrive initiative gets off the ground. The listening tour meets with women across the state to learn about barriers to financial literacy.

### **[Battle to keep Trump off Illinois primary ballot moves to state court](#)**

[Jon Seidel](#) January 31, 2024

Objectors asked the court to move quickly and are hoping it will hear arguments as soon as Monday.

### **[The Illinois elections board rules Trump will remain on the March 19 ballot](#)**

[Dave McKinney](#) January 30, 2024

The bipartisan board said they couldn't take up the question of whether Trump's conduct on Jan. 6 barred him from running.

### **[Lakeshore Recycling Systems' waste transfer center proposal heads to full county board](#)**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) January 29, 2024

In August, Lakeshore Recycling Systems submitted an application to develop a second waste transfer center in Bloomington, a facility the company says will meet a growing demand within McLean County. A series of public hearings on the matter concluded in December.

### **Trump's candidacy on the Illinois ballot should be decided by the courts, an elections board hearing officer says**

[Dave McKinney](#) January 29, 2024

The hearing officer, a retired Republican judge, wrote a scathing assessment of Trump's involvement in the Jan. 6 insurrection, but said the courts ultimately should decide. The full elections board will consider the matter Tuesday.

### **Sorensen's listening tour to medical centers stops at OSF St. Joseph in Bloomington**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 26, 2024

U.S. Rep. Eric Sorensen visited with health care providers in the 17th Congressional District to learn about key challenges in the industry. Among his top priorities are expanding access to care and mental health resources for patients and health care workers.

### **City council OKs 20-year agreement and seals hockey deal with Bloomington Bison**

[Michele Steinbacher](#) January 24, 2024

The Bloomington City Council approved a 20-year agreement Wednesday to officially launch a new ECHL pro hockey team at Grossinger Motors Arena. The Bloomington Bison will host three dozen home games, in the season that runs from October to April.

### **Pritzker joins Democratic governors asking Biden, Congress for migrant aid and to fix 'outdated' immigration system**

[Tina Sfondeles](#) January 23, 2024

The letter penned by Democratic governors said political machinations are delaying much-needed help for their states and cities — and they urged the passage of President Joe Biden's \$110 billion request for wartime aid and border security.

### **Illinois is considering its own child tax credit**

[Lisa Kurian Philip](#) January 22, 2024

A new study says a bill currently under consideration in Springfield would cost \$1 billion and reduce child poverty by 7.6%.

## **City projects hockey team deal could bring \$20M at Bloomington arena over next two decades**

Michele Steinbacher January 20, 2024

A pro hockey team has the potential to bring more than \$20 million in rent and profits over the next two decades if it plays at the City of Bloomington's Grossinger Motors Arena. That's according to a proposal coming before the Bloomington City Council on Monday.

## **Downtown Bloomington street design study finds public wants classic/contemporary hybrid**

Michele Steinbacher January 16, 2024

A formal redesign proposal for downtown Bloomington streets won't come before the city council until later this spring, but on Tuesday the group heard an update on the plan.

## **Town council appoints Reece to Tri-County River Valley Development Authority**

Jack Podlesnik January 16, 2024

The authority issues taxable and tax-exempt bonds to businesses to construct, develop and acquire properties.

## **Illinois lawmakers are returning to Springfield. Here's what we're watching.**

Alex Degman January 16, 2024

The legislature's spring session gets underway on Jan. 16, but the upcoming election could play a role in what gets done and when.

## **McLean County Board rejects proposal opposing public services for certain immigrants**

Michele Steinbacher January 12, 2024

The McLean County Board on Thursday rejected a proposal calling for the board to oppose tax-supported services for certain groups of immigrants. The 13-to-7 vote followed nearly two hours of public comments before a standing room-only crowd.

## **Immigration advocate says dozens of bused migrants are already living in McLean County**

Eric Stock January 11, 2024

An immigration rights advocate says more than 75 migrants bused from the southern border since 2022 are already living in McLean County.

## **[Normal looks to divert homeless services grant from PATH for apparent noncompliance](#)**

[Melissa Ellin](#) January 11, 2024

The Town of Normal said PATH Inc. failed to meet grant requirements, so the town wants to send \$24,000 in funds to Unit 5 and the Salvation Army.

## **[Illinois lawmakers quietly scaled back a popular tax credit. A former governor wants it back.](#)**

[Dave McKinney](#) January 11, 2024

The more than 11 million Illinoisans who claim the standard exemption each year will not see an inflation-indexed bump for the 2023 tax year.

## **[McLean County EMA director says the state plans to process migrants](#)**

[Eric Stock](#) January 10, 2024

The state of Illinois has set up a new intake center in Chicago for migrants brought to the state. McLean County Emergency Management Agency Director Cathy Beck says the county would arrange transportation for migrants to travel to the intake center if buses arrive in McLean County.

