

WGLT ISSUES AND PROGRAMS Second Quarter 2025

April 2025 – June 2025

The following issues were addressed during WGLT Newscasts during MORNING EDITION from 5 to 9 am M-F, during ALL THINGS CONSIDERED from 3-6PM, M-F, and during Sound Ideas, M-F 5p-5:30. The story lengths range from one minute to 20 minutes.

Politics and Government

Regional planning commission wants feedback on draft land use plan for McLean County

[Charlie Schlenker](#), June 26, 2025

The draft of a new McLean County Land Use Plan suggests future growth will largely happen on the fringes of Bloomington and Normal.

City of Bloomington will work to assuage massage therapist concerns over new ordinance

[Charlie Schlenker](#) June 26, 2025

Bloomington's city manager says the newly-passed massage business ordinance will do more than help shut down illicit businesses.

Gov. JB Pritzker announces run for 3rd term to protect Illinois from 'chaos and craziness' of Trump

June 26, 2025

A trans migrant came to Chicago to escape violence. Now she's afraid of deportation.

June 26, 2025

State Rep. Bill Hauter announces reelection bid

June 25, 2025

Bloomington council OKs updated massage business regulations in effort to halt illicit operations

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#), June 23, 2025

Bloomington city leaders remain optimistic a modified plan to regulate massage businesses will still strengthen efforts to prevent human trafficking, despite the removal of an annual fee intended to fund investigations.

ISU nuclear physicist: Long-term consequences of military strike on Iran remain to be seen

[Lauren Warnecke](#), June 23, 2025

A nuclear physicist from Bloomington-Normal said diplomacy has been the best method to reduce the global nuclear threat.

WGLT joins other NPR stations in court filing to contest public media defunding

Eric Stock, June 23, 2025

WGLT and more than two dozen other NPR stations joined a newly filed amicus brief in the lawsuit that aims to block the Trump administration's executive order to defund public media.

Students can soon earn automatic admission to state's universities, hoping to keep more in Illinois

Vivienne Hughes, June 23, 2025

High school and community college students in Illinois will soon be able to earn automatic admission to most state public universities based on their GPA — without even having to apply.

Illinois lawmakers react to Trump administration strikes on Iran nuclear sites

Collin Schopp, June 22, 2025

Illinois' political leaders are reacting to the U.S. military's weekend strikes of three nuclear sites in Iran.

Bloomington removes annual licensing fee from proposed massage business regulations

Eric Stock, June 21, 2025

Bloomington is dropping the proposed licensing fees that massage establishments would have to pay to operate in the city. City staff had proposed a \$250 annual fee to cover the cost of investigating the businesses to address concerns about sex trafficking.

Peoria chapter of business mentorship group looks to relaunch Bloomington effort, amid possible federal cutbacks

Joe Deacon - WGLT, June 20, 2025

The volunteer business assistance nonprofit SCORE Peoria is working to expand its presence in Bloomington-Normal. But those efforts could be facing a major roadblock, as the pending reconciliation legislation in Congress would eliminate the national organization's funding.

After Minnesota killings, elected officials in B-N say violent rhetoric here comes at a cost

Ryan Denham, June 20, 2025

Elected officials in McLean County say the lawmaker shootings in Minnesota are frightening – and that they've been on the receiving end of violent rhetoric themselves.

Despite lack of power, rookie Central Illinois lawmakers carve out their own paths

[Cesar Toscano](#), June 18, 2025

Many new lawmakers come to government with big dreams but often find they have little power. This is how several first-time Central Illinois lawmakers learned how to enact change in their own ways.

Phase-in of short-term rental limits in Normal could avoid a legal issue

[Charlie Schlenker](#), June 18, 2025

The five-year delay of a ban on existing short-term rental units in residential areas of Normal might have been a wise move by the town.

Hard Things: Could 220 mph passenger rail service be next?

[Charlie Schlenker](#), June 18, 2025

It took more than 30 years to bring 110 mph passenger train service from Chicago to St. Louis. It could take that or longer to get true high-speed rail along the same corridor.

