



*A New Start - A New State - New Illinois*

## **New Illinois Gubernatorial Primary Voter Guide**

### **March 17, 2026**

There are other very good voter guides available that are in grid form and show the candidates' positions/votes on different bills. Our voter guide is different in that it specifically addresses issues of interest to New Illinois, some of which do not appear in other voter guides. Also, three of the four Republican candidates do not have a voting record. Candidate Bailey has a voting record but has been out of office for a few years. So rather than a grid, our information is in narrative form and emphasizes policy positions.

New Illinois is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the mission of educating Illinoisans about their right, under the U.S. Constitution, to pursue the formation of a new state separate from the State of Illinois. Under that umbrella, our focus areas are 1) representative government, 2) government corruption, and 3) Illinois' financial disaster. The only other issue on which we have taken a formal position is support for universal school choice.

Our information was obtained from the following: official candidate sources, such as websites, social media, and other publications; conversations with the candidates and/or their staff; and recorded interviews, forums, and other public statements. For Governor Pritzker, we also relied on the history of bills he has signed into law and policies he has enacted. The Heider campaign did not respond to our request for more information. We did not attempt to contact the Pritzker campaign, because of his expressed hostility toward our movement.

As a nonpartisan nonprofit, we do not endorse candidates or political parties. The Republican candidates' names appear in the same order that they will appear on the primary ballot. After the questions, we have included a list of the candidates' major endorsements by organizations that are not political parties.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **#1 School Choice & School Quality**

All of the Republican candidates' websites state that they support school choice.

#### **Ted Dabrowski**

Dabrowski's website states that he supports universal school choice as a top priority. He would end social promotion, raise learning standards, audit compliance with phonics law, remove

political indoctrination and DEI curricula, cancel mandated politicized training for teachers, support parents' rights, and have no regulation on homeschooling. He will hold education officials accountable for outcomes. He supports participation in the federal school choice program.

**James Mendrick**

Mendrick wants home school freedom without government intrusion, with state guidance to a point, but no state control. The money should follow the child. He supports participation in the federal school choice program.

**Darren Bailey**

Bailey's website states his support for, "parents empowered to make the best choices for their children." He would fight to ensure that our schools are fully funded and support teachers with the resources they need. He's committed to removing bureaucratic barriers so teachers and families can focus on helping kids thrive. On social media, he stated he supports participation in the federal school choice program.

**Rick Heidner**

Heider's website states that he supports vouchers and parental choice as well as higher standards for schools. He believes this is a key part of reversing Illinois' educational decline.

**Governor JB Pritzker**

Governor Pritzker allowed Illinois' limited school choice option, the Invest in Kids Act, to expire in 2023, despite expressing conditional support earlier. As of now, he has not decided whether to opt into the federal program.

**#2 Sanctuary State Status**

All of the Republican candidates' websites state that they oppose Illinois' sanctuary state status.

**Ted Dabrowski**

Dabrowski's website states that he supports repeal of sanctuary status (the TRUST Act) and repeal of all illegal migrant welcoming programs. He will cooperate with federal law enforcement on immigration.

**James Mendrick**

Mendrick would end sanctuary status immediately with an executive order; his representative stated that this can be done because the TRUST Act is illegal. He would immediately contact the Trump administration to cooperate. He would also fight to repeal the laws giving benefits such as healthcare and college scholarships to illegal immigrants, though that may require more than an executive order.

**Darren Bailey**

Bailey's website states that, while in the state legislature, he fought sanctuary state policies. He is in favor of repealing the TRUST Act.

**Rick Heidner**

Heider's website states that he is against illegal immigration, but it does specifically mention the TRUST Act. His website does not mention programs for illegal immigrants such as college scholarships and healthcare. At forums, he has expressed support for repealing the TRUST Act.

**Governor JB Pritzker**

Governor Pritzker supports sanctuary status and has prominently opposed federal immigration efforts. He supports benefit programs for illegal immigrants, such as college scholarships and healthcare.

**#3 Gerrymandering & Representative Government****Ted Dabrowski**

Dabrowski would end one-size-fits-all mandates, return local control for large projects such as green energy, end unfunded mandates on schools, end anti-notification laws on education and healthcare. He emphasizes local control, family control, and restoring parental rights. He has called gerrymandering in Illinois "a horrific situation" and supports reforms for non-partisan map drawing.

**James Mendrick**

Mendrick states that the Illinois Constitution requires districts that are compact. Since the gerrymandered districts are not, this means that the maps are unconstitutional. Because they are unconstitutional, he may be able to correct them by executive order. His idea for fair maps would emphasize square districts – "Square for Fair."

**Darren Bailey**

Bailey's website does not mention this topic, and this has not been an issue he's emphasized in the 2026 campaign. In the past, he has expressed support for Fair Maps.