## **[Connect Transit looking at simplifying fares, changing fare boxes](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 9, 2024

Connect Transit may change how much it charges for rides on the Bloomington-Normal bus system and modernize its fare boxes. A proposal will go board members at their February meeting. If approved, the draft package would be put out for the public to offer input before any formal adoption.

## **[Friends, colleagues celebrate retirement of former McLean County Board chair John McIntyre](#)**

[Michele Steinbacher](#) January 8, 2024

Many attending Monday's event applauded McIntyre's ability to rise above partisan politics, as well as his efforts to bring economic growth to the community.

## **[Bloomington council approves final plat for apartment complex](#)**

[Jack Podlesnik](#) January 8, 2024

The project is an addition to Wittenberg Woods at Prairie Vista. Four buildings, housing more than 50 apartment units, are set to be built on the northwest corner of Lutz Road and South Morris Avenue.

### **Board of review cuts estimated market value of Eastland Mall by 24%**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 8, 2024

The McLean County Board of Review has reduced the assessed value of Eastland Mall by a couple million dollars — from \$8.7 million to \$6.7 million. The assessed value is one third of the estimated market value of a property and is used to compute property taxes owed to governmental bodies such as municipalities, townships, and school districts.

### **Most owners of assault-style weapons in Illinois appear not to have registered them as required by law**

[Matthew Hendrickson](#) January 8, 2024

There are minimal consequences for failing to register, and whether the law is even enforced depends heavily on where you live and how authorities discover an unregistered gun.

### **McLean County's top election official calls for special meeting to request police at Eastland Mall**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) January 5, 2024

McLean County Clerk Kathy Michael said she is encouraging county board members to call for a special meeting to discuss a request for a sheriff's deputy to remain at Eastland Mall during early voting this year. Her request failed to gain traction at county board finance committee earlier this week.

### **Trump's candidacy is challenged by a group of Illinois residents**

[Dave McKinney](#) January 4, 2024

Five people working with a voting rights organization filed a formal objection, making Illinois the 18th state challenging Trump over his ties to the 2021 insurrection.

### **Youth justice expert Heidi Mueller will head up embattled Illinois DCFS**

[Tina Sfondeles](#) January 3, 2024

Heidi Mueller, who has served as director of the Illinois Dept. of Juvenile Justice since 2016, was selected after a national search. She will take the reins of the scandal-plagued agency beginning February 1.

## **[Illinois DCFS stands on the precipice of repair after decades of systemic issues](#)**

[Alex Degman](#) January 2, 2024

The department's budget is growing as new leadership is being recruited. Advocates hope those changes signal more improvements to come.

## **[Big money, big problems. Deep-pocketed, self-funding candidates and dark money mar Illinois politics](#)**

[Tina Sfondeles](#) January 2, 2024

Primary meddling, dark money and self-funding loopholes help skew Illinois politics to favor moneyed candidates. But there are also solutions — like fighting big money with public funding of campaigns.

## **[An Illinois lawmaker wants to ban ex-Speaker Michael Madigan's portrait from the capitol](#)**

[Dave McKinney](#) January 2, 2024

Madigan, the longtime Illinois House Speaker, is charged with bribery and conspiracy. A lawmaker wants to ban his portrait from the House.

## **[New Illinois law should help survivors of gender violence who sue their employers](#)**

[Dan Mihalopoulos](#) January 2, 2024

The law, which took effect Jan. 1, is intended to hold employers accountable for failing to act on complaints of workplace violence.

## **Higher Education**

### **[Former ISU president Dietz a finalist for interim presidency in Minnesota](#)**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) March 29, 2024

Larry Dietz is one of two finalists in the running for an interim presidency at St. Cloud University in Minnesota, about an hour north of Minneapolis. He is scheduled to visit the campus on Thursday, April 4.

### **[ISU Interim AD Beggs might want to keep the job](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 28, 2024

Now that the flap over spending on donor entertainment is over, and trustees have named a permanent ISU president, several interim positions need to be filled. One of those is in the Athletics Department.

### **[ISU Athletics Department audits find no other expenditure problems](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 27, 2024

Illinois State University has released summaries of an internal audit of Athletics Department spending and of an external audit commissioned in the wake of questionable expenditures that led to the resignation of Athletic Director Kyle Brennan last year.

### **[Dual credit amendment shelved amid sharp opposition spearheaded by Heartland faculty unions](#)**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 27, 2024

After producing a report on dual credit trends, a task force of unionized Heartland Community College faculty raised concerns about proposed changes to the Dual Credit Quality Act.

