

WGLT ISSUES AND PROGRAMS First Quarter 2026 January 2026 – March 2026

The following issues were addressed during WGLT Newscasts during MORNING EDITION from 5 to 9 am M-F, during ALL THINGS CONSIDERED from 3-6 pm, M-F, during Sound Ideas segments in those dayparts, and on our website at www.wglt.org. Other examples of WGLT addressing community issues can be found at www.wglt.org.

Politics and Government

[Bloomington plans public conversation about data centers soon](#)

[Braden Fogerson](#) March 30, 2026

The City of Bloomington and Central Illinois Regional Airport [CIRA] have both said there are no redevelopment plans at the location rumored to become a data center in southeast Bloomington.

[Immigration Project grapples with reduction of accredited legal program for immigrant families](#)

[Ben Howell, Eric Stock](#) March 30, 2026

The Department of Justice quietly reassigned its senior attorneys off of the Recognition and Accreditation Program, which provides training and standards for non-attorneys to give legal advice and sometimes litigate issues. The Immigration Project in downstate Illinois has 30 DOJ reps.

[Immigration Project grapples with reduction of accredited legal program for immigrant families](#)

[Ben Howell, Eric Stock](#) March 30, 2026

The Department of Justice quietly reassigned its senior attorneys off of the Recognition and Accreditation Program, which provides training and standards for non-attorneys to give legal advice and sometimes litigate issues. The Immigration Project in downstate Illinois has 30 DOJ reps.

[Pope Leo tells Bloomington-Normal mayors they have a duty to reduce suffering](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 30, 2026

Pope Leo XIV has told the mayors of Bloomington and Normal that authority must be understood as service. The Pope referred to the example of Christ, who came “not to be served but to serve.”

[YWCA of McLean County ends longtime volunteer program and faces other threats from federal anti-DEI stance](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 30, 2026

The YWCA of McLean County is ending a nearly 40-year-old program that coordinates volunteers for nonprofit organizations in the community. This comes in the face of changing federal priorities and the Trump administration's campaign against diversity, equity and inclusion [DEI] and its "War on Woke."

[Bloomington, Normal and Peoria join nationwide 'No Kings' protests](#)

[Molly Hughes](#) March 28, 2026

"No Kings" rallies were held Saturday in Bloomington, Normal and Peoria as part of a nationwide day of protests against the Trump administration. Big crowds turned out at each location, with attendees carrying signs addressing issues like immigration, health care, women's rights, and executive overreach.

[Bloomington resumes search for new water sources](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 27, 2026

The City of Bloomington is engaged in a significant planning effort to look for ways to expand its drinking water supply. Water director Brett Lueschen said the city will likely need more water in the future.

[Illinois State University president backs evidence-based funding formula that passes in House committee](#)

[Evan Holden](#) March 26, 2026

Illinois State University President Aondover Tarhule was one of eight university leaders who signed a letter in support of a measure that aims to overhaul how public universities in Illinois are funded. The measure that would create an evidence-based funding formula for higher education was approved in a House committee on Thursday.

[Rep. Sharon Chung wants to limit corporate money in elections](#)

[Evan Holden](#) March 26, 2026

An Illinois lawmaker from Bloomington wants to limit corporate money in elections, but it could face legal challenges.

[Pritzker discusses housing crisis with Bloomington-Normal area leaders](#)

[Braden Fogerson](#) March 25, 2026

Gov. [JB Pritzker](#) spoke Wednesday with Bloomington-Normal area business and government leaders to discuss solutions to the ongoing [housing crisis](#).

[CIRA seeks community donations to support unpaid TSA officers](#)

Ben Howell March 25, 2026

The [Central Illinois Regional Airport](#) Authority [CIRA] is asking its community to support unpaid TSA workers as a partial government shutdown extends into its second month.

[Bloomington OKs revised development plan for former State Farm building downtown](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 23, 2026

Redevelopment of one of Bloomington's most prominent downtown buildings will occur in phases, with the initial phase beginning in July and targeted for completion by the middle of next year.

[Residents bring objections to the idea of a data center to Bloomington City Council](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 23, 2026

Ten of the 11 people who spoke during the public comments portion of Monday's Bloomington City Council meeting voiced opposition to a perceived possibility of a data center development south of Central Illinois Regional Airport.

[Bloomington Police unveil plans for \\$550K federal grant updating real-time crime data center](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 23, 2026

The region's only real-time data center collects and interprets information from license plate and public safety cameras. Bloomington Police plan to invest in crash detection tools and additional software and hardware upgrades.

[Rep. Darin LaHood wants the war in Iran to wind down, doesn't think ICE in airports is 'the right approach'](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 23, 2026

The Republican House member wouldn't commit to giving the Trump administration an additional \$200 billion for the war effort, saying constituents don't want to see "boots on the ground."

Downtown Starbucks would be part of revised Phase 1 of former State Farm building redevelopment

[Ryan Denham](#) March 22, 2026

The Bloomington City Council is expected to vote Monday on changes to a redevelopment agreement for the former State Farm building downtown, including a \$42 million Phase 1 that would bring a Starbucks to the property by July 2027.

Q&A: Uptown underpass unknowns remain in Normal

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 18, 2026

There are still a lot of details to work through with a prospective contractor on the Uptown Normal underpass project for another revised bid, and with state, federal, and railroad partners. City Manager Pam Reece has more to say in a WGLT interview.

New traffic signal technology could lower Normal Fire response times

[Charlie Schlenker](#), March 18, 2026

The union representing firefighters in the Town of Normal is giving up its request to add a fourth fire station. And the town is considering new traffic signal preemption technology that could cut 15-20 seconds off the average drive time to emergencies.

Voter turnout only hits 21% in McLean County in midterm primary

[Ryan Denham](#), March 17, 2026

Turnout in McLean County (including Bloomington voters) reached only 21.2% in this midterm, nonpresidential year primary election. That's the third straight decline in turnout in elections of this type.

Juliana Stratton wins Democratic primary for U.S. Senate

[Ben Szalinski](#), [Brenden Moore](#), March 17, 2026

Gov. Juliana Stratton won the hotly contested Democratic primary for U.S. Senate, defeating U.S. Reps. Raja Krishnamoorthi and Robin Kelly.

Voters approve new fire station for Randolph Township Fire Protection District

[Eric Stock](#), March 17, 2026

The referendum passed by a 64%-36% margin [572-315] on Tuesday with all five precincts reporting, according to the McLean County Clerk's office.

Darren Bailey wins GOP nomination, setting up Pritzker rematch in November

[Peter Hancock](#) March 17, 2026

Republican voters in Illinois have once again chosen former state Sen. Darren Bailey as their candidate for governor, giving him a second chance to unseat incumbent Democrat JB Pritzker in November.

Bloomington city leaders outline \$112M in proposed capital projects

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 16, 2026

A long list of upgrades, improvements and initiatives planned for the next fiscal year add up to nearly \$112 million worth of capital projects included in the City of Bloomington's proposed budget for the 2027 fiscal year.

Normal approves 2026-27 budget, pause in sales tax sharing and new street work

[Braden Fogerson](#), March 16, 2026

The Normal Town Council approved a new operating and capital investment budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year. The \$233.5 million budget represents a 10% increase over last year.

McLean County could seek reimbursement from clerk's office for budget overruns

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 16, 2026

The McLean County Board could decide to claw back more than \$400,000 in budget overruns from County Clerk Kathy Michael's office. Board chair Elizabeth Johnston said depending on what invoices and other documentation Michael submits in the next month, the county general fund may need to be reimbursed.

Illinois lawmakers look to regulate data centers as local governments propose their own rules

[Evan Holden](#) March 16, 2026

Several local governments in Central Illinois are looking to create their own data center regulations as lawmakers have yet to take action regulating this emerging industry. Data centers are seen as key to fueling an AI revolution. Critics worry they could drain water and electricity supplies that are needed to power them.

Connect Transit transfer center designs pass the halfway mark

[Ben Howell](#) March 16, 2026

City Manager Jeff Jurgens shared the newest images of the Connect Transit transfer center that is set to break ground at the end of 2026 or early 2027. The design is 60% complete.

[McLean County Board chair praises performance of EDC](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 16, 2026

McLean County Board Chair Elizabeth Johnston said she disagrees, in part, with Twin City mayors Dan Brady and Chris Koos who have criticized the performance of the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council. Johnston said she thinks the EDC has delivered a lot of bang for the buck.

[Bloomington defers adopting Eid al-Fitr Day proclamation](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 13, 2026

The City of Bloomington has deferred adoption of an Eid al-Fitr Day proclamation in part due to the conflict with Iran.

[McLean County pauses contentious intergovernmental sales tax agreement](#)

[Jim Stahly Jr.](#) March 12, 2026

The amendment to the agreement — that also must be passed by Bloomington and Normal — will forgo the money that would come during April, May and June, said McLean County Board Chair Elizabeth Johnston.

[Bloomington-Normal joins national YMCA to advocate on Capitol Hill](#)

[Ben Howell](#), [Eric Stock](#) March 12, 2026

Senior leadership from the Bloomington-Normal YMCA traveled to Washington, D.C. to join the national coalition's advocacy days. YMCA wants full funding for childcare funding and health promotions, among other priorities. At home, the BN YMCA is hoping to expand its service

[Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council head departs, opening door to dialogue on EDC's future](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 11, 2026

The head of the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council has submitted his resignation. Patrick Hoban led the EDC for six years. This opens the door to a broader discussion of the role of the EDC in the Twin Cities.

[New underpass draft bid in Normal is higher than the one approved in November](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 11, 2026

The updated tentative price to build the Uptown underpass project in Normal is about \$33.7 million. That is above the roughly \$32 million bid approved in November. The previous winning bidder withdrew over concerns about timing and its ability to meet the cost.

[McLean County Board members interrogate Clerk Kathy Michael over extra spending](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 10, 2026

McLean County Board members grilled County Clerk Kathy Michael for more than 40 minutes yesterday concerning more than \$400,000 in budget overages in her office that Michael has asked the county to pay.

[Bloomington council approves plan to add downtown parking](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 10, 2026

In the agreement with Lifelong Access, Bloomington will purchase a lot immediately north of the building and build a new 77-space public lot. In turn, the city will lease a 43-space lot at the former Elks Lodge along Madison to Lifelong Access on a 99-year term.