Normal council bans new short-term rentals in single-family neighborhoods

[Braden Fogerson](#), June 17, 2025

While no new rentals can be made in areas marked as single-family residential in Normal, a five-year transition period for current STRs is included in the ordinance approved by the town council on Monday.

Bloomington looks to adopt new housing rehabilitation strategy

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#), June 16, 2025

Bloomington city leaders plan to implement a multi-faceted strategy aimed at addressing vacant properties throughout the city over the next several years.

Illinois legislators split on party lines over bill that aims to preserve reproductive health care

[Cesar Toscano](#), June 16, 2025

Mifepristone, a drug used in medical abortion, has come under threat by the Trump administration in recent months. The widely used abortion bill is still legal. It survived a court challenge last year, but state Rep. Dagmara Avelar said she is concerned that reproductive health care remains under attack.

Illinois lawmakers strengthen law requiring hospital care for sexual assault survivors

[Kate Martin](#), June 16, 2025

The bill's passage comes a year after APM Reports revealed that dozens of hospitals violated the 49-year-old law.

Pritzker signs \$55.1B state budget reliant on \$700M of new taxes

[Ben Szalinski](#), June 16, 2025

Gov. JB Pritzker signed Illinois' fiscal year 2026 budget into law Monday, taking shots at President Donald Trump's budget management to defend hard choices state lawmakers were forced to make this year.

Video: No Kings rally draws large crowd to Downtown Bloomington

[Ryan Denham](#), June 14, 2025

A huge crowd packed a public space in Downtown Bloomington on Saturday as part of nationwide "No Kings" protests aimed at the Trump administration.

McLean County Board awards \$1.3 million grant to build shelter village

[Ben Howell](#), June 12, 2025

The McLean County Board on Thursday approved Home Sweet Home Ministries' request for a \$1.3 million grant from the McLean County behavioral health coordination.

Reps. LaHood and Sorensen split on rescission vote for foreign aid and public media

[Eric Stock](#), June 12, 2025

The measure narrowly passed largely along party lines, 214-to-212, sending the measure to the U.S. Senate.

Trump administration derails McLean County's 'equity' initiative for digital literacy

[Eric Stock](#), June 11, 2025

A program that was supposed to expand digital literacy in McLean County has fallen victim to the Trump administration's budget ax. It's possible one word killed the project.

Bloomington mayor says proposed massage therapy ordinance needs input from businesses

[Charlie Schlenker](#), June 11, 2025

The mayor thinks there is a need for more regulation of massage businesses to prevent sex trafficking, and agrees the city council did the right thing in postponing consideration of an ordinance to do that.

Central Illinois GOP lawmakers host online town hall to discuss the spring session

[Cesar Toscano](#), June 10, 2025

Illinois GOP lawmakers from Central Illinois held a townhall meeting this week following the end of the Spring session. The town hall took place online on Sen. Sally Turner's Facebook page. Turner was accompanied by Rep. Bill Hauter and Rep. Regan Deering, who both represent parts of McLean County.

Bloomington council postpones vote on new regulations for massage businesses

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#), June 9, 2025

The City of Bloomington's proposal to place higher fees on massage establishments and adult-oriented businesses as a way to suppress human trafficking is on hold, at least for two weeks.

McLean County Board Executive Committee unanimously approves request for money for shelter village in Bloomington

[Ben Howell](#), June 9, 2025

The McLean County Board's Executive Committee on Monday unanimously approved a request for money to partially fund Home Sweet Home Ministries' non-congregate shelter known as The Bridge.

Legal assistance program plots its next move after Illinois wins injunction in AmeriCorps case

[Braden Fogerson](#), June 9, 2025

A federal ruling restoring AmeriCorps grant funding in states that sued over the Trump administration's dismantling of the program may help keep important legal assistance available in McLean County.

Under bill, state highway cameras could be used to investigate human trafficking

June 9, 2025

A bill passed in this year's legislative session would rewrite the definition of a "forcible felony" to allow Illinois State Police to use images obtained from automatic license plate readers in cases involving human trafficking and involuntary servitude.