**Rick Heidner**

Heidner's website does not mention this topic, and Candidate Heidner has made no public statements about this.

**Governor JB Pritzker**

Governor Pritzker signed HB4412 (Public Act 102-1123), taking away local power to regulate wind and solar farms. However, he had previously gone on record (August 2022) saying he would not support legislation or create statewide controls over the siting of wind or solar farms. In his 2018 campaign, he was strongly against gerrymandering and pledged to veto any maps that were "in any way drafted or created by legislators, political party leaders, and/or their staffs or allies." Nevertheless, he later signed politically drawn maps into law that were among the worst gerrymandered in the country and received a grade of "F" from the Princeton Gerrymandering Project. In 2025, Pritzker strongly opposed Texas gerrymandering efforts as "cheating" and "stealing seats."

## **#4 Pensions/Government Debt**

### **Ted Dabrowski**

Dabrowski would repeal unfunded mandates, call for municipal bankruptcy, and consolidate duplicative and overlapping local governments. He would transition to a 401K program for all new government workers to halt creation of new pension debt and kickstart business confidence. Addressing pension debt is a core issue of his campaign; and he sees it as a driver of high taxes, population loss, and businesses leaving. His approach is structural, freezing new debt through defined contribution plans for new employees and stabilizing existing obligations.

### **James Mendrick**

Mendrick believes in the following: auditing waste to end fraud and inefficiency, reducing regulation, and reducing taxation. Forensic audits and a strong pro-business environment would help to eliminate the debt. He would have a truly balanced budget by the end of his term. He would address the pension issue by transitioning to 401Ks. He acknowledges it would be unfair not to pay retirees. Already retired people who are in insolvent pensions should be able to buy into a solvent one, such as the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF), which is 98% funded. He would not abolish the pensions but have them administered by an outside firm that is well-managed with a good track record. He would also change to a merit-based system for government employees.

### **Darren Bailey**

Bailey's website and his *Blueprint for Illinois* do not specifically mention pensions or debt. He does not support moving new public employees to 401k style plans. He proposes negotiating with state workers and retirees, though he does not provide specifics on how this will work within the framework of Illinois' constitutional pension protections.

### **Rick Heidner**

This topic is not mentioned on his website. At public forums, he has suggested raising the retirement age and providing less generous benefits. He positions this as a part of overall fiscal discipline.

### **Governor JB Pritzker**

The Governor's campaign website claims that he enacted seven balanced budgets that invest in key priorities for working families.<sup>1</sup> The Governor would address the pension debt incrementally and extend a voluntary buyout program. In 2025, he signed legislation for a pension "sweetener" adding \$11 billion in liabilities to Chicago's police and fire pension funds. During his administration, the state budget has grown from \$40 billion to \$55 billion.

## **#5 Taxes**

### **Ted Dabrowski**

Dabrowski would audit all spending and expose the waste, fraud, and abuse. He would put a 1% cap on property taxes like Indiana does. To make this work, he would push for cuts in Illinois bureaucratic waste and bloat, veto any and all tax increases, and use the line-item veto to reduce state spending. He would create jobs by lowering income and business taxes, capping property taxes as mentioned above, reforming workers' compensation, slashing regulations (removing

three old rules for every new one enacted), and repealing the zero emissions policy. Lowering taxes is central to his *Make Illinois Affordable* campaign. He sees high taxes as driving population loss and business flight.

### **James Mendrick**

Mendrick will lower taxes by ending sanctuary status and by conducting forensic audits of all government agencies and NGOs. He would raise the percentage of state taxes that go to local municipalities back to 10% from the current 6%, which is a key reason why property taxes have been raised. He would immediately eliminate unfunded mandates that were established by executive order. He will publicize others in order to put pressure on the general assembly. He would follow the federal policy of no taxes on tips/overtime. He would also match the federal government in raising the estate tax exemption to \$14 million from the current \$4 million.

### **Darren Bailey**

Bailey's website emphasizes affordability, saying that he will fight to lower taxes, cut wasteful government spending, and bring real fiscal responsibility back to Springfield. He will champion policies that put more money back in the pockets of everyday Illinoisans, support small businesses, and attract new jobs to our state. On property taxes, he talks about people being taxed out of their homes. In his *Blueprint for Illinois*, he says, "No family should pay more in property taxes than their mortgage." To remedy this, he will rein in government waste, demand accountability, and deliver real tax relief. By exposing fraud, that money can fund schools and bring down property taxes. He focuses on cutting spending without specifying deep program cuts. He would cap property tax increases and support no tax on tips. He ties property tax caps to mortgage rates. He also points to unfunded mandates as driving up property taxes.

### **Rick Heidner**

His website states he is for lower taxes, tax relief, and budget accountability but does not say specifically what he would do.