[Bloomington OKs plan to develop Carle Health medical campus on east side](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 9, 2026

The Bloomington City Council on Monday approved an agreement with Carle Health and Deneen Brothers Farms that paves the way for the regional medical campus on 35 acres within the Empire Business Park.

[Underpass contractor pulls out of project in Uptown Normal](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 6, 2026

The decade-old Underpass project in Uptown Normal has had another hitch. The contractor, Millstone-Weber, said it can't meet the requirements and construction timeline and has pulled out.

[McLean County Board to consider zoning changes related to potential AI data centers](#)

[Ben Howell](#) March 5, 2026

Though McLean County is not currently considering any proposals for large-scale AI data centers, the county board will consider a zoning amendment at its next meeting to clarify language and application requirements for any future proposal.

Early voting off to slow start in McLean County

[Eric Stock](#) March 5, 2026

Nearly 4,000 voters in McLean County have cast ballots in person or by mail. That's about 3% percent of registered voters in the county.

Illinois Municipal League wants more funding for local governments

[Evan Holden](#) March 4, 2026

The Illinois Municipal League wants more funding for local governments and quicker permitting process from state agencies to build infrastructure.

Illinois lawmakers consider removing the 2-year foreign language requirement for high school

[Evan Holden](#) March 4, 2026

Two Illinois lawmakers want to remove the two-year foreign language requirement for high school because they want to let students choice their own elective.

Former DOJ attorneys intervene in lawsuit seeking sensitive Illinois voter registration data

[Peter Hancock](#) March 3, 2026

Eighteen former U.S. Department of Justice attorneys filed a brief in federal court this week opposing the Trump administration's lawsuit that seeks access to sensitive personal information about every registered voter in Illinois.

Bloomington will tackle tough issue of sign code revisions

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 3, 2026

The City of Bloomington is stepping into what promises to be a thorny issue: rules about signs. City Manager Jeff Jurgens said the city hasn't revised the sign code since the 1970s.

Normal welcomes new transit provider to Uptown Station

[Braden Fogerson](#) March 2, 2026

FlixBus joins Peoria Charter, Greyhound and Jefferson Lines as roadway transit providers at the station.

Museum event lets people consider what 'life and liberty' means as America turns 250

[Michele Steinbacher](#) February 28, 2026

The program, focusing on the phrase “Life and Liberty,” was at the McLean County Museum of History and is part of the Democracy Dialogues series of public discussions this year, marking the museum’s celebration of America 250.

[Duckworth calls Iran strikes 'illegal' as LaHood points to 'direct consequence of Iran's actions'](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) February 28, 2026

U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois on Saturday called the Trump administration’s strikes on Iran “illegal” and happened “without a legitimate imminent threat to our homeland or our citizens.”

[Crucial water system upgrades are in Bloomington's plans](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 27, 2026

The City of Bloomington doesn't know what's happening to up to 3 million gallons of water per day — and it could be more during the summer. An aging treatment and distribution system is a root cause.

[Durbin, Duckworth back Gilmore for U.S. Attorney for Central Illinois](#)

[Ben Howell](#) February 27, 2026

With the strong support of U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, the Senate Judiciary Committee advanced the nomination of Gregory Gilmore to be the U.S. Attorney for the Central District of Illinois.

[GOP Senate candidates make case for conservative replacement for Durbin](#)

[Jim Stahly Jr.](#) February 26, 2026

Republicans Don Tracy, Casey Chlebek and Pamela Denise Long participated in a candidate forum broadcast Thursday on WTVP and presented by the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria and the League of Women Voters of Illinois.

[Democrats vying to replace Durbin tout political achievements, bash Trump](#)

[Jim Stahly Jr.](#) February 26, 2026

Democrats Robin Kelly, Raja Krishnamoorthi and Juliana Stratton participated in candidate forum broadcast Thursday on WTVP and presented by the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria and the League of Women Voters of Illinois.

[State Rep. Sharon Chung seeks compromise on insurance oversight](#)

[Evan Holden](#) February 24, 2026

Bloomington state Rep. Sharon Chung has introduced a insurance bill that invites conversation and compromise between insurance companies and the state.

Immigrants in McLean County seeking legal pathway face 'a different kind of fear'

[Cindy Alcazar, Saskia Molina Gamez](#) February 24, 2026

Some asylees in McLean County fear the legal pathway for remaining in the country is a trap for detention and deportation.

Central Illinois travel group is safe amid unrest over Mexican drug leader's killing

[Ben Howell](#) February 24, 2026

The "Winter Escape with WBNQ" group arrived to their resort safely Saturday and sheltered in place as the unrest started. Host Susan Saunders said most of their amenities have been unaffected.

Bloomington proposes major budget increase to \$371M for 2027

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) February 23, 2026

Driven by expenses mandated by the federal and state governments, the City of Bloomington is proposing a \$370.5 million overall budget for 2027.

McLean County begins search for new director of Behavioral Health Coordination

[Ben Howell, Eric Stock](#) February 20, 2026

The new director will need to pick up the responsibilities including managing the department, its programs, budgets, large-scale initiatives and public engagement.

Electric rates could be wobbly again this year

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 19, 2026

Last year, many Bloomington-Normal residents saw their electric bills jump 40% in some cases, even after the municipalities teamed together with other Illinois governments. And there are signs the summer could produce some volatile electric rates again.

Democrats offer muted praise of Pritzker's speech, Republicans dismiss 'campaign' rhetoric

[Brenden Moore and Jenna Schweikert](#) February 18, 2026

Reaction to Gov. JB Pritzker's combined State of the State and fiscal year 2027 budget address fell largely along partisan lines as Democrats offered muted praise while Republicans dismissed his affordability message as campaign-style rhetoric.

[Federal grant will allow extension of Constitution Trail in west Normal](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 18, 2026

A \$1.9 million federal grant announced by U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin will fund engineering and construction of the new stretch of trail that will extend the current endpoint at Gregory Street and Parkside to the west and south.

[Central Illinois lawmakers react to governor's budget address](#)

[Evan Holden](#) February 18, 2026

Democratic lawmakers mostly support the proposal, but have concerns about higher education funding. Republicans have concern about increases in taxes and increased spending.

[Rep. Sorensen sees no end in sight to partial government shutdown](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 18, 2026

Democrats are leveraging Department of Homeland Security funding to try and force reforms on Immigrations and Customs Enforcement. U.S. Rep. Eric Sorensen said Republicans need to come to the negotiating table.

[Sen. Durbin, Ray LaHood find common ground on perils, solutions to preserving democracy](#)

[Jim Stahly Jr.](#) February 17, 2026

The two came together at Braden Auditorium at Illinois State University for a question-and-answer session moderated by WGLT's Charlie Schlenker, in the first of a series of Democracy Dialogues.

[Bloomington leaders updated on strategic plan for regional economy, Bridge shelter village](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) February 17, 2026

The head of the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council says addressing residential needs is one key piece to realizing business growth in Bloomington.

[On Hearts for Heroes campaign, Rep. Sorensen hears veterans' concerns at Bloomington VFW](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 17, 2026

Democratic U.S. Rep. Eric Sorensen met with veterans from Bloomington-Normal this week. Among their top concerns are the bureaucratic hoops they must jump through to receive services.

[Normal renews contract with goal of reducing utility bills](#)

[Braden Fogerson](#) February 16, 2026

The town council approved a contract with Stone River Group to act as broker and consultant for Normal's electric aggregation program.

[Ranked choice voting stalled in Illinois, waiting for clarity from the courts](#)

[Evan Holden](#) February 16, 2026

Illinois municipalities face confusion on whether the Illinois election code allows for the implementation of ranked choice voting. Illinois lawmakers introduced a bill that would clarify how local governments can implement ranked choice voting.

[CIRA cruising along at a stable altitude](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 13, 2026

The director of the Central Illinois Regional Airport said 2025 was a good year for the Bloomington facility. Carl Olson said in a WGLT interview the airport had about 325,000 passengers for the year, in the same range as the last couple of years.

[With new construction lagging, Bloomington turns to rehab strategy to address housing crunch](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 13, 2026

Homebuilders put up just 58 single-family homes and duplexes in Bloomington last year — fewer than the 66 built in 2024. City officials hope other actions focusing on existing housing will help ease the community housing shortage.

[McLean County contracts to provide juvenile detention space for Macon County](#)

[Jim Stahly Jr.](#) February 12, 2026

The McLean County Board on Thursday approved an intergovernmental agreement to provide juvenile jail bed space to Macon County.

Bloomington names new water director

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 10, 2026

Brett Lueschen is the City of Bloomington's new water director.

Bloomington OKs swapping police department guns after amendment fails

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) February 9, 2026

The Bloomington City Council ultimately voted 8-1 to authorize spending up to \$120,000 on 145 new Walther PDP handguns for the police department.

Despite concerns, LaHood doesn't break with administration over vaccinations

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 9, 2026

Congressman Darin LaHood is not breaking entirely with the Trump administration on the vaccine question — even while acknowledging he now has more than just concerns.

Pritzker's new budget report could set tone for conservative 2027 spending plan

[Jerry Nowicki , Ben Szalinski](#) February 6, 2026

With Gov. JB Pritzker's annual budget address less than two weeks away, a new report from his office is setting the table for a speech that's likely to be bleak in tone.

Rep. LaHood praises federal immigration policy

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 6, 2026

U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood praised the Trump administration immigration policy and efforts to deport criminals, while expressing reservations about conduct toward children and warrantless searches.

Bloomington increases water conservation request as drought persists

[Eric Stock](#) February 6, 2026

City Manager Jeff Jurgens has signed a proclamation that mandates restrictions intended to reduce water use by 10% across all sectors, including residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, institutional, wholesale and for electric power generation.

Normal could dust off an old idea for a community sports complex

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 4, 2026

An upcoming strategic planning retreat for the Normal Town Council will help focus on issues for the next several years. Mayor Chris Koos said one idea that has surfaced in focus groups is a sports complex.

Community leaders are apprehensive about prospects for insurance regulation

[Charlie Schlenker](#), February 4, 2026

Bloomington-Normal leaders are calling for better dialogue between lawmakers, Gov. JB Pritzker, and insurance companies such as Bloomington-based State Farm.

Documentation Project event details Trump administration impacts on farmers and schools

[Braden Fogerson](#) February 3, 2026

The Documentation Project presented an informational meeting on the impact of Trump administration funding cuts Tuesday at Heartland Community College.