ISU graduate receives democracy prize to fund civic engagement project

[Ben Howell](#), June 9, 2025

A recent graduate of Illinois State University is a recipient of Southern Illinois University (SIU) Carbondale's Paul Simon Democracy Award. After graduating in May, Bloomington native Ben Muncy will return to campus in the fall to complete a voter registration drive for students.

Grant proposal will be presented to cover half the cost of shelter village in Bloomington

[Emily Bollinger](#), June 6, 2025

Home Sweet Home Ministries will present a grant proposal Monday that, if approved, would cover almost half the money needed to build a proposed shelter village for the unhoused in Bloomington called The Bridge.

Bloomington targets massage spas in proposal to combat human trafficking

[Eric Stock](#), June 6, 2025

The City of Bloomington is proposing new regulations for massage parlors and adult entertainment venues amid reports that some operating in the city are not legitimate businesses.

What the One Big Beautiful Bill could mean for Rivian and other EV automakers

[Ryan Denham](#), June 6, 2025

An electric-vehicle expert from the University of Illinois talks to WGLT about legislation that would kill \$7,500 tax credits, add a new \$250 fee, and pull back on charging-station spending.

Clean Slate Act, Medical Aid in Dying bills among those that stalled in Illinois legislature

[Cesar Toscano](#), June 6, 2025

Illinois lawmakers filed more than 7,500 bills this spring session, and 615 of them crossed the finish line. While most bills failed to escape legislative committees, there were some that got close to becoming reality.

State Sen. Dave Koehler reflects on spring session and helping pass Illinois' \$55 billion budget

[Cesar Toscano](#), June 5, 2025

In the days following the end of the session, Illinois State Senator Dave Koehler of Peoria looked back at the tense spring session.

McLean County school leaders disappointed new state budget doesn't help more with busing and other mandated costs

[Braden Fogerson](#), June 4, 2025

Public school educators got some of what they wanted in the new state budget, but McLean County superintendents say there are still some issues left unresolved — such as transportation costs.

With electric prices going up, advocates tried — and failed — to reform the energy sector

[Andrew Adams](#), June 3, 2025

Heading into the end of the legislative session, consumer advocates, renewable energy industry groups and environmental advocates were hopeful about a bill that would have overhauled Illinois' energy industry.

Normal council OKs road projects; music festival complaints amplified

[Braden Fogerson](#), June 2, 2025

The Normal Town Council on Monday approved several infrastructure-related items and heard about labor concerns for the Tailgate and Tallboys event.

Sorensen urges more public feedback on proposed Republican-backed budget cuts

[Charlie Schlenker](#), June 2, 2025

U.S. Rep. Eric Sorensen is urging the public to call Republican lawmakers to protest proposed cuts to food aid and health insurance programs for lower income people.

Central Illinois lawmakers stick to party lines on state budget

[Cesar Toscano](#), June 1, 2025

Central Illinois lawmakers had predictably partisan reactions to the official state budget for the next fiscal year. The budget includes \$55.2 billion in spending, a 3.9% increase. Revenue estimates total \$55.3 billion, with \$1 billion in new taxes on nicotine products, sports betting, and businesses.

Illinois Senate's transit funding and delivery tax proposal stalls in House

June 1, 2025

With public transit agencies in Chicagoland facing a fiscal cliff and the potential for thousands of layoffs, the state did not pass a bill that would have provided the agencies with potentially over \$1 billion in new funding.

Amid uncertainty in Washington, Illinois lawmakers pass slimmed-down Medicaid package

[Peter Hancock](#), June 1, 2025

Lawmakers passed one of the narrowest packages in recent memory, due mainly to the Trump administration's vows to make sweeping cuts in federal funding for the program while state lawmakers faced their own set of budget constraints.

New taxes on sports bets and nicotine products as Democrats pass \$55.2B budget

[Ben Szalinski](#), June 1, 2025

Giving almost no time for public review, Illinois Democrats pushed through a \$55.2 billion budget for next fiscal year late Saturday, bolstering coffers with new taxes on sports bets, nicotine products and businesses.

Illinois criminal justice advocates tout 'Clean Slate' legislation as 'economic boon'

May 31, 2025

Criminal justice reform advocates say legislation to seal criminal records for certain nonviolent crimes, which passed Friday in the House, would unlock economic opportunity for thousands of Illinoisans.

Lawmakers unveil \$55B spending plan with just 1 day left to pass it

[Ben Szalinski](#), May 31, 2025

Illinois Democrats introduced what a leading budgeteer described as a \$55 billion budget Friday evening ahead of a Saturday deadline to pass the fiscal year 2026 spending plan.

With the rising costs of health care, Illinois pushes bill to lower prescription costs and protect patients

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 30, 2025

The Illinois Senate has passed a pair of bills that are intended to lower prescription drug costs for patients and maintain their access to the medications.

Illinois bill aims to lower cost of prescriptions, rein in pharmacy benefit managers

[Peter Hancock](#), May 30, 2025

A bill that seeks to control the rising cost of prescription drugs while also offering financial help for many small, independent pharmacies in Illinois cleared the General Assembly on Saturday and will soon be sent to Gov. JB Pritzker for his signature.

Advocates for older adults hold day of action in Normal to protect threatened programs

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 29, 2025

Central Illinois advocates for older adults are lobbying Congress to protect federally-funded programs they say are under threat.

Bloomington council approves \$36M bond issue for water department improvements

[Colin Hardman](#), May 28, 2025

The city will complete several projects, including replacing lead lines and some water mains, and upgrading the city's filtration plant. Also at Tuesday's meeting, the city declined to extend a tax rebate for Green Top Grocery co-op.

Rep. LaHood backs Medicaid work requirements in reconciliation bill

[Eric Stock](#), May 28, 2025

The so-called Big Beautiful Bill Act that passed by the slimmest of margins in the U.S. House last week would make the 2017 federal tax cuts permanent. It also would make significant cuts to Medicaid and other safety net programs.

Airport director says CIRA is strong, stable amid uncertainty elsewhere

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 27, 2025

Technical troubles at major airports can have trickle down effects in smaller facilities like the Central Illinois Regional Airport in Bloomington. Airport Director Carl Olson said, for instance, cutting the number of flights at Newark because of limited staff capacity can increase ticket prices and suppress demand for travel down the chain.

A \$35 million price tag to dredge Lake Bloomington

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 23, 2025

A study done for the City of Bloomington has estimated the cost to dredge Lake Bloomington at more than \$35 million.

Central Illinois lawmakers split votes on Mahomet Aquifer bill, which now heads to the governor

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 21, 2025

The Illinois House on Tuesday voted to ban carbon capture near the Mahomet Aquifer in a 91-19 vote. It's already passed the Senate and now goes to the governor.

Downtown Bloomington named as a new State-Designated Cultural District

[Ben Howell](#), May 21, 2025

Bloomington's downtown was named one of five new state-designated cultural districts by the Pritzker administration. That designation opens up millions of dollars in grant funding.

Town of Normal, nonprofit collaborate to facilitate homeless encampment dispersal

[Emily Bollinger](#), May 21, 2025

Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District and the Town of Normal have been working with Home Sweet Home Ministries on how to best handle disbursing the encampment along Sugar Creek near Auto Zone.

Bill banning carbon sequestration near Mahomet Aquifer clears General Assembly

May 20, 2025

A bill that bans carbon sequestration over, under or through portions of the Mahomet Aquifer passed out of the Illinois General Assembly on Tuesday.

With new website, B-N wants to improve homeless services and deter panhandling

[Eric Stock](#), May 20, 2025

The City of Bloomington and Town of Normal have launched a website that wants to make it easier to help the unhoused in the Twin Cities. The campaign has two goals in mind.

Illinois lawmakers push to ban 'forever chemicals' in firefighter gear due to cancer risk