### **[Police militarization nothing new, says scholar coming to speak at ISU](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 15, 2024

Some worry about the militarization of police agencies nationwide as tactical units, automatic weapons, body armor, and armored vehicles proliferate to cities across the nation. A noted scholar who will appear at Illinois State University on March 28 said that's really nothing new.

### **[Ambitious plan unveiled to boost college spending in Illinois -- and more fairly distribute money](#)**

[Lisa Kurian Philip](#) March 7, 2024

The plan would increase spending at Illinois four-year campuses by \$1.4 billion over the next 10 or 15 years and drive money to schools with higher need students.

### **[State commission says Illinois underfunds public universities by \\$1.4 billion](#)**

[Cole Longcor](#) March 6, 2024

The body was formed by the General Assembly in 2021 to consider a new funding formula.

### **[FCC approves radio station for Eureka College](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 22, 2024

Eureka College is getting a radio station. The Federal Communications Commission has approved a construction permit for the station that will broadcast at 103.1 FM.

### **Heartland Community College board votes on tuition increase, lab renovations**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 19, 2024

If approved, the 1.65% tuition hike includes a \$1 increase to students' program and facilities fee, aimed at offsetting the increased costs associated with a 2019 expansion to Heartland's athletics programs.

### **McLean County has high potential for work-from-home permanence**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 16, 2024

McLean County had a huge shift to work-from-home employment during the pandemic. In fact, a bigger percentage change than in all but two other counties in Illinois.

### **Illinois Wesleyan nursing program recovers**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 16, 2024

Illinois Wesleyan University's nursing program has rebounded in a big way. A year ago the state put the program on probation for a low pass rate for its graduates on the national licensing exam (NCLEX).

### **ISU scientist prospects for strategic minerals**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 7, 2024

An Illinois State University scientist is part of a national effort to find materials crucial to grow a green economy and support a modern tech-dependent economy.

### **How Bloomington High School is adjusting to FAFSA changes and delays**

[Evy York](#) February 7, 2024

New changes to the application for student financial aid and its timeline have caused a Bloomington-Normal high school to find ways to adapt while still providing sufficient guidance for its students.

### **Heartland Community College to charge up electric vehicle programs with state grant**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 24, 2024

The college expand its electric vehicle programs with the help of a \$525,000 grant from the Illinois Community College Board.

### **[Illinois Wesleyan University gains \\$5 million in state equity funding](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 23, 2024

The Illinois Board of Higher Education is handing Illinois Wesleyan University more than \$5 million for infrastructure. Illinois Wesleyan says it's not sure yet exactly how it will use the money.

## **Education and Schools**

### **[ISU economist's study hints that cheaters can prosper in college](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 9, 2024

If it seems like the more colleges and universities make policies about academic cheating the more ways to cheat pop up, you might not be wrong.

### **[Remembering ISU and Bloomington-Normal community leader Betty Kinser](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 5, 2024

Longtime Bloomington-Normal leader Betty Kinser has died. The educator, political activist, and community servant shed a bright light for decades, one she cast as much with her energy as she did her personal warmth and vivid personality.

### **[ISU study: Lawmakers' gender matters on gun laws](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 3, 2024

It turns out the more women there are in a state house of representatives, the more likely it is legislation will pass that deals with firearms. That's according to new scholarship by an Illinois State University economist.

## **Environment and Nature**

### **[Illinois lawmakers seek to protect state wetlands](#)**

[Juanpablo Ramirez-Franco](#) March 6, 2024

The U.S. Supreme Court rolled back protections for wetlands last year, leaving states like Illinois vulnerable.

### **[Lead water service line removal is costly in Bloomington-Normal](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 29, 2024

The City of Bloomington and Town of Normal will spend about \$101 million over the next decade to remove lead water pipes leading to people's homes, most of that in Bloomington.

### **[Normal Library asbestos removal and renovation bid \\$5.1 million](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 23, 2024

The price tag to remove asbestos from the Normal Public Library and renovate the facility in Uptown is now up to \$5.1 million.

### **[Owner of Clinton nuclear power plant files license extension application](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 15, 2024

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will review the proposal from Constellation Energy to allow the plant to operate another 20 years, through 2047.

### **[ISU scientist prospects for strategic minerals](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 7, 2024

An Illinois State University scientist is part of a national effort to find materials crucial to grow a green economy and support a modern tech-dependent economy.

### **[Heartland Community College to charge up electric vehicle programs with state grant](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 24, 2024

The college expand its electric vehicle programs with the help of a \$525,000 grant from the Illinois Community College Board.

### **[Parklands Foundation secures 'devil's backbone' as new conservation holding in Woodford County](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 22, 2024

A central Illinois conservation group has acquired one of the few remaining remnants of Hill Prairie habitat in Illinois. It's called the "devil's backbone," an old-time name for the jagged geography of the 55 acres near the Mackinaw River in Woodford County.