Pritzker sticking to proposal to fully fund pensions

[Ben Szalinski](#) February 3, 2026

The hallmark of the plan calls for fully funding pensions by 2048, rather than reaching 90% funding by 2045 like current state law calls for.

Child care funding freeze could worsen shortage in Illinois, providers say

[Nikoel Hytrek](#) February 3, 2026

Providers aren't the only ones who rely on the money. A small amount of federal funds go toward state child care support programs like CCAP that help families find and afford child care.

Normal refutes the need for extra fire station at town council meeting

[Braden Fogerson](#) February 3, 2026

The Normal Town Council on Monday heard a presentation of data analysis on the efficiency of fire department responses.

Pritzker gives \$5 million to boost Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton's Senate bid

[Tina Sfondeles](#) February 2, 2026

The billionaire governor's contribution, which was anticipated, was made through a pro-Stratton super PAC and already is being used to run TV ads with just weeks to go in the campaign.

[**Karine Jean-Pierre urges action to protect democracy at MLK Jr. Cultural Dinner**](#)

[Ben Howell](#) January 30, 2026

Karine Jean-Pierre visited Illinois State University for the annual MLK Jr. Cultural Dinner. The former White House press secretary talked to WGLT about her split from the Democratic Party last year, and how both parties have faced the first year of President Trump's second term.

[**U.S. Rep. Sorensen plans to vote against funding for DHS after 'abhorrent' ICE actions**](#)

[Eric Stock, Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) January 30, 2026

Central Illinois U.S. Rep. Eric Sorensen said he does not support funding for the Department of Homeland Security, a primary sticking point that puts another government shutdown in play.

[**After relocating one fire station, Normal will share internal data on response times**](#)

[Ben Howell](#) January 30, 2026

Town officials plan to present data at Monday's town council meeting to discuss how the relocation could impact emergency medical response times. That's been a point of contention with the Normal firefighters union.

[**Nonprofits sign letter asking Illinois government to resist Trump's policies**](#)

[Evan Holden](#) January 30, 2026

Peoria Proud and the JOLT foundation signed a letter, along with 100 other non-profit organizations, asking the Illinois government to resist the Trump administration's policies.

[**House rejects Sen. Tammy Duckworth's bid for independent ICE investigations**](#)

[Eric Stock](#) January 29, 2026

Duckworth said on NPR's Morning Edition she called for an independent investigation for any use of force by immigration agents in the spending bill. Her request was denied.

[**Sewage infrastructure need prompts Normal council discussion on how to pay**](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 28, 2026

Town of Normal staff are signaling a potential need for significant rate increases in several programs including water and sewer, recycling, landscape waste and trash pickups. City Manager Pam Reece said a need for new sewage lift stations and cost recovery for hauling will require a council policy discussion.

[Documentation Project aims to measure all Trump administration cuts in McLean County](#)

[Ben Howell, Eric Stock](#) January 27, 2026

In 2025, the actions of President Donald Trump's second term saw significant cuts of various funding sources for McLean County programs. A new community advocacy group wants to document the totality of these cuts in their initiative known as The Documentation Project.

[Bloomington council OKs ban on kratom, synthetic alternatives](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) January 26, 2026

Bloomington residents and businesses can no longer possess or sell the herbal substance kratom and synthetic alternatives, following action taken by the city council.

[Rep. LaHood calls latest Minneapolis shooting 'deeply concerning' and demands local and state role in investigation](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) January 25, 2026

The statement from Rep. Darin LaHood, a former federal prosecutor, appears to break from the Trump administration's claims about what happened — as well as its efforts to block state and local law enforcement from participating in the investigation.

[Pritzker pushes back at State Farm in escalating fight for tighter insurance regulations](#)

[Mawa Iqbal](#) January 23, 2026

After hearing from State Farm's CEO, Gov. JB Pritzker cited 'factual inaccuracies' in the company's stance against legislation to empower the state to force refunds to hefty insurance premium increases.

[ISU visiting professor in diplomacy critiques U.S. foreign policy](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 23, 2026

A veteran diplomat said American actions in Venezuela and rhetoric on Greenland do not show any foreign policy advantage for the U.S.

[Bloomington to consider ban on herbal substance kratom](#)

[Eric Stock](#) January 23, 2026

According to a staff memo to the city council, the city cites an FDA advisory that kratom can cause liver toxicity, seizures and substance use disorder. It's also been linked to deaths in rare cases, primarily in combination with other drugs.

[Advocates cheer new Illinois law that seals non-violent convictions 3 years after completing a sentence](#)

[Evan Holden](#) January 22, 2026

Gov. JB Pritzker signed a law that will automatically seal a person's non-violent criminal record three years after completing a sentence. When a felony conviction is sealed it will not show up on a background check that, removing restrictions on getting certain loans, jobs and buying or renting a home.

[Legitimate investigation of Minneapolis ICE shooting unlikely, according to Sen. Dick Durbin](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 21, 2026

“The investigation into the death of an innocent person is not complete or credible unless we reach out and gather every single resource to understand what happened and understand the truth,” Sen. Dick Durbin said during a stop in Bloomington.

[Normal council hears details of proposed \\$233M budget, and another pitch from firefighters](#)

[Braden Fogerson](#) January 21, 2026

The Normal Town Council on Monday heard a presentation on the proposed operating budget for the next five years.

[McLean County has plan for more timely audits, bill paying](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 20, 2026

A delay last year in finishing the external audit for McLean County government put grants at risk and further heightened periodic and recurring tensions. McLean County Board Chair Elizabeth Johnston said in a WGLT interview she thinks this year will go much better.

[Illinois Medicaid program faces looming funding crisis due to federal changes](#)

[Peter Hancock](#) January 19, 2026

A multibillion-dollar budget crisis will hit the state's Medicaid program in the next few years unless state lawmakers and Gov. JB Pritzker act to prevent it.

[Central Illinois lawmakers back nuclear power but differ on much of new energy law](#)

[Evan Holden](#) January 16, 2026

The Clean and Reliable Grid Act aims to expand the state's energy capacity in hopes of lowering energy prices. Here's what Central Illinois lawmakers say about the new law.

[Kathleen Lorenz testifies in marathon public hearing about McLean County GOP's \\$28K campaign contribution to her mayoral campaign](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 16, 2026

Kathleen Lorenz defended a campaign contribution from the McLean County Republican Party in her 2025 run for mayor of Normal during a marathon hearing Friday at the Illinois State Board of Elections' offices in Chicago. Lorenz's attorney called the hearing "smoke and mirrors."

[Normal will extend temporary School St. shutdown near ISU until summer](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) January 16, 2026

The Town of Normal is extending the temporary closure of a pedestrian-heavy stretch of School Street near Illinois State University as it gathers more data for potential permanent changes.

[GOP candidates for governor blast sanctuary cities and SAFE-T Act in Central Illinois forum](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 16, 2026

The four Republican Party candidates for governor of Illinois told a Central Illinois audience Thursday evening they favor property tax caps, pension reform, ending Illinois' status as a "sanctuary state," and rolling back the SAFE-T criminal justice reform act which ended cash bail.

[McLean County Board approves agreement for scope of mental health fund audit](#)

[Braden Fogerson](#) January 15, 2026

The McLean County Board on Thursday approved a Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] and a statement of work related to the mental health and public safety fund audit.

[Normal firefighters union makes case for saving fire station at town hall meeting](#)

[Eric Stock, Ben Howell](#) January 15, 2026

The union representing Town of Normal firefighters found a receptive audience at the first of four community town hall-style presentations on their efforts to save a fire station the town plans to close.

[Illinois county clerks alert public to postal changes that could delay mail-in ballots](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) January 15, 2026

Elections officers across Illinois are concerned delays in mail delivery could disrupt mail-in voting in upcoming elections.

[Bloomington mayor defends First Friday pullback, offers reassurance on tardy leaf collection](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 14, 2026

Bloomington Mayor Dan Brady said the downtown business community largely drove the city decision to scale back on First Friday promotional events. The city will now pick its spots to promote First Fridays, tied to happenings such as the Route 66 Festival, Tour du Chocolat, or holiday programs.

[Trump administration reverses \\$2B cuts that would have hit McLean County System of Care grant](#)

[Ben Howell, Lauren Warnecke](#) January 14, 2026

A federal grant in McLean County that provides community-based children's services of welfare, mental health and schools has been terminated, effective immediately. The county is still determining how to fill a \$500,000 funding gap.

[Pritzker doubles down on insurance industry regulation, would revisit cashless bail and higher ed funding](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 13, 2026

During a visit to Bloomington-Normal on Tuesday, Gov. JB Pritzker said he supports changing how state colleges and universities are funded, but wouldn't commit to releasing discretionary funds held back last fall.

[Bloomington City Council OKs changes to downtown business fronts, sidewalks](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#), January 12, 2026

The City of Bloomington is making adjustments to regulations governing sidewalks and storefront doorways in portions of the downtown area, potentially allowing some businesses to expand their entry areas.

[Lawsuit puts Illinois on offensive against ‘menacing’ immigration raids](#)

[Brenden Moore](#) January 12, 2026

Illinois and Chicago sued the Trump administration on Tuesday, seeking to severely limit immigration agents’ authority in the state and accusing the feds of unleashing an “organized bombardment” to coerce state and local officials to change their immigration policies.

[Needling Trump as 2028 looms: Inside JB Pritzker’s all-of-the-above media strategy](#)

Ben Szalinski and Brenden Moore January 12, 2026

Capitol News Illinois reviewed Gov. JB Pritzker’s schedule for the last seven years through public records requests and limited data shared by his campaign. Reporters found the 60-year-old governor did roughly 100 one-on-one media interviews in 2025, his most of any year in his tenure as governor.

[Illinois, 4 other states targeted for \\$10B child care funding freeze win restraining order](#)

[Nikoel Hytrek, Jerry Nowicki](#) January 9, 2026

Illinois and the four other Democratic-led states that were subject to the Trump administration’s freeze on \$10 billion in federal funding for child care and family services secured a restraining order on Friday in their lawsuit seeking to block the move.

[Pritzker signs major energy reform bill amid projected shortages](#)

[Maggie Dougherty](#) January 8, 2026

The Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act incentivizes battery storage among other measures aimed at bolstering grid reliability.