### **Governor JB Pritzker**

His website lists cutting taxes as one of his accomplishments.<sup>2</sup> His 2019 Rebuild Illinois plan doubled the state gas tax with annual increases for inflation. He eliminated the 1% state sales tax on groceries, but since that money went to local governments, not the state, many municipalities were forced to reinstate it.

## **#6 Government Corruption/Ethics in Government**

### **Ted Dabrowski**

Dabrowski would work to improve police morale, and work cooperatively with federal law enforcement. He would call for the sanction of prosecutors and judges who fail to hold those who are arrested for violent crimes or are habitual criminals. He would make criminal justice data available to the public.

### **James Mendrick**

Mendrick would use forensic audits to find corrupt people. He would implement ethics training for government employees and have ethics policies with teeth. While Sheriff of DuPage County, there have been no complaints about police brutality, because they have been given the tools to

do things the right way, for instance, training with high-tech headsets that simulate schizophrenia. Mendrick also wants to end eminent domain abuse.

### **Darren Bailey**

Bailey will stop fraud with a DOGE-style approach and will prosecute fraud aggressively. He would require proof of citizenship when people register to vote.

### **Rick Heidner**

Heidner would address this through term limits for governor.

### **Governor JB Pritzker**

The Governor pledged to combat corruption and signed Senate Bill 539 in 2021, an ethics omnibus bill. Legislative Inspector General at the time, Carol Pope, resigned as a result, stating that the bill was full of loopholes.

## **#7 The New Illinois Movement**

### **Ted Dabrowski**

Dabrowski has spoken at three New Illinois events between 2019 and 2022, on issues of shared concern. While not in favor of splitting the state, he acknowledges the legitimacy of our frustrations over fiscal mismanagement and unequal representation. In a Feb 2025 article he wrote, “The bottom line is, these Illinoisans— who love this state and share in the state’s long history – have become so frustrated that they feel their only way out is to separate. Illinois’ leaders ignore these residents at their own peril...A separation from Illinois is highly unlikely to happen – nor should it happen. But that’s not to say that the grievances of Illinoisans in groups like New Illinois should be ignored. To do so is a mistake. For a state that’s creating so many problems for its people, it’s absolute arrogance.”

### **James Mendrick**

Mendrick has heard about New Illinois. He does not think it will happen and does not think it is practical, but he doesn’t want to discourage our efforts. He thinks the way to solve our problems in Illinois will be to elect a good governor.

### **Darren Bailey**

In 2019, while in the Illinois House of Representatives, Bailey co-sponsored HR101, the resolution for the 51<sup>st</sup> state. He spoke at three New Illinois events in 2019 and 2020. When running for governor in 2022, he changed his position and no longer supports the movement. He has said that he never really supported splitting the state but was trying to send a message.

### **Rick Heidner**

This was not mentioned on Heidner’s website, and there is no record of any public statements he has made on this issue.

### **Governor JB Pritzker**

Since his February 2020 budget address, Gov. Pritzker has spoken against the new state movement. At the Illinois State Fair in Du Quoin in September 2025, he mocked the movement and then said that people who don’t like the way things are run in Illinois should move.

**The following questions are NOT related to New Illinois' core issues. They are included here because many people are interested in them.**

### **#8 Abortion**

#### **Ted Dabrowski**

This topic is not mentioned on Dabrowski's website, but he has publicly stated that he is pro-life. He opposes Illinois' 2019 Reproductive Health Act and has criticized Illinois as the "extreme abortion capitol of the Midwest."

#### **James Mendrick**

Mendrick is pro-life, with exceptions for rape and incest. He believes that abortion should be limited to the first trimester only and believes that the recently adopted assisted suicide law has got to go. He does not want Illinois to go Canada's way and calls it "adult abortion." He will work with the General Assembly to stop abortion funding for patients from out of state.

#### **Darren Bailey**

This topic is not mentioned on Bailey's website. He is pro-life and opposes taxpayer funding for abortion, except in cases when the mother's life is in danger.

#### **Rick Heidner**

This topic is not mentioned on Heidner's website, and no recorded statements on this topic by Heidner could be found.

#### **Governor JB Pritzker**

Governor Pritzker is staunchly pro-choice and signed legislation to expand reproductive rights in Illinois. He has also worked for this in other states. He recently launched the Prairie State Access Fund in Illinois, a public/private partnership, to "strengthen infrastructure and resources for Illinois' reproductive healthcare ecosystem." This effort is intended to "ensure continued access for both residents of Illinois and those from across the country seeking abortion care." He has worked to pass the Reproductive Health Act, to repeal parental notification laws, and to establish a hotline for out-of-state patients. He recently signed an assisted suicide bill into law.

### **#9 Second Amendment**

#### **Ted Dabrowski**

This topic is not mentioned on Dabrowski's website, but in public statements he has expressed staunch support for the Second Amendment. He is strongly opposed to the Protect Illinois Communities Act (PICA) and is emphatic that it must be repealed. He will also push to abolish the FOID card.