### **[John Wesley Powell Audubon Society changes name to Grand Prairie Bird Alliance](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 2, 2024

A central Illinois Chapter of the Audubon Society is distancing itself from the name of the founder of the national bird watching movement. The John Wesley Powell Chapter of the National Audubon Society has changed its name to the Grand Prairie Bird Alliance.

## **Health and Medicine**

### **[Finding herself through the lens: Eckstine's 'With Love & Rage' at ISU art exhibition](#)**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 21, 2024

Illinois State University grad student Sarah Eckstine uses self-portraiture and writing to process years of trauma related to medical conditions causing sexual dysfunction. She found confidence—and community—by putting a taboo topic out in the open.

### **[With the rise of pickleball comes a surge in injuries](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 15, 2024

The sport of pickleball has had explosive growth over the last 10 years. About nine million people now play in the U.S. In Bloomington-Normal, parks and rec departments have added a lot of courts, and a private concern is building an indoor pickleball facility. But along with the rise in the number of players, there has been huge increase in the number of injuries.

### **[House panel opens hearings on Pritzker's health insurance reforms](#)**

[Peter Hancock](#) March 13, 2024

A panel of Illinois lawmakers began hearing testimony Wednesday on Gov. JB Pritzker's proposals for sweeping changes in the state's health insurance industry.

### **[IRS restores tax-exempt status for Community Health Care Clinic in Normal](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 12, 2024

The Community Health Care Clinic in Normal has recovered its federal tax-exempt status. The agency that serves low-income people with no or inadequate health insurance lost its 501-C-3 designation in May of last year.

### **[Normal mayor: Business balance a reason to consider smoke shop limit in Uptown](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 6, 2024

The mayor of Normal said a potential ban on more smoke shops in Uptown relates to the purpose of the district. Mayor Chris Koos said the idea behind Uptown is to have an area that gets used 18 hours a day, and not just by university students but by the community. That requires a mix of businesses.

### **[Bloomington homeless problem could prompt emergency declaration and request for county services](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 4, 2024

The City of Bloomington may want more out of the sales tax money it sends to McLean County.

### **[Lead water service line removal is costly in Bloomington-Normal](#)**

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 29, 2024

The City of Bloomington and Town of Normal will spend about \$101 million over the next decade to remove lead water pipes leading to people's homes, most of that in Bloomington.

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## **Education and Schools**

## [Former ISU president Dietz a finalist for interim presidency in Minnesota](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#) March 29, 2024

Larry Dietz is one of two finalists in the running for an interim presidency at St. Cloud University in Minnesota, about an hour north of Minneapolis. He is scheduled to visit the campus on Thursday, April 4.

## [Rep. Sharon Chung joins statewide teacher shortage working group](#)

[Megan Spoerlein](#) March 28, 2024

Democratic state Rep. Sharon Chung hopes to address the Illinois' teacher shortage by joining the newly-formed Teacher Shortage Working Group.

## [ISU Athletics Department audits find no other expenditure problems](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 27, 2024

## [Dual credit amendment shelved amid sharp opposition spearheaded by Heartland faculty unions](#)

March 27, 2024

## [LaHood pushes employer incentives during tour of HCC's new Advanced Manufacturing Center](#)

March 26, 2024

## [Unit 5 school board approves 5-year strategic plan](#)

[Colin Hardman](#) March 21, 2024

The plan highlights improving academic outcomes, maintaining strong staff, and connecting to the community. In addition to a unanimously positive vote, the board praised the plan as a living document to account for unforeseen changes.

## [IBHE awards \\$148K grant to ISU's Mennonite College of Nursing](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#) March 12, 2024

The grant award requires ISU to conduct a research study on the use of more diverse manikins in the Mennonite College of Nursing's Simulation Lab.

## **[Illinois State University plans to name Aondover Tarhule as permanent president on March 18](#)**

[Eric Stock](#) March 8, 2024

According to a statement from the university, the board reached a consensus to pursue Tarhule as its next permanent president after a presidential search committee led on-campus interviews with four finalists that emerged from a nationwide search.

## **[Ambitious plan unveiled to boost college spending in Illinois -- and more fairly distribute money](#)**

[Lisa Kurian Philip](#) March 7, 2024

The plan would increase spending at Illinois four-year campuses by \$1.4 billion over the next 10 or 15 years and drive money to schools with higher need students.

## **[21 Women Who Shaped B-N: Maura Toro-Morn, a bridge between students and their community](#)**

[Melissa Ellin](#) March 5, 2024

Maura Toro-Morn has made herself known in the academic world of Bloomington-Normal, catapulting the Latin American and Latino/a Studies program forward and connecting with students on an personal level.