[Livingston County Judge Yedinak promoted to fill Bauknecht retirement](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 8, 2026

The former prosecutor became a judge in the 11th Judicial Circuit in 2023. He presides over the circuit-wide veterans Treatment Court.

[Kinzinger and Raoul emphasize importance of the Jan. 6 insurrection anniversary](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 8, 2026

The fifth anniversary of the Jan. 6 insurrection passed with little note this week, as events in Venezuela, the economy and even chatter about Greenland consumed public attention. It didn't go entirely unobserved. House Democrats held an unofficial hearing on the issue.

Firefighters' union and Town of Normal continue differences over emergency response times

[Charlie Schlenker](#) January 7, 2026

The union representing firefighters in the Town of Normal is continuing its campaign to keep the soon-to-close College Avenue fire station open — after a new station opens on the east side of town. The town insists there is no situation that needs to be addressed.

Rep. Sorensen says he's willing to bargain on health care subsidies: 'Something is better than nothing'

[Eric Stock](#) January 7, 2026

U. S. Rep. Eric Sorensen, a Democrat from Moline, said he's willing to consider some limits or cost controls that would help the plan pass in the Senate, where 60 votes are required for passage.

Trump administration freezing \$10 billion in social service funding for Illinois, four other blue states

[Tina Sfondeles](#) January 7, 2026

The pause in funding comes about a week after the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said it was freezing child care funds in Minnesota, and asking for an audit of day care centers amid allegations of fraud by day care centers run by Somali residents.

Illinois House speaker calls Bears stadium ask 'insensitive' amid budget pressures

[Ben Szalinski](#) January 6, 2026

"Talking about a brand new Bears stadium when this one's not even 25 years old, that's insensitive to what real people are going through right now," said Illinois House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch.

Normal council accepts community investment plan, hears more on fire station placement

[Ben Howell](#) January 5, 2026

The various projects, including public infrastructure, water, sewer and parks, total \$188 million of planned capital spending.

[Despite mounting budget pressure, graduated income tax remains political longshot](#)

Brenden Moore January 5, 2026

Gov. JB Pritzker backs the idea in principle but says it's not a 2026 priority.

[Illinois political leaders react to U.S. capture of Venezuela's president](#)

[Eric Stock, Lauren Warnecke](#) January 3, 2026

Republican U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood is praising the U.S. military operations in Venezuela, which included the capture of its president Nicolás Maduro and his wife. Democratic U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth, a former combat veteran, calls the Trump administration's actions unconstitutional.

[Bloomington requests voluntary water conservation during severe drought](#)

[Eric Stock](#) January 2, 2026

The City of Bloomington is asking residents and businesses to reduce their water use, as water levels at lakes Bloomington and Evergreen have dropped more than 8 feet below adequate levels. Much of McLean County, including Bloomington-Normal, is in a severe drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

[What to know about the 400 Illinois laws taking effect in the new year](#)

[Ben Howell](#) January 1, 2026

Teri Ross is the executive director of ILAO. She says it is important to understand the law because it effects the everyday lives of Illinois residents.

Education

[Teens can get financial literacy advice through program at Bloomington library, including session in Spanish](#)

[Saskia Molina Gamez](#) March 30, 2026

The Illinois State Credit Union, in partnership with the Bloomington Public Library, is offering financial literacy sessions next month. The financial education sessions are offered in both languages to ensure accessibility. The English session is on April 14, and the Spanish session is April 21.

[City of Bloomington Black History Essay Contest winners write about more than civil rights lions](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 30, 2026

Student winners of this year's City of Bloomington Black History Essay Contest wrote about everyone from civil rights icons to artists, musicians and little-known scientists. The young people have chosen heroes to admire and people who speak to them.

[ISU workers union delivers intent to strike as contract talks drag on](#)

By [Braden Fogerson](#) March 26, 2026

Illinois State University's unionized buildings, grounds and dining services workers said Thursday they've voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike as contract negotiations drag on.

[Illinois State University president backs evidence-based funding formula that passes in House committee](#)

March 26, 2026

[Students use AI to solve food waste issues at ISU business college event](#)

March 24, 2026

[Olympia Middle School students have plenty to be excited about over spring break](#)

March 23, 2026

[Unit 5 parents question how school board has communicated during enrollment study](#)

March 19, 2026

[Options for Unit 5 enrollment adjustment largely unchanged at marathon school board meeting](#)

March 19, 2026

Unit 5

1. [Normal Community High School celebrates tech teacher for being Teacher of the Year finalist](#)
2. [Chiddix Junior High parents want answers. Unit 5 says it legally can't say much](#)
3. [Unit 5 school board member discusses multiple factors under consideration in realignment plans](#)

4. [Parents seek help from Normal Town Council to avoid relocation of students from Glenn Elementary](#)
5. [8th grade Chiddix teacher on paid leave was disciplined by Unit 5 for repeated 'grooming behaviors'](#)
6. [Unit 5 adopts new reading curriculum that has classrooms hooked on phonics](#)
7. [Chiddix teacher was sanctioned by Unit 5 for 2019 conduct at LaSalle County cheerleading event](#)

District 87

1. [Unit 5 adopts new reading curriculum that has classrooms hooked on phonics](#)
2. [Readers' theater teaches Stevenson Elementary students about Black history](#)
3. [Unit 5 and District 87 switch to e-learning on Friday due to extreme cold forecast](#)
4. [District 87 shares student learning improvements, plans for gym renovation](#)
5. [Bloomington Junior High embraces AI technology in the classroom](#)
6. [Students and staff say new phone policy is working as designed at Bloomington High School](#)
7. ['Opens up the world': Stevenson Elementary's new playground focuses on access](#)

Higher Education

1. [Mass shooting injures 6, including ISU students, in off-campus residential neighborhood](#)
2. [Historian to debunk myths of the American west in ISU talk](#)
3. [ISU women's basketball earns No. 3 seed in MVC tournament after victory against Bradley](#)
4. [How Redbird Flight equips college students with financial literacy](#)
5. [Illinois State's Arch Madness stay winds up short-lived](#)
6. [Illinois lawmakers consider removing the 2-year foreign language requirement for high school](#)

7. [Credit transfers between Heartland and ISU coming for engineering and special education](#)

More education stories

[IEA chooses Bloomington resident as next president](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#)

, March 18, 2026

The newly elected head of the state's largest union lives in Bloomington. Illinois Education Association members chose Karl Goeke who had been serving as interim president following the death of IEA president Al Llorens in September.

[Tornadoes, severe storms still possible overnight as NWS extends tornado watch](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) March 10, 2026

The National Weather Service is warning of an enhanced risk of tornados and other severe weather on Tuesday night into Wednesday morning throughout Central Illinois.

[A student farming program is expanding in urban schools. Here's what city kids get out of FFA](#)

[Katie Grawitch](#) March 9, 2026

Chapters of FFA, once called Future Farmers of America, are becoming more common in city schools. Program advisors say students are learning skills that can help them work in a wide range of industries — from biotech to cosmetology.

[Normal West principal named a finalist for the Golden Apple leadership award](#)

[Courtney Conroy](#) March 5, 2026

A veteran McLean County educator is among seven Illinois finalists for the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Leadership. Winners receive a \$10,000 cash prize, split between the educator and their school.

[Chiddix Junior High principal announces departure](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 4, 2026

In an email to parents, Mariana Nicasio said her leaving is unrelated to turmoil at the school while two teachers are on leave for alleged misconduct.

ISU criminologist's new book shows schools use restraint and seclusion more than they're saying

[Lauren Warnecke, Ben Howell](#) March 4, 2026

New research showed public schools across the country intentionally evade federal reporting requirements by calling seclusion rooms something else. Students with disabilities, he found, were four times more likely to be restrained or secluded.

Chiddix teacher, coach fired from Lexington High cheer squad

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 27, 2026

Andrew Miller has volunteered with Lexington's cheer squad since 2024. He was placed on administrative leave in the wake of a police investigation that's taken him off the job at Chiddix Junior High. On Friday afternoon, Lexington High's cheerleading families were notified of Miller's termination.

Normal Police investigating second Chiddix teacher after alleged inappropriate conduct with a student

[Eric Stock, Lauren Warnecke](#) February 24, 2026

Eighth grade social studies teacher Brandon Knapp has been placed on paid administrative leave.

ISU president recaps university response to first year of Trump's 2nd term and ongoing new budgeting model

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 23, 2026

ISU President Aondover Tarhule on Friday took a practical stance as litigation continues over a lot of federal mandates. "Our first and most important responsibility is to our students," said Tarhule.

ISU trustees approve 5% tuition increase for new students this fall

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 20, 2026

Illinois State University's board of trustees on Friday approved a 5% tuition increase for new students arriving on campus this fall, with Chief Financial Officer Glen Nelson saying planners tried to minimize the impact of cost increases on those students.

Regional school superintendent Mark Jontry takes early retirement

[Eric Stock](#) February 20, 2026

Mark Jontry is stepping down 14 months earlier than expected, likely paving the way for his successor to take office sooner. He's the regional superintendent of schools for McLean, DeWitt, Livingston and Logan counties.

Parents can offer feedback on 2 options related to Unit 5 enrollment study

[Braden Fogerson](#) February 20, 2026

Unit 5 families have two draft options to submit feedback related to the districtwide enrollment survey. Families can review the two proposals and complete a survey until March 1.

Unit 5 budget is 'on track' midway through fiscal year

[Braden Fogerson](#) February 19, 2026

The Unit 5 school board received a mid-year update on the budget during Wednesday's school board meeting.

ISU plans \$1,100 increase for most incoming undergraduate students

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 18, 2026

It will cost most incoming Illinois State University undergraduate students about \$1,143 more next school year, according to recommendations the administration has made to the Board of Trustees.

ISU College of Engineering dean talks program's first year and what's to come

[Braden Fogerson](#) February 18, 2026

The College of Engineering at Illinois State University is surpassing enrollment goals and showing promise for a statewide market in need of more engineers.

Carlock families press campaign against potential grade school closure

[Braden Fogerson](#) February 12, 2026

Although a final recommendation from consultants who first floated the idea of closing the school will not come until March, Unit 5 will hold a meeting on Feb. 19 to lay out options for the school district moving forward.