#### **James Mendrick**

Mendrick is pro Second Amendment, even for ex-cons who are fully rehabilitated. He would work to abolish the FOID card. He would clean up the database for mental health records. Red flag laws need to be looked at carefully; there has to be a formal process and tougher, due

process to confiscate guns. He originally refused to enforce PICA, but reversed course to avoid legal challenges.

**Darren Bailey**

Bailey's website does not mention this issue. In the past Bailey has expressed support for the Second Amendment and his belief in zero regulations. He opposes the Protect Illinois Communities Act (PICA). He supports constitutional (permitless) carry and eliminating the FOID card. He opposes red flag laws.

**Rick Heidner**

This topic is not mentioned on Heidner's website. In forums, he has tied gun rights to broader safety issues. He has not proposed the repeal of PICA.

**Governor JB Pritzker**

Gov Pritzker has signed gun control bills into law, most notably the Protect Illinois Communities Act (PICA) in January 2023, which bans the sale and distribution of numerous weapons and devices.

**#10 Girl's Sports****Ted Dabrowski**

This topic is not mentioned on Dabrowski's website. On social media he has stated "No boys in girls' sports. Period."

**James Mendrick**

Mendrick will work to protect women's and girls' sports and safe spaces. He will enforce federal laws to correct this problem. He believes sex education should be limited to the basics and that the rest should be up to the parents.

**Darren Bailey**

This topic is not mentioned on Bailey's website. He spoke about this issue during his last run for governor in 2022. No recorded statements on this topic by Bailey could be found.

**Rick Heidner**

This topic is not mentioned on Heidner's website. There is no record of him making any public statements about this issue.

**Governor JB Pritzker**

In 2019, Gov Pritzker issued executive order 2019-11, which supported participation in sports based on gender identity. He has defended this in speeches, and under his administration the Illinois Department of Human Rights has stated that prohibiting transgender girls from girls' sports would violate state law.

**#11 The SAFE-T Act****Ted Dabrowski**

Dabrowski is a strong opponent of the SAFE-T Act and has pledged to fight for its full repeal. He has also stated that he would work to improve police morale.

**James Mendrick**

Mendrick would reverse the SAFE-T Act with an executive order on day one. He believes there have to be options for judges. He believes that the SAFE-T Act prevents early intervention. He wants to expand rehabilitative programs that he's developed in DuPage County statewide.

**Darren Bailey**

Bailey's website says, "Stop policies that put politics ahead of public safety." His website alludes to but doesn't specifically mention the SAFE-T Act. Bailey has publicly spoken out against the SAFE-T Act and said that it should be repealed.

**Rick Heidner**

Heidner's website says that he wants safe streets. He speaks against the SAFE-T Act but doesn't specify whether he would amend it or eliminate it.

**Governor JB Pritzker**

Governor Pritzker signed the SAFE-T Act into law.

**Major Endorsements as of February 17, 2026**  
**(These do not include political party organizations or elected officials.)**

**Dabrowski**

- Illinois Family Institute, citing his "commitment to pro-life and pro-family values" as a primary reason for their support; 1/27/26.
- Mary Kate Zander, president of Illinois Right to Life, endorsed Dabrowski citing his and his running mate's commitment to "human dignity" and the rights of parents and children in Illinois; 1/26/26.

**Mendrick**

- Sheriffs of Illinois PAC, because of his status as a career law enforcement officer and his refusal to enforce the state's assault weapon ban; 2/10/26.

**Bailey**

- Daily Herald Editorial Board, due to his legislative experience and refined tone regarding Chicago in his second campaign, as well as his platform emphasizing tax caps, auditing state spending, and addressing utility costs; 2/15/26.

**Heidner**

- AL-PAC Illinois, funded and led by Leopardo Construction
- Gold Rush Amusements/Gold Rush Gaming, which is a private business owned by Heidner

**JB Pritzker's**

- Giffords Courage to Fight Gun Violence PAC; 2/2/26
- Equality Illinois, statewide LGBTQ+ organization; 1/15/26

**Major organizations that have not yet made endorsements for the 2026 Republican primary:**

- Chicago Tribune
- Illinois State Rifle Association (ISRA)
- National Rifle Association (NRA-PVF)
- National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB)
- Illinois Chamber of Commerce PAC

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<sup>1</sup> Financial watchdog organizations maintain that Illinois' budget has not been balanced for over twenty years.

<sup>2</sup> While there have been some targeted relieve efforts, there have been multiple instances of tax increases; he has hiked taxes and fees 49 times. Gov. Pritzker has not proposed any broad-based tax cuts or rate reductions. Reports show that Illinois residents pay substantially more per person in state taxes since the beginning of the Pritzker administration.