## **[Illinois State University graduate teaching assistants agree to new contract](#)**

[Eric Stock](#) March 4, 2024

The Graduate Workers Union at Illinois State University will see higher pay and lower student fees in a new contract.

## **[21 Women Who Shaped B-N: Eva Jones, more than the 'first'](#)**

[Melissa Ellin](#) March 1, 2024

Eva Jones was the first woman and person of color to make the District 87 school board. That was in 1971. Six years later, she became president and three years after that she was on the Bloomington City Council.

## **[Online college classes, persisting past COVID, may be the key to offsetting a looming enrollment cliff](#)**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) February 28, 2024

Data from the Department of Education's Integrated Post Secondary Education Data Systems shows that a majority of college students took at least one or more of their classes online in 2022: 54%. That's a nearly 50% jump from that percentage in pre-pandemic fall 2019, when it was just 37% of students.

### **Bridge Academy eyes expansion for year three**

[Melissa Ellin](#) February 22, 2024

Startup grants are reaching their term limit for Central Illinois Bridge Academy, but Director Trish Malott said the school is financially stable. They even want to expand for next year by getting an additional teacher.

### **Unit 5 leaders consider details of proposed strategic plan, along with mid-year budget update**

[Michele Steinbacher](#) February 22, 2024

Bloomington-Normal's strong economic growth last year likely will help Unit 5 use less borrowed money to balance its budget, when the fiscal year ends in June.

### **Heartland Community College board votes on tuition increase, lab renovations**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 19, 2024

If approved, the 1.65% tuition hike includes a \$1 increase to students' program and facilities fee, aimed at offsetting the increased costs associated with a 2019 expansion to Heartland's athletics programs.

### **'Eye opening': Students learn renewable energy in competition at Heartland Community College**

[Erik Dedo](#) February 16, 2024

Dozens of central Illinois students competed this week at the Challenger Learning Center at Heartland Community College to explore the world of renewable energy.

### **ISU's board approves more funding for engineering college work, new sports communication degree**

[Lyndsay Jones](#) February 16, 2024

Illinois State University's governing body approved a new degree program, additional funding for work at the future home of the College of Engineering and the first renovations of the chemistry lab at University High School since 1965 during a regularly scheduled meeting Friday.

## **‘Inspiring excellence’: Central Catholic takes \$10 million fundraising campaign public**

Megan Spoerlein February 15, 2024

Central Catholic High School in Bloomington has raised more than \$6 million for its capital campaign that recently went public. School President Sean Foster says the campaign, entitled VISION, hopes to reach its \$10 million goal sometime this year.

## **ISU presidential candidates pool narrowed to 4 finalists**

Lyndsay Jones February 13, 2024

Illinois State University's governing body will vote during a regularly scheduled meeting Friday on whether to approve the slate of finalists presented by the 29-member presidential search committee.

## **How Bloomington High School is adjusting to FAFSA changes and delays**

Evy York February 7, 2024

New changes to the application for student financial aid and its timeline have caused a Bloomington-Normal high school to find ways to adapt while still providing sufficient guidance for its students.

## **Q&A: Jelani Day Foundation adds scholarships to its list of services**

Lyndsay Jones February 6, 2024

The Jelani Day Foundation was founded in 2022. Its mission is to help families of color who have reported a missing person connect to resources that Carmen Bolden-Day said she didn't have when her son went missing in 2021.

## **District 87 is launching new curriculum to serve more English language learners**

Michele Steinbacher February 5, 2024

District 87 is launching a new curriculum for middle and high schoolers enrolled as English language learners — part of an effort to better serve the growing demographic group.

## **YouthBuild celebrates 30 years helping adolescents in McLean County**

Melissa Ellin February 2, 2024

For 30 years YouthBuild McLean County has had a subtle influence on the area — often without recognition.

## **Former Chicago Bears player reads to Heartland Head Start students**

Erik Dedo February 2, 2024

Since 2018, the Chicago Bears have give preschool students extra educational experiences in their classrooms, known as Homeroom Huddles.

## **Heartland Community College cuts the ribbon on \$23 million agriculture complex**

Tim Alexander January 31, 2024

The long-awaited Heartland Community College Agriculture Complex was officially unveiled to the public on Wednesday.

## **ISU board approves differential tuition costs for specific programs**

Lyndsay Jones January 25, 2024

Sticker prices for some programs at Illinois State University will increase in the next academic year in a change meant to offset the increased cost of delivering those programs to students.

## **Heartland Community College to charge up electric vehicle programs with state grant**

Charlie Schlenker January 24, 2024

The college expand its electric vehicle programs with the help of a \$525,000 grant from the Illinois Community College Board.

## **Scholar coming to IWU will explore effects of large-scale mining in Latin American communities**

Lyndsay Jones January 24, 2024

A researcher coming to Illinois Wesleyan University next month hopes to make visible what large scale extraction operations — like lithium mining — cost some Latin American communities.

## **Illinois Wesleyan University gains \$5 million in state equity funding**

Charlie Schlenker January 23, 2024

The Illinois Board of Higher Education is handing Illinois Wesleyan University more than \$5 million for infrastructure. Illinois Wesleyan says it's not sure yet exactly how it will use the money.

## **Unit 5: Energy efficiency boost in many schools saved district more than \$5M**

Michele Steinbacher January 18, 2024

McLean County's largest school district is home to more than half of Illinois K-12 schools awarded the Energy Star rating in 2023.

## **State approves curricula for ISU's new College of Engineering**

Lyndsay Jones January 10, 2024

The Illinois Board of Higher Education recently approved Illinois State University's curricula for mechanical, electrical and general engineering. It's one more step in the process of opening the College of Engineering that is expected to enroll its first students in the fall of 2025.

## **ISU economist's study hints that cheaters can prosper in college**

Charlie Schlenker January 9, 2024

If it seems like the more colleges and universities make policies about academic cheating the more ways to cheat pop up, you might not be wrong.

## **Board of review cuts estimated market value of Eastland Mall by 24%**

Charlie Schlenker, January 8, 2024

The McLean County Board of Review has reduced the assessed value of Eastland Mall by a couple million dollars — from \$8.7 million to \$6.7 million. The assessed value is one third of the estimated market value of a property and is used to compute property taxes owed to governmental bodies such as municipalities, townships, and school districts.

## **ISU study: Lawmakers' gender matters on gun laws**

Charlie Schlenker January 3, 2024

It turns out the more women there are in a state house of representatives, the more likely it is legislation will pass that deals with firearms. That's according to new scholarship by an Illinois State University economist.

## **Arts and Culture**

### **[A variety of tribute bands headline weekend concerts in downtown Bloomington](#)**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 29, 2024

In partnership with the Castle Theatre, the city of Bloomington launches a First Friday concert series from June through September on the BCPA lawn.

### **[TromBari quintet plays Jazz UpFront debut, highlighting under-celebrated instruments](#)**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 28, 2024

Steely Dan trombonist Jim Pugh is the 'trom' in TromBari, alongside baritone saxophonist Glenn Wilson. They've both played Jazz UpFront before—but never together.

### **[21 Women Who Shaped B-N: Bloomington-Normal rocks, thanks to Morgan Schulte](#)**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 28, 2024

Morgan Schulte's career booking live entertainment for the Town of Normal started at the Hammitt School. She brought musicians into her special education classroom to foster empathy and coping skills.

### **[21 Women Who Shaped B-N: After 55 years on the podium, Deanne Bryant continues to leave a musical mark](#)**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 27, 2024

Deanne Bryant launched a district-wide Unit 5 string program in 1969, ensuring access to instruments often left out of school curriculums. Five decades later, Bloomington-Normal is lauded statewide for its high quality music education.

### **[String of sell-outs and Bison deal are signs of strength for Bloomington venues](#)**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 26, 2024

The struggling Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts and Grossinger Motors Arena came under new shared management over a year ago. Director of Arts and Entertainment Anthony Nelson was given a strict mandate to start turning a profit. Recent sellouts at the BCPA are signs of a turnaround.

### **[Photos and video: Highway 309 LIVE starring Crys Matthews and opener Sarah & The Underground](#)**

[Emily Bollinger](#) March 25, 2024

Changemakers in music and beyond were in the spotlight at the third show in WGLT's Highway 309 LIVE concert series presented by CEFCU. See photos and video.

## **Museum of History celebrates past, present and future women of McLean County**

[Jack Podlesnik](#) March 23, 2024

McLean County's women were highlighted Saturday at the McLean County Museum of History. About 50 people attended the afternoon event where a brief lesson was given on some notable women in McLean County's history. **[3 things to do this weekend: Easter egg hunts, Women's History IRL, Jazz UpFront gets funky](#)**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 22, 2024

A celebration of women's rights, Easter egg hunts and two stellar soul bands at Jazz UpFront are this weekend's highlights.

## **Finding herself through the lens: Eckstine's 'With Love & Rage' at ISU art exhibition**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 21, 2024

Illinois State University grad student Sarah Eckstine uses self-portraiture and writing to process years of trauma related to medical conditions causing sexual dysfunction. She found confidence—and community—by putting a taboo topic out in the open.

## **Inaugural Derpfest at Hangar Art Co. builds community and demystifies artmaking — mostly, it's a vibe**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 20, 2024

Artists have 48 hours to build an original painting that will be auctioned off this Sunday. Half the proceeds of all sales benefit Illinois Art Station.

## **Country star Sara Evans to headline 2024 Fairbury Fair**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 19, 2024

The multi-platinum country star will be joined Aug. 16 by Nashville singer/songwriter KayLyn Pace.

## **After six decades, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band goes on the road one last time — with a stop in Bloomington**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 14, 2024

The band's hits like Mr. Bojangles and Fishin' in the Dark defined a new era for Americana music—before it was even called that.

## **Highway 309 LIVE headliner Crys Matthews reclaims Americana with a truer picture of America**

Lauren Warnecke March 12, 2024

Lauded in D.C.'s indie folk scene for her rich musicality and poignant lyrics, Crys Matthews moved to Nashville to return to her southern roots. The Highway 309 LIVE headliner is gearing up for a new album that's fully—and unapologetically—country.

## **Piano music volunteers provide relaxation at Carle BroMenn hospital in Normal**

Evy York March 12, 2024

The use of a piano in the atrium at Carle BroMenn Medical Center in Normal is creating a relaxing environment for patients, their families, and staff members.

## **3 things to do this weekend: Sunshine Daydream, Arnetta Johnson, Ramadan story time**

Lauren Warnecke March 8, 2024

Bloomington library celebrates Muslims' holiest month with a family-friendly event the day before Ramadan begins.

## **Peoria's Sarah & the Underground kicks off next Highway 309 LIVE**

Lauren Warnecke March 6, 2024

Headliner Crys Matthews and opening act Sarah & the Underground have a shared mission, using their music to shed a light on underrepresented stories. Sarah Marie Dillard sits down with WGLT ahead of a Women's History Month live concert at the Normal Theater.

## **Lee Brice and his guitar are coming to Bloomington**

Lauren Warnecke March 4, 2024

The multi-platinum country superstar stops at the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts as part of a solo acoustic tour—the first of his career.

## **'It's madness': Coffeehouse in Uptown pausing nighttime live music after damages**

Lyndsay Jones March 1, 2024

Manager Yvonne Wilson emphasized the bands and artists are not at fault for the damages and placed blame on concertgoers whose actions have ranged from “chaotic” to “not normal behavior.”

### **3 things to do this weekend: Art openings, Chicago Farmer and a new music festival**

Lauren Warnecke March 1, 2024

A trio of art exhibitions open on Friday, with live music at the Castle and Coffeehouse.

### **Former professor can't stop learning, captures 'little microcosms of nature' in art exhibition**

Lauren Warnecke February 29, 2024

Retired Heartland Community College professor Tom Clemens talks to WGLT about his longtime obsession with Scandinavian painting, and a recent foray into landscapes. Clemens' painting, Trout Stream, appears in the 97th annual amateur exhibition at McLean County Arts Center, which opens this weekend.

### **Inside Art video: 'Let's make a record' with Bloomington's Tony SanFilippo**

Emily Bollinger February 29, 2024

Episode 4 of WGLT's Inside Art video series features record producer, recording engineer and Oxide Lounge owner Tony SanFilippo.

### **McCauley art exhibit 'Perennial Optimism' shows even the hardest need care and compassion**

Lauren Warnecke February 23, 2024

Artist David Dow created sculptures in his signature style blending reclaimed materials, modeling clay and thousands of beads placed by hand for Perennial Optimism. The theme centers six women's stories of resilience.

### **Music makers share their experiences at Black History Project panel**

Colin Hardman February 18, 2024

Three prominent African American musicians from the Bloomington-Normal area spoke Saturday at a panel at the McLean County Museum of History.

### **As Yea Big, Stefen Robinson swings big with new collaborations and an album release party**

Lauren Warnecke February 15, 2024

Percussionist Jon Mueller and guitarist Share Parish team up with experimental musician Stefan Robinson on a pair of albums out this month.

### **Soccer is just a metaphor for empathy in Pulitzer-nominated 'The Wolves' at IWU**

Lauren Warnecke February 14, 2024

Playwright Sarah DeLappe's celebrated debut script is on stage at Illinois Wesleyan University — the perfect project for theater director and soccer superfan Christopher Connelly.

### **High kicks for mental health! Broadway star's journey with bipolar disorder at the BCPA**

Lauren Warnecke February 13, 2024

The former Rockette and star of Broadway, small and silver screens Chryssie Whitehead is on tour with her one-woman show about her mother's death and learning to live with bipolar disorder. She shares her story hoping to normalize conversations about mental health.

### **'Twelve Thousand Bombs' seminar series explores the threat and consequences of nuclear war**

Lauren Warnecke February 13, 2024

Illinois State University physics professor Matt Caplan wants to raise public awareness about the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons, efforts to disarm the nine countries who have them and accountability for harm caused by radioactive fallout.

### **Tania Miller gets her turn at the Illinois Symphony podium with works by Barber, Beethoven and Nielsen**

Lauren Warnecke February 12, 2024

Canadian conductor Tania Miller is the third of four finalists vying for the symphony's top job.

### **3 things to do this weekend: Zooga, Abe's birthday bash and Heartland's 'Brilliant Thing'**

Lauren Warnecke February 9, 2024

David Davis Mansion celebrates Abraham Lincoln's 214th birthday in high style, plus a poignant play at Heartland Theatre and activities at the zoo.

### **Leah Marlene's first EP since 'Idol' ruminates on life and love out of the limelight**

Lauren Warnecke February 7, 2024

"We're All Buying Into A Dream" includes three previously-released singles: "Lottery," "Flashes" and "Dying Wish." The six-song EP drops Friday.

### **'Every Brilliant Thing' at Heartland Theatre reminds us to live life in the moment**

Lauren Warnecke February 1, 2024

Veteran Peoria actor Tim Wyman suggested the play for Heartland's season — and wound up playing the only part.

### **Inside Art video: Sculpting concrete with Aianna Zachary**

Emily Bollinger January 31, 2024

Episode 3 of WGLT's Inside Art video series features concrete sculptor Aianna Zachary.

### **3 things to do this weekend: ISO plays cartoon hits, astronomy film and a John Prine tribute**

Lauren Warnecke January 26, 2024

A new show at the ISU Planetarium offers a cinematic history of celestial science, while a John Prine cover band makes its central Illinois debut. And maestro Yaniv Dinur makes his final trip to Bloomington-Normal vying for the music directorship at Illinois Symphony.

### **180+ alums show the depth, breadth and longevity of ISU's School of Art at University Galleries**

Lauren Warnecke January 25, 2024

For the first time since 2015, University Galleries hosts an open call alumni exhibition, featuring 182 artworks from alumni spanning graduation dates from 1968-2023.

### **Q&A: Toni Picasso on art therapy, mass incarceration, and his Bloomington event**

Melissa Ellin January 25, 2024

"Mass Incarceration: Healing through Community and Art with Toni Picasso" runs from 3 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 27, at the McLean County Arts Center in Bloomington.

### **Stand-up comedy tour highlights the best — and funniest — Midwest stereotypes at the BCPA**

Lauren Warnecke January 24, 2024

Emmy-winning broadcast journalist Charlie Berens ventured into comedy with a satirical broadcast called the Manitowoc Minute. His latest stand-up routine is titled in honor of Wisconsin's signature brandy cocktail. The Good Old Fashioned Tour comes to the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts Thursday.

### **There's no Ripley without Pam Grier: Blaxploitation film series connects pop culture dots**

Lauren Warnecke January 19, 2024

Co-professors Eric Wesselmann and Stanford Carpenter's honors seminar on Black horror films was well-received by students and the public. The Normal Theater pressed them to mix up a new course focused on 1970s blaxploitation films.

### **3 things to do this weekend: Art shows, pro wrestling and Chris Janson at the BCPA**

Lauren Warnecke January 19, 2024

A handful of new art shows lean into artists with local connections, while multi-platinum country singer Chris Janson brings his full band to the BCPA.

### **Joseph brings their magic indie-pop formula to Bloomington in Castle Theatre debut**

Lauren Warnecke January 18, 2024

The trio hit the ground running 11 years ago, touring more than 200 days a year and putting out four studio albums. Their latest, "The Sun," anchors a 13-city acoustic tour that comes to Bloomington next week.

### **Blackberry Smoke's Charlie Starr on 'singing what you know' ahead of new album release**

Lauren Warnecke January 12, 2024

The lead singer and guitarist of the chart-topping Southern Rock band is on a month-long tour with bandmate Benji Shanks. They play a sold-out show Friday night at the Castle Theatre.

### **First 'Straight Ahead Sunday' at Jazz UpFront features next-gen hard bop saxophonist Reginald Lewis**

Lauren Warnecke January 11, 2024

Reginald Lewis comes from jazz music royalty: His grandfather and teacher Robert "Bootsie" Barnes was a staple of Philly's jazz scene for decades.

### **Venezuelan jazz singer Maria Rodriguez shares the rhythms of her country in Jazz UpFront debut**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 5, 2024

Maria Alejandra Rodriguez moved to Bloomington-Normal in 2022 looking for a fresh start. She met Brazilian guitarist Jose Emilio Gobbo, premiering at Jazz UpFront as a four-piece combo with Max Beckman and Jay Ferguson.

**'12 Angry Jurors' holds a mirror to the American legal process — and an audience of peers**

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 5, 2024

Community Players Theatre presents an adaptation of the acclaimed 1957 Reginald Rose film "12 Angry Men" for two weekends in Bloomington.