Normal Community tech teacher is the region's Teacher of the Year

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 11, 2026

The Illinois State Board of Education selects one teacher from each region for the recognition. Don Whitman is among 14 teachers statewide eligible for Illinois Teacher of the Year.

'Really cool' \$50,000 makeover of Metcalf classroom is complete

[Braden Fogerson](#) February 11, 2026

Upgrades are complete for a \$50,000 classroom makeover won by a 7th and 8th grade teacher at Thomas Metcalf School, a university lab school.

Illinois lawmakers not sure there's more higher ed money in a 'tricky' budget

[Evan Holden](#) February 10, 2026

Lawmakers have concerns about increasing higher education funding this year, with a tight budget. They are waiting for more information to decide on a change to the funding model.

Education unions rally in Uptown Normal for increased state funding

[Ben Howell](#), [Sami Johnson](#) February 9, 2026

At Friday's "People Over Profits" rally, several public and higher education teacher unions came together to vocalize the state's historic lack of funding for the sector.

Heartland Community College hosts town halls to guide strategic plan

[Eric Stock](#) February 6, 2026

Heartland has four in-person and one virtual town hall planned to help the college shape its long-term strategic plan over the next 10 years.

Union opposes Unit 5's move to reject teacher resignation

[Braden Fogerson](#) February 2, 2026

The Unit 5 teacher's union is opposed to the district's decision to reject a Parkside Elementary learning behavior specialist's resignation.

Student loan borrowers in Illinois could face federal and state 'tax bomb' in 2026

[Sam Freeman](#) January 30, 2026

For the first time in five years, certain forms of student loan forgiveness will be taxable following a change in federal tax policy this year.

Potential Carlock school closure still top of mind at Unit 5 board meeting

[Braden Fogerson](#) January 29, 2026

About two dozen public commenters, including a few current Carlock students, spoke during Wednesday's meeting.

[Unit 5 schools closed Monday due to frigid forecast; District 87 will do e-learning](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) January 25, 2026

The Unit 5 school district has canceled school for Monday, Jan. 26, because of expected frigid temperatures. Bloomington's District 87 will do an e-learning day.

[Grid operator MISO ends 'energy emergency alert' and lifts electricity conservation measures](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) January 24, 2026

With frigid temperatures for a second straight day, Ameren Illinois and Corn Belt Energy customers on Saturday were asked to reduce their non-essential use of electricity following an emergency warning by the regional grid operator MISO. Those conservation measures were lifted around 10 a.m. Saturday.

[Illinois higher education board seeks 4.6% budget increase for next fiscal year](#)

[Peter Hancock](#) January 23, 2026

The board that governs higher education in Illinois voted Wednesday to request \$2.7 billion in general revenue funding next year, an increase of \$121.6 million, or 4.6%, over the amount lawmakers approved for the current fiscal year.

[Heartland Community College will offer the first program in Illinois on hybrid diesel technology](#)

[Ben Howell](#) January 21, 2026

A new certificate of both hands-on training and technical coursework teaches students to diagnose, repair and maintain medium and heavy-duty hybrid diesel vehicles and equipment. Students will also study electric propulsion systems.

[Unit 5 postpones monthly school board meeting](#)

[Eric Stock](#) January 20, 2026

The monthly meeting has been rescheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 28 at Normal Community West High School.

Ridgeview's 'Midday Madness' combines conference rival basketball with an in-school assembly

[Braden Fogerson](#), January 20, 2026

Ridgeview High School in Colfax hosted conference rivals Flanagan-Cornell for a Midday Madness event combining sports and student safety.

Unit 5 and Baby Fold pivot after Department of Education cancels grant money

[Braden Fogerson](#) January 20, 2026

Unit 5 is still working to adjust as a student support program at Cedar Ridge and Fairview Elementary schools loses federal grant funding at the end of the month.

Central Illinois has a nurse shortage. New caps on student loan borrowing could make it worse.

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 15, 2026

Health care providers and educators worry a \$100,000 lifetime limit on borrowing for graduate nursing programs, wrapped in the fine print of the Big, Beautiful Bill, could put a wrench in the workforce pipeline.

Pritzker doubles down on insurance industry regulation, would revisit cashless bail and higher ed funding

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 13, 2026

During a visit to Bloomington-Normal on Tuesday, Gov. JB Pritzker said he supports changing how state colleges and universities are funded, but wouldn't commit to releasing discretionary funds held back last fall.

Groundbreaking ceremony kicks off long-awaited change to ISU's fine arts facilities

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 13, 2026

Upgrades to ISU's aging arts complex have been discussed for decades. The project broke ground Tuesday, with \$87 million in state funds helping to get it to the starting line.

Normal Community High School will host first TEDx event for students

[Eric Stock](#), [Ben Howell](#) January 12, 2026

For the first time at Normal Community High School, students will have the chance to participate in presentations on technology, entertainment or design—better known as a TED Talk.

Environment and Nature

[Bloomington city leaders outline \\$112M in proposed capital projects](#)

[Joe Deacon](#) - WGLT March 16, 2026

A long list of upgrades, improvements and initiatives planned for the next fiscal year add up to nearly \$112 million worth of capital projects included in the City of Bloomington's proposed budget for the 2027 fiscal year.

[Illinois lawmakers look to regulate data centers as local governments propose their own rules](#)

[Evan Holden](#) March 16, 2026

Several local governments in Central Illinois are looking to create their own data center regulations as lawmakers have yet to take action regulating this emerging industry. Data centers are seen as key to fueling an AI revolution. Critics worry they could drain water and electricity supplies that are needed to power them.

[Town of Normal seeks feedback before renovating Rosa Parks Commons](#)

March 13, 2026

[Woodford County joins 40 counties in planting 25 trees for 4-H's Green Communities project](#)

March 10, 2026

[McLean County Emergency Management Agency prepares for another storm season](#)

March 6, 2026

[Farmers may lose a USDA program that helps them adapt to climate change](#)

[Rachel Cramer](#) February 9, 2026

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Agriculture created a network of "climate hubs" to understand how climate change affects agriculture and forestry and help farmers adapt to more extreme and unpredictable weather. Now, the future of these hubs is uncertain.

[Petition hits 1000+ signatures to save the largest redwood tree on ISU's campus](#)

[Addy Carnahan, Lauren Warnecke](#) January 21, 2026

A dawn redwood is threatened by sewer and sidewalk work connected to ISU's fine arts complex construction. Recent ISU graduate Cassie McGinnis organized a change.org petition to raise awareness about what she believes is one of the oldest redwoods in Central Illinois.

[This conservation practice boosts wildlife species on farmland, new research finds](#)

[Jess Savage](#) January 12, 2026

University of Illinois researchers analyzed traces of DNA in rivers and streams to learn how strips of trees near water — called riparian buffers — impact land species.

[Pritzker signs major energy reform bill amid projected shortages](#)

[Maggie Dougherty](#) January 8, 2026

The Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act incentivizes battery storage among other measures aimed at bolstering grid reliability

Arts and Culture

[MIOpera features Black stories and voices with 'I, Too, Sing America' series](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 31, 2026

With support from a Healing Illinois grant, the Bloomington-Normal-based opera company is producing several months of programming centering Black composers and stories in the genre.

[Bloomington man gains \\$10,000 by losing 100 pounds in national fitness challenge](#)

[Colleen Holden](#) March 30, 2026

Jeff Gerald is a member at Farrell's Extreme Bodyshaping gym in Bloomington, and recently won their yearlong national body transformation challenge with a grand prize of \$10,000.

['Brush it Off' exhibition features work by artists in substance use recovery working to build healthy habits](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 30, 2026

The exhibition is on view at the McLean County Arts Center alongside the center's popular emerging artist exhibition—something curator George Woodworth calls "huge" for the artists' journeys through and out of addiction.

City of Bloomington Black History Essay Contest winners write about more than civil rights lions

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 30, 2026

Student winners of this year's City of Bloomington Black History Essay Contest wrote about everyone from civil rights icons to artists, musicians and little-known scientists. The young people have chosen heroes to admire and people who speak to them.

Some tickets will be available in-person and day-of for Bob Odenkirk's Normal Theater screening

[Ryan Denham](#) March 26, 2026

The actor and comedian Bob Odenkirk will visit Normal next week for a preview screening of his new film "Normal," and yes, it's happening at the Normal Theater. Here's what we know about the availability of tickets day-of at the theater's box office.

The pendulum of history swings 'toward a more perfect union' in lecture at Eureka College

[Lauren Warnecke, Ben Howell](#) March 17, 2026

Historian Barry McNealy teaches high school history and works with the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. He'll give a public talk at Eureka College on March 27.

Bob Odenkirk to visit Normal Theater for screening of new film 'Normal'

[Ryan Denham](#) March 13, 2026

Actor Bob Odenkirk will appear in person April 2 at the Normal Theater to talk about his new film "Normal." After a 7 p.m. screening, Odenkirk will be joined on stage by screenwriter Derek Kolstad for a discussion about the movie.

'Homeaid' is Chicago Farmer's first LP in 6 years

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 12, 2026

The Bloomington-based singer-songwriter has produced his first record with a label—and the first with his touring band, the Fieldnotes. They'll play the Castle Theatre on March 28.

Prairie Fire Theatre shakes things up for 2026 season

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 11, 2026

The theater and light opera company embarks on a first-time collaboration with the Music Connections Foundation to mount 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' this summer at Heartland Community College

[Memory, grief and collective healing take the stage in Community Players' 'Fun Home'](#)

[Ben Howell, Lauren Warnecke](#) March 5, 2026

The Tony Award-winning musical Fun Home tells the story of graphic novelist Alison Bechdel's testing time of writing her autobiography. The Community Players Theatre gives the musical's Bloomington-Normal debut this weekend at the Normal Community Activity Center.

[WGLT partners with Normal Theater for freedom of the press film series](#)

[Melissa Libert](#) March 4, 2026

Meet members of the WGLT newsroom before the movie and ask your news questions.

[Here Come the Mummies bring the funk to Bloomington](#)

[Lauren Warnecke, Ben Howell](#) February 26, 2026

Mummy Cass and his band mates make up the all-original anonymous funk band called Here Come the Mummies. 5,000 years ago, they were in sarcophagi, but now they're playing at the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts.

[After 65 years, Normal's Music Shoppe can't stop the beat](#)

[Addy Carnahan, Lauren Warnecke](#) February 25, 2026

The Music Shoppe, a family-owned instrument sales and service center with three locations in Central Illinois, is celebrating a big milestone. Past and present owners discuss their unlikely success in a niche industry.

[A new movie called 'Normal' is about a Midwest town named Normal. Just not our Normal.](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) February 19, 2026

A new trailer dropped Thursday for "Normal," a neo-Western thriller film set in a small Midwestern town called Normal. It stars Bob Odenkirk from "Breaking Bad" fame.

[For moms, Nomad Theatre's 'Paint Night' is art imitating life](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 19, 2026

Director Cristen Monson said the play's tagline as "Steel Magnolias" for the 21st century doesn't give the play enough credit. "Paint Night" runs two weekends in Bloomington, at the future McLean County Arts Center Annex.

[CreatiVets honors Marine Nancy Benedict in inaugural art exhibition at Heartland](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 10, 2026

Nancy Benedict of Pontiac served in the Marine Corps from 1975-1978. She died last fall while enrolled in CreatiVets. Her classmates worked together to finish the pottery she'd started and dedicated their exhibition to her memory.

[Some tickets will be available in-person and day-of for Bob Odenkirk's Normal Theater screening](#)

[Some tickets will be available in-person and day-of for Bob Odenkirk's Normal Theater screening](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) 21 hours ago

The actor and comedian Bob Odenkirk will visit Normal next week for a preview screening of his new film "Normal," and yes, it's happening at the Normal Theater. Here's what we know about the availability of tickets day-of at the theater's box office.

[The pendulum of history swings 'toward a more perfect union' in lecture at Eureka College](#)

[Lauren Warnecke, Ben Howell](#) March 17, 2026

Historian Barry McNealy teaches high school history and works with the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. He'll give a public talk at Eureka College on March 27.

['Homeaid' is Chicago Farmer's first LP in 6 years](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 12, 2026

The Bloomington-based singer-songwriter has produced his first record with a label—and the first with his touring band, the Fieldnotes. They'll play the Castle Theatre on March 28.

[Prairie Fire Theatre shakes things up for 2026 season](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 11, 2026

The theater and light opera company embarks on a first-time collaboration with the Music Connections Foundation to mount 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' this summer at Heartland Community College

[Memory, grief and collective healing take the stage in Community Players' 'Fun Home'](#)

[Ben Howell, Lauren Warnecke](#) March 5, 2026

The Tony Award-winning musical Fun Home tells the story of graphic novelist Alison Bechdel's testing time of writing her autobiography. The Community Players Theatre gives the musical's Bloomington-Normal debut this weekend at the Normal Community Activity Center.

[WGLT partners with Normal Theater for freedom of the press film series](#)

[Melissa Libert](#) March 4, 2026

Meet members of the WGLT newsroom before the movie and ask your news questions.

[Here Come the Mummies bring the funk to Bloomington](#)

[Lauren Warnecke, Ben Howell](#) February 26, 2026

Mummy Cass and his band mates make up the all-original anonymous funk band called Here Come the Mummies. 5,000 years ago, they were in sarcophagi, but now they're playing at the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts.

[After 65 years, Normal's Music Shoppe can't stop the beat](#)

[Addy Carnahan, Lauren Warnecke](#), February 25, 2026

The Music Shoppe, a family-owned instrument sales and service center with three locations in Central Illinois, is celebrating a big milestone. Past and present owners discuss their unlikely success in a niche industry.

[A new movie called 'Normal' is about a Midwest town named Normal. Just not our Normal.](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) February 19, 2026

A new trailer dropped Thursday for "Normal," a neo-Western thriller film set in a small Midwestern town called Normal. It stars Bob Odenkirk from "Breaking Bad" fame.

[For moms, Nomad Theatre's 'Paint Night' is art imitating life](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 19, 2026

Director Cristen Monson said the play's tagline as "Steel Magnolias" for the 21st century doesn't give the play enough credit. "Paint Night" runs two weekends in Bloomington, at the future McLean County Arts Center Annex.

[**CreatiVets honors Marine Nancy Benedict in inaugural art exhibition at Heartland**](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 10, 2026

Nancy Benedict of Pontiac served in the Marine Corps from 1975-1978. She died last fall while enrolled in CreatiVets. Her classmates worked together to finish the pottery she'd started and dedicated their exhibition to her memory.

[**Film series memorializing the AIDS epidemic provides 'chilling parallels' to today**](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 9, 2026

Weekly screenings focus on the early days of the AIDS crisis, with community leaders and scholars introducing each film.

[**Chris Greene Quartet to make its Twin City debut at Jazz UpFront**](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 5, 2026

The Chicago-based band will play tracks from its 2024 album 'Conversance' for a first-ever appearance in Bloomington. But Greene has been here before.

[**At University Galleries, 50 years in 50 prints mark Normal Editions' golden anniversary**](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 29, 2026

Price worked with University Galleries staff and ISU alumni to select from among the print shop's most memorable and significant projects—including a set of prints by David Wojnarowicz.

[**McLean County Indian community feels 'seen and heard' by U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi**](#)

[Cindy Alcazar](#) January 25, 2026

Members of a South Asian association in McLean County gathered Saturday to celebrate India's 77th year as a republic, featuring a keynote address by U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, who is running for U.S. Senate from Illinois.

[**144-year-old Longfellow Club keeps up with the times by keeping things simple**](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 23, 2026

Bloomington-Normal's oldest social club was launched by educators and scholars in 1882, following the death of American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Elder members of the Longfellow Club say a strict vetting process and subtle changes in format through the generations have kept the club going as others social societies struggle.

[Illinois State campus to add public art installation to revived arts complex](#)

[Addy Carnahan, Lauren Warnecke](#) January 22, 2026

The Illinois Arts Council and the Illinois Capital Development Board have partnered to commission a public art piece for display at the new Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts complex. It's part of a larger push for public art in Bloomington-Normal that will now include a major opportunity on Illinois State University's campus for an Illinois artist.

[Looking to read more in 2026? B-N has plenty of book clubs to help](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 22, 2026

Book clubs see a bump in participation as "January Joiners" look for ways to up their word count. Librarians and indie organizers say book clubs aren't just about the books—they build community.

[McLean County leaders expect big crowds this year for Route 66 centennial](#)

[Michele Steinbacher](#) January 21, 2026

Leaders gathered Tuesday in Downtown Bloomington to announce a yearlong celebration for the 100th anniversary of Route 66. Organizers expect an influx of tourism tied to the celebration of the famed American highway.

[Small and mighty WYSE food pantry gets a boost from B-N music community](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 15, 2026

The Starving Artists is a grassroots initiative encouraging Central Illinois musicians to hold monthly benefit concerts. A concert at the Coffeehouse in Normal on Jan. 24 is collecting donations for WYSE Food Pantry in West Bloomington.

[Groundbreaking ceremony kicks off long-awaited change to ISU's fine arts facilities](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 13, 2026

Upgrades to ISU's aging arts complex have been discussed for decades. The project broke ground Tuesday, with \$87 million in state funds helping to get it to the starting line.

[Downtown Bloomington reboots First Fridays with anchor events 3 times a year](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 9, 2026

The monthly initiative aimed at drawing foot traffic to businesses and art galleries downtown has seen waning participation, driving city staff to rethink their involvement. In

addition to city-sponsored First Fridays in Feb., July and Dec., business owners are committed to leading the initiative the rest of the year.

[Strong Towns Blono commissions public art to recognize Route 66 centennial celebration](#)

[Ben Howell](#) January 8, 2026

Last May, the grassroots advocacy group commissioned an artist to paint 15 circus-themed murals connecting the Bloomington Public Library and the McLean County Museum of History. The member organization will do the same thing this summer to celebrate the centennial of Route 66.

[Community Players' 'Waiting in the Wings' is a belly laugh about family—and a ghost—in a new venue](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 7, 2026

The contemporary romantic comedy, produced at Illinois Art Station, is the first of three productions in a satellite location while Community Players undergoes renovations.

Business and Economy

[Former Pantagraph print building reopens as a retro arcade](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 31, 2026

Bloomington City Manager Jeff Jurgens said he's pleased with the redevelopment of the former Pantagraph print building on West Jefferson Street. The building has reopened with the 8 Bit Arcade, a retro-style video game and pinball arcade and bar on the main floor.

[Bloomington Normal Economic Development Council picks Chamber of Commerce exec as interim CEO](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 31, 2026

The Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council has named an interim Chief Executive Officer. Tyler Cravens will hold the position while the council does a national search for someone to succeed Patrick Hoban.

[Bloomington OKs revised development plan for former State Farm building downtown](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 23, 2026

Redevelopment of one of Bloomington's most prominent downtown buildings will occur in phases, with the initial phase beginning in July and targeted for completion by the middle of next year.

[Residents bring objections to the idea of a data center to Bloomington City Council](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 23, 2026

Ten of the 11 people who spoke during the public comments portion of Monday's Bloomington City Council meeting voiced opposition to a perceived possibility of a data center development south of Central Illinois Regional Airport.

['Illinois farmers can feed Illinois': State grant program offers assistance](#)

March 20, 2026

[Rivian deal with Uber will put up to 50,000 self-driving R2s on the streets](#)

March 19, 2026

[State Farm to close Corporate HQ and Illinois Operations Center and consolidate Bloomington employees at Corporate South](#)

March 19, 2026

[Bloomington city leaders outline \\$112M in proposed capital projects](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 16, 2026

A long list of upgrades, improvements and initiatives planned for the next fiscal year add up to nearly \$112 million worth of capital projects included in the City of Bloomington's proposed budget for the 2027 fiscal year.

[Recent closures leaves families on a 'Hunger Games'-style search for child care](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 16, 2026

A shortage of child care options has worsened in recent months following the closure of Kidsville, Bright Horizons and one of two Cadence Academy locations.

[Eastview Church to donate community center, expanding Home Sweet Home Ministries' campus](#)

[Emily Bollinger](#) March 31, 2026

When the donation goes through, Home Sweet Home will own properties that serve the unhoused population on three adjacent blocks south of downtown Bloomington.

Normal's Pizza Payaa takes 2nd place at International Pizza Expo

[Ben Howell](#) March 31, 2026

Adam Elpayaa was recognized as one of the top pizza makers at the International Pizza Expo in Las Vegas. The event hosted 780 competitors from around the world.

Bloomington plans public conversation about data centers soon

[Braden Fogerson](#) March 31, 2026

The City of Bloomington and Central Illinois Regional Airport [CIRA] have both said there are no redevelopment plans at the location rumored to become a data center in southeast Bloomington.

Connect Transit transfer center designs pass the halfway mark

[Ben Howell](#) March 16, 2026

City Manager Jeff Jurgens shared the newest images of the Connect Transit transfer center that is set to break ground at the end of 2026 or early 2027. The design is 60% complete.

More American farmers are filing for bankruptcy. Here's why

[Tadeo Ruiz Sandoval](#) March 13, 2026

Higher costs and lower prices are squeezing farmers out of profitability. That's led many to file for bankruptcy as a last resort to find aid.

First Rivian R2s will start at \$57,990; cheapest version not available until late 2027

[Ryan Denham](#) March 12, 2026

The first Rivian R2s will be delivered to customers this spring, beginning with a special "launch" version that starts at \$57,990. A base model of R2 starting around \$45,000 will not be available until late 2027.

Rivian-owned robotics company secures more startup funding

[Charlie Schlenker](#) March 11, 2026

A startup robotics company owned by Rivian and founded by Rivian CEO RJ Scaringe has secured \$500 million in startup capital. Mind Robotics announced an investment by Accel and Andreessen Horowitz. The firm wants to build AI-powered industrial robots.

Bloomington-Normal gas prices surge due to war in Iran

[Eric Stock, Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 10, 2026

The average price in McLean County is up to \$3.56 per gallon, that's 65 cents more than the price in February, according to the fuel cost-tracking website GasBuddy.com.

[Bloomington OKs plan to develop Carle Health medical campus on east side](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 9, 2026

The Bloomington City Council on Monday approved an agreement with Carle Health and Deneen Brothers Farms that paves the way for the regional medical campus on 35 acres within the Empire Business Park.

[Group Tool expands Lexington manufacturing plant](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 9, 2026

The new 100,000-square-foot facility will add about 30 manufacturing jobs. Group Tool, Inc. has hubbed operations in Lexington since 1985.

[Bloomington child care center was under DCFS investigation when it closed](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 6, 2026

The national chain Bright Horizons said the location was "no longer viable." The location in east Bloomington is among two of three child care centers along Williamsburg Drive to close in recent months.

[Contractor dies in a workplace incident at Rivian warehouse in Normal](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 5, 2026

Firefighters unpinned a man who was trapped between a semi-trailer and loading dock at the Rivian's warehouse in north Normal. Kevin Lancaster of Heyworth was transported by ambulance but later died.

[Lawsuit claims 'pattern of unfair and deceptive practices' at B-N mobile home park owner Oak Wood](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) February 26, 2026

Three residents of a Bloomington mobile home park have filed a lawsuit against the park's out-of-town owner, claiming it's used a "pattern of unfair and deceptive practices" to illegally force them to pay higher rent and improperly assessed fines and fees.

[State Farm reports strong growth — and shares some of it with policyholders](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 26, 2026

State Farm is announcing the largest dividend in company history, a \$5 billion giveback to auto policyholders. CEO Jon Farney told reporters the dividend works out to an average of \$100 per vehicle for 49 million vehicles.

[OSHA inspection found safety violations at Gibson City grain bin led to a worker injury](#)

[Ben Howell, Lauren Warnecke](#) February 25, 2026

OSHA said Alliance Grain Co. violated safety standards by not properly guarding a sump hole, contributing to a seasonal laborer becoming injured. Alliance has not yet responded to the penalties, which total \$276,407. The company said it's reviewing the citations.

[Connect Transit fares to go contactless this summer](#)

[Ben Howell](#) February 25, 2026

Connect Transit announced their fare collection system will go contactless this summer. Community members can provide feedback at engagement sessions on March 5, 6 and 12.

[Ransomware cyberattack hits City of Bloomington payment vendor](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 24, 2026

A vendor for the City of Bloomington suffered a ransomware cyberattack early this month. That criminal action disrupted about 1,500 credit and debit card payments to the city.

[USDA lost 24,000 workers under Trump, hurting critical resources for farmers](#)

Macy Byars February 24, 2026

The Trump administration's federal workforce cuts shrunk U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies that inspect produce, provide conservation resources and collect data on crops and livestock. It's creating longer wait times for farmers seeking federal services and programs, people working in agriculture say.

[Bloomington proposes major budget increase to \\$371M for 2027](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) February 23, 2026

Driven by expenses mandated by the federal and state governments, the City of Bloomington is proposing a \$370.5 million overall budget for 2027.

[McLean County farmer sees more short-term instability from Supreme Court ruling on tariffs](#)

[Eric Stock](#) February 20, 2026

A Lexington area farmer says Friday's U.S. Supreme Court ruling striking down the Trump administration's tariff policies will provide long-term benefit but more short-term uncertainty.

[Bloomington leaders updated on strategic plan for regional economy, Bridge shelter village](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) February 17, 2026

The head of the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council says addressing residential needs is one key piece to realizing business growth in Bloomington.

[Builders put up some houses last year in Normal. There's a longer list of empty lots](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 17, 2026

Single-family housing starts grew in Normal last year by nearly 49% — though the total number only reached 55.

[Infrastructure and workforce dominate One Voice trip requests for federal funding](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 17, 2026

The Bloomington Normal Economic Development Council has three infrastructure projects and one workforce development program earmarked for a request for funding by Congress and federal agencies as part of the annual One Voice trip to Washington.

[With new construction lagging, Bloomington turns to rehab strategy to address housing crunch](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 13, 2026

Homebuilders put up just 58 single-family homes and duplexes in Bloomington last year — fewer than the 66 built in 2024. City officials hope other actions focusing on existing housing will help ease the community housing shortage.

[Illinois awards more grant money toward McLean County's Route 66 celebrations and landmarks](#)

[Ben Howell](#) February 10, 2026

With over \$500,000 in new grant money, VisitBN will use the funds to continue projects, renovations and updates to McLean County's Route 66 landmarks.

[Bloomington OKs swapping police department guns after amendment fails](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) February 9, 2026

The Bloomington City Council ultimately voted 8-1 to authorize spending up to \$120,000 on 145 new Walther PDP handguns for the police department.

Farmers may lose a USDA program that helps them adapt to climate change

[Rachel Cramer](#) February 9, 2026

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Agriculture created a network of “climate hubs” to understand how climate change affects agriculture and forestry and help farmers adapt to more extreme and unpredictable weather. Now, the future of these hubs is uncertain.

New Pantagraph owner takes over

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 6, 2026

The new owner of the parent company of The Pantagraph newspaper said the chain’s flagship paper in St. Louis is “a little too far left.”

Community leaders are apprehensive about prospects for insurance regulation

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 4, 2026

Bloomington-Normal leaders are calling for better dialogue between lawmakers, Gov. JB Pritzker, and insurance companies such as Bloomington-based State Farm.

Heartland Community College receives \$20,000 donation in robotic landscape equipment

[Courtney Conroy](#) February 3, 2026

Heartland Community College students in the Technical Education division will soon train with the same technology used by landscape professionals.

YWCA closes Labyrinth Made Goods as clean energy jobs program ramps up

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 3, 2026

The shift is partly a response to changes in the nonprofit’s grant funding. YWCA said it’s also an opportunity to better assist with pre-release job training for incarcerated individuals.

EDC and YWCA report lays out McLean County’s child care crisis

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 2, 2026

The Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council and YWCA McLean County are proposing significant public and private sector investment in affordable child care for the community, after a yearlong study.

[Ropp Jersey Cheese Farm will permanently close in February](#)

[Ben Howell](#) January 29, 2026

For six generations, the Ropp family has made dairy products in Normal, including two decades producing cheese. The store and farm will close early next month.

[United Airlines restores Bloomington service with daily flights to Chicago](#)

[Courtney Conroy](#) January 27, 2026

Starting in May, the Central Illinois Regional Airport will restore daily flights to Chicago O'Hare International Airport through United Airlines.

[Bloomington council OKs ban on kratom, synthetic alternatives](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) January 26, 2026

Bloomington residents and businesses can no longer possess or sell the herbal substance kratom and synthetic alternatives, following action taken by the city council.

[Rivian's first test R2s come off the line after fast-track expansion in Normal](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) January 26, 2026

Rivian's first R2s — test models called manufacturing validation build vehicles — drove off the line earlier this month, with the first customer deliveries expected by June. That comes after a huge expansion that added 2.6 million square feet of new space at the plant in Normal.

[Pritzker pushes back at State Farm in escalating fight for tighter insurance regulations](#)

[Mawa Iqbal](#) January 23, 2026

After hearing from State Farm's CEO, Gov. JB Pritzker cited 'factual inaccuracies' in the company's stance against legislation to empower the state to force refunds to hefty insurance premium increases.

[Former Illinois Farm Bureau president refuses to resign seat on Country Mutual board in unprecedented move](#)

[Ben Howell](#) January 16, 2026

In an unprecedented move, former Illinois Farm Bureau President Brian Duncan has declined to resign from his seat as chair of the Country Mutual Insurance board. A legal dispute involving Country's Farm Bureau ties helped lead to Duncan's ouster.

[Lake Road Inn near Hudson closes after over 90 years in business](#)

[Courtney Conroy](#) January 13, 2026

Lake Road Inn in rural Hudson is closing until further notice after the unexpected death of its owner.

[Bloomington City Council OKs changes to downtown business fronts, sidewalks](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) January 12, 2026

The City of Bloomington is making adjustments to regulations governing sidewalks and storefront doorways in portions of the downtown area, potentially allowing some businesses to expand their entry areas.

[This conservation practice boosts wildlife species on farmland, new research finds](#)

[Jess Savage](#) January 12, 2026

University of Illinois researchers analyzed traces of DNA in rivers and streams to learn how strips of trees near water — called riparian buffers — impact land species.

[Farmers are in line for billions of bailout money. Will it be enough to offset losses?](#)

[Rachel Cramer](#) January 9, 2026

The U.S. Department of Agriculture plans to send “bridge” payments to farmers who grow soybeans, cotton and other crops before March. Commodity groups and economists say the aid brings relief to farmers and their lenders, but they need long-term solutions.

Police and Courts

[New documentary will unveil new information on unsolved murder of Jennifer Lockmiller](#)

[Ben Howell, Lauren Warnecke](#) March 30, 2026

A new half-hour true-crime special set to debut on April 7 takes a look at new evidence unveiled in the unsolved murder of ISU student Jennifer Lockmiller in 1993. She was the ex-girlfriend of the wrongfully convicted Alan Beaman.

Tennessee man self-represented in McLean County court gets 35 years for armed robbery, fleeing police

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 29, 2026

Marcus Folks, 43, appeared for a sentencing hearing which stretched more than three hours Friday. Prosecutors called Folks' complaints a "self-inflicted wound" caused by his choices to fire a public defender three times and not show up for trial.

11th Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Casey Costigan plans to retire

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 27, 2026

Judge Casey Costigan has served on the bench in McLean County since 2006, ascending to chief judge overseeing five Central Illinois counties since 2022. His seat is up for election in November, with a new chief judge to be announced later this year.

Bloomington police chief reinforces the firewall between policing and immigration

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 27, 2026

Chief Jamal Simington gave a presentation on immigration policies and procedures in the Bloomington Police Department during a quarterly meeting of the city's police accountability board.

Judge reverses pretrial release for former McLean County staffer accused of viewing child porn at work

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 25, 2026

Bradley W. Beyer was granted pretrial supervision last week after being arrested on 34 counts of possessing and viewing child pornography. A McLean County judge reversed that ruling, sending Beyer to jail to await trial.

Normal Police says 6 shooting victims are all in stable condition

[Eric Stock](#) March 24, 2026

The six victims were all hospitalized with undisclosed injuries. The shooting happened in an apartment parking lot in the 700 block of Franklin Avenue around 2:40 a.m. Sunday.

Residents bring objections to the idea of a data center to Bloomington City Council

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 23, 2026

Ten of the 11 people who spoke during the public comments portion of Monday's Bloomington City Council meeting voiced opposition to a perceived possibility of a data center development south of Central Illinois Regional Airport.

[**Bloomington Police unveils plans for \\$550K federal grant updating real-time crime data center**](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 23, 2026

The region's only real-time data center collects and interprets information from license plate and public safety cameras. Bloomington Police plan to invest in crash detection tools and additional software and hardware upgrades.

[**Normal Police seeks public help as they investigate Sunday's mass shooting**](#)

[Eric Stock](#) March 23, 2026

Normal Police said Monday the six victims of Sunday's early morning shooting near the Illinois State University campus were between the ages of 17 and 19.

[**McLean County jury convicts truck driver in attempted \\$10.6 million cocaine delivery**](#)

[Eric Stock](#) March 23, 2026

Jobanpreet Singh, 30, was found guilty of controlled substance trafficking and unlawful possession of a controlled substance with intent to deliver following a jury trial in McLean County.

[**Why ISU opted against sending an emergency alert after a mass shooting near campus**](#)

[Eric Stock](#) March 22, 2026

Illinois State University's police chief said it took time to verify where the shooting had occurred and to collect other pertinent information. "By the time they sorted it out — the location and what had occurred — that imminency had kind of passed," he said.

[**Mass shooting injures 6, including ISU students, in off-campus residential neighborhood**](#)

[Ryan Denham, Eric Stock](#) March 22, 2026

Six people — including two juveniles — were shot early Sunday morning in a residential neighborhood in Normal just south of the Illinois State University campus, authorities said. It's one of the few mass shootings in recent Bloomington-Normal history.

[More McLean County defendants are using ChatGPT as their lawyers. It's not going great](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 20, 2026

Chief Judge Casey Costigan and Associate Judge Amy McFarland said litigants aren't doing themselves any favors by using artificial intelligence in place of public defenders.

[Former McLean County elections administrator arrested on 34 child pornography charges](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 20, 2026

Bradley Beyer was the co-director of McLean County elections until September 2025. He's been granted conditional release while awaiting trial.

[Community forum discusses recent justice system changes in Illinois](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 18, 2026

Hosted by the League of Women Voters, the event profiled three recent laws aimed at reforming bail, public defense and relief for formerly incarcerated people who've served their time.

[Bloomington police arrest Mahomet man for alleged sexual abuse of a teenager](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 13, 2026

Eswin Ixcotoyac-Tzoy, 23, is accused of posing as a juvenile on social media and traveling to Bloomington to meet a teenage girl.

[Last defendant sentenced in fatal Peoria Facebook Marketplace robbery](#)

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) March 12, 2026

A 20-year-old Peoria man will spend 15 years in prison for his role in a 2024 attempted robbery arranged through Facebook Marketplace that resulted in the death of an accomplice from Bloomington.

[Appeals court partially reverses 2024 McLean County conviction for child sexual crimes](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 9, 2026

Richard Gaines was convicted by a McLean County jury in 2024. An appellate court has tossed out two of three convictions and sent the case back to McLean County for resentencing.

[Contractor dies in a workplace incident at Rivian warehouse in Normal](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 5, 2026

Firefighters unpinned a man who was trapped between a semi-trailer and loading dock at the Rivian's warehouse in north Normal. Kevin Lancaster of Heyworth was transported by ambulance but later died.

[Couple acquitted of theft charges sues the City of Bloomington](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) March 2, 2026

Cassandra and Jadeyn Lacey allege the city violated their rights during an investigation into allegations they stole from business partners at a Bloomington wellness center. The federal lawsuit accuses a former Bloomington Police sergeant of prompting the criminal investigation on false pretenses.

[2 men arrested following Monday night shooting in Bloomington](#)

[Eric Stock](#) February 25, 2026

One man was hospitalized in the shooting. It happened in the 400 block of West Graham Street. His condition is not known.

[Police seek help in finding suspect after 2 armed robberies at Bloomington businesses](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) February 20, 2026

Police are looking for the public's help identifying the suspect in a pair of armed robberies this week at two Bloomington businesses just a few blocks apart.

[Bloomington police say teenager's death is a homicide case](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#) February 19, 2026

Bloomington Police now call the death of a 16-year-girl earlier this month a homicide investigation. But they have released few other details, including a cause of death.

[16-year-old girl injured in overnight shooting at off-campus apartment near ISU](#)

[Eric Stock](#) February 14, 2026

Normal Police said the shooting was reported at 12:58 a.m. at The Flats at ISU, 709 S. Main St. One person was shot and was taken to a hospital for treatment of injuries not considered life threatening.

Efforts with state police have increased Bloomington Police's repossession of firearm licenses

[Ben Howell, Eric Stock](#) February 13, 2026

Since March 2025, Bloomington Police collected about five cases a week related to gun owners with expired or revoked FOID and concealed carry licenses.

Bloomington's annual crime statistics show drop in shootings, increase in drug crimes

[Ben Howell, Eric Stock](#) February 12, 2026

With the release of Bloomington's 2025 crime statistics, gun-related and property crimes decreased, but drug offenses increased. Police Chief Jamal Simington said the department's proactive approach has led to greater intervention throughout the community.

Bloomington OKs swapping police department guns after amendment fails

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#) February 9, 2026

The Bloomington City Council ultimately voted 8-1 to authorize spending up to \$120,000 on 145 new Walther PDP handguns for the police department.

Twin City real estate developer arrested, accused of theft from a Bloomington language academy

[Lauren Warnecke](#) February 2, 2026

Rathnakumar Ramachandran, of Bloomington, is accused of embezzling more than \$100,000 from a language school in Bloomington. The academy teaches Tamil, a South Asian language, to children 3-10 years old.

Peoria County Sheriff's deputy is stable after being shot; suspect arrested

[Eric Stock](#) February 1, 2026

The Peoria County Sheriff's Office reports one of its deputies was shot several times during a traffic stop Saturday night and is hospitalized with serious injuries.

Bloomington's police accountability board to review Care for Victims report

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 29, 2026

The board selected a subcommittee charged with examining recommendations from a victims' rights group that wants to see greater investigatory power to hold police accountable. The PSCRB reviewed one complaint last year.

[White former downstate cop gets 20-year sentence for murdering Sonya Massey](#)

[Mawa Iqbal](#) January 29, 2026

In a police brutality case that drew national attention, Sean Grayson fatally shot the Black Springfield area woman in her home in 2024 after she had called 911 to investigate a possible prowler. His second-degree murder conviction carried a maximum sentence of 20 years.

[Man shot dead by federal immigration officers in Minneapolis](#)

[Cheryl W. Thompson](#) January 24, 2026

The incident, which was caught on video, marks the second deadly shooting by federal officers in Minneapolis in less than a month.

[Former youth group leader in Bloomington faces grooming charges](#)

[Eric Stock](#) January 23, 2026

A former youth program worker at a Bloomington nonprofit faces felony charges for allegedly grooming a teenage girl.

['This is fun': How police push through severe cold weather](#)

[Ben Howell](#) January 23, 2026

Some professionals do not have the luxury of staying home during cold snaps. But Normal Police Officer Nick Kosenesky is no stranger to braving the Midwest cold.

[Bloomington man charged with homicide connected to 2025 back-to-back fentanyl overdoses](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 23, 2026

Shaquan Hosea, 30, is accused of causing the death of two women who purchased drugs from him, not knowing it was fentanyl.

[Retiring U.S. Marshal Brendan Heffner laments loss of 'warrior mindset' in law enforcement](#)

[Eric Stock](#) January 22, 2026

Brendan Heffner said he's concerned that many in law enforcement have lost what he calls the "warrior mindset" and it's putting officers and the public at risk.

[Normal firefighters union makes case for saving fire station at town hall meeting](#)

[Eric Stock, Ben Howell](#) January 15, 2026

The union representing Town of Normal firefighters found a receptive audience at the first of four community town hall-style presentations on their efforts to save a fire station the town plans to close.

[Bloomington Police parking deck will see some parking affected during repairs](#)

[Ben Howell](#) January 12, 2026

Contractors will replace the existing concrete beams with steel ones with a crane in order to improve the safety and functionality of the parking structure. The work will leave the deck and affected areas inaccessible to vehicles.

[Livingston County Judge Yedinak promoted to fill Bauknecht retirement](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#) January 8, 2026

The former prosecutor became a judge in the 11th Judicial Circuit in 2023. He presides over the circuit-wide Veterans Treatment Court.

[Bloomington man dead after motorcycle-SUV crash on city's southeast side](#)

[Ryan Denham](#) January 7, 2026

A 40-year-old Bloomington man is dead after his motorcycle collided with an SUV on Wednesday afternoon on the city's southeast side.