



Illinois Primary Election Results

March 17, 2026

All constitutional offices, one US Senate seat, all members of Congress, all Illinois House members, and a group of Illinois state senators have elections this fall. The primary election decides the political party nominees for these races. That said, with Illinois voters largely backing Democrat candidates and the legislative maps favoring Democrat members, the primary election can be considered the decisive race for most offices. Without having to contribute to a governor's race, labor unions and other Democrat-supporting groups can help fund down-ticket races at a much higher level, while Republicans have limited resources from contributions and have had to fund several primary races prior to the November election.

The biggest news thus far in the 2026 election cycle is the overwhelming influx of super PAC money in Illinois campaigns, coming in at a much higher amount than ever before. One analysis shows 18 super PACs contributing more than \$35 million into Illinois races for primary elections alone, bringing outside influence to a whole new level. In 2010, the US Supreme Court removed legal restrictions on political spending by corporations, unions and outside groups. Groups with major donations ranged from cryptocurrency, gaming and data to pro-Israel groups.

Other takeaways:

- Governor JB Pritzker supported his Lieutenant Governor, Juliana Stratton, for Senate and Representative Margaret Croke for Comptroller in both money and endorsements. Both candidates won their elections, bolstering Pritzker's campaign operations.
- US Senator Dick Durbin's retirement and Comptroller Susana Mendoza's decision not to run for reelection opened the door for a shakeup in Democratic offices all down the ticket.
- The far end of each party had wins this election over long-time incumbents, with Rep. Jaime Andrade and Rep. Norine Hammond both losing their seats to a more progressive and more conservative party candidate, despite strong support from their leadership.

- As final numbers come in, analysts will study the Republican turnout in this midterm election and how it was and will be impacted by President Trump.

Governor

Governor JB Pritzker is running for a rare third term as governor and did not have a Democrat challenger in the primary. He did, though, change his running mate for Lieutenant Governor. With Juliana Stratton running for the US Senate, Governor Pritzker called on his former Deputy Director and a previous state representative, Christian Mitchell, to run with him. Illinois' governor and lieutenant governor run on the same ballot spot.

Pritzker will face Republican Darren Bailey and his running mate Aaron del Mar in the November election for a second time. Bailey lost to Pritzker in 2022 by a large margin but is working to appeal to more moderate and suburban voters this time around. Bailey, a former State Senator and perennial conservative campaigner, fought off challengers Ted Dabrowski, Rick Heidner, and James Mendrick, none of whom garnered statewide voter recognition. For the general election, Bailey will focus on public safety, property taxes and rising costs, but he will have a very tough challenge in overcoming Pritzker's self-funded campaign with millions of dollars.

Pritzker will continue his criticism of President Trump and Republicans as he not only campaigns for governor but also strengthens his profile as a potential Democratic nominee for President in 2028.

US Senate

With the retirement of longtime Senator Dick Durbin, several Democrats sought to win the coveted US Senate seat. The three Democrat frontrunners quickly surfaced as Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi; Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton, who earned Governor Pritzker's support; and Congresswoman Robin Kelly. While Krishnamoorthi led polling for months, Stratton emerged with a solid 40% of the vote, greatly benefiting from Pritzker's help. Stratton will face Republican Don Tracy, businessman and former state Party leader, in November. Krishnamoorthi earned 33% of the vote, and Robin Kelly was at 18%.

Governor Pritzker gave \$12 million from his Illinois Future PAC to Stratton's campaign. Some last-minute drama circled around Stratton, who announced that the late Rev. Jesse Jackson had said he endorsed Stratton for the US Senate, but Jackson's family rebutted those remarks, saying that the family was not making any political endorsements following the civil rights leader's death.

Over \$24 million from outside groups was spent on this US Senate primary race alone. More than \$10 million came from just two PACs associated with the cryptocurrency industry, primarily to fight against Stratton unsuccessfully.

Secretary of State

Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias (D) is running for reelection but is rumored to possibly run for Mayor of Chicago in 2027. Diane Harris of Joliet will be the Republican candidate for Secretary of State.

Comptroller

When Comptroller Susanna Mendoza chose not to run for reelection (also with an expectation to run for Chicago Mayor), she opened the seat for one of the most active races of the spring. Four Democrat women competed in the primary to succeed Mendoza – State Representatives Margaret Croke and Stephanie Kifowit, Senator Karina Villa, and Lake County Treasurer Holly Kim. Kim gained Mendoza's endorsement while Pritzker supported Croke. Villa became the progressive nominee, and Kifowit a more fiscal-focused moderate. Again, Governor Pritzker's support helped carry the leading candidate, Margaret Croke, who has 34.5% of the votes with 90% of expected votes counted. She leads Karina Villa by about 26,000 votes. Bryan Drew, an attorney from southern Illinois, will be the Republican nominee.

Treasurer

Treasurer Michael Frerichs is running for his fourth term as State Treasurer, first elected in 2014. He does not have a Republican opponent at this time.

US Congress

Democrats currently hold 14 of the 17 Congressional seats in Illinois. Five seats have open races this fall, all in the Chicago area. Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller beat former US Representative Jesse Jackson, Jr. in the 2nd District. State Representative LaShawn Ford won the nomination in the 7th district over Chicago City Treasurer Melissa Conyears-Ervin. Former Representative Melissa Bean is running for Congress again in the 8th, and Evanston Mayor and former state senator prevailed over a progressive newcomer Kat Abughazaleh and State Senator Laura Fine for the candidacy in the 9th District.

Illinois Senate

Only a handful of state Senate races had primary elections. Senators Sara Feigenholtz and Emil Jones III defeated their challengers in the Democratic primary. Jones faced a trial on federal charges last April over alleged bribes and lying to federal authorities, but the trial ended in a hung jury. Patrick Hanley won the Democratic nomination in the open district to replace Laura Fine, who ran for Congress. Former state representative Fran Hurley will run to replace retiring Senator Bill Cunningham. Danielle Penman will face Michele Clark for Senator Don DeWitte's district, and Representative Paul Jacobs will try to move to the Senate against Tamiko Mueller in Senator Dale Fowler's downstate district.

Illinois House

Of the 118 House districts, about 20 had primary elections, with eight of them being open seats. The closest House primary races reflected conflicts from the far sides of each party. Rep. Jaime Andrade faced progressive Democrat challenger Miguel Alvelo-Rivera in the 40th House District and Josh Higgins, backed by Darren Bailey and conservative GOP activist Tom DeVore, forced a hard race against long-time Republican Representative and Deputy Minority Leader Norine Hammond (R) in western Illinois. Both Andrade and Hammond lost their seats to Alvelo-Rivera and Higgins, respectively.

Incumbents winning their primary races were Representatives Aaron Ortiz, Lillian Jimenez, Kam Buckner, Margaret DeLaRosa, Diane Blair-Sherlock, Republican Leader Tony McCombie, Brad Halbrook, Charlie Meier and David Severin.

Shantel Franklin won the primary to replace Rep. LaShawn Ford; Paul Kendrick took the Democratic win in Rep. Margaret Croke's place; and Demi Palecek earned the spot in a full field to replace Rep. Hoan Huynh. Cleopatra Cowley won over Aja Kearny for Rep. Nick Smith's seat. In the far southern district, Scott Doody won the Republican primary for Rep. Paul Jacobs' open seat.

Cook County Board President

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle ran for a fifth term but faced a tough primary election with Chicago Alderman Brendan Reilly. Reilly focused on affordability and safety and was the more moderate candidate, but Toni Preckwinkle easily won by over 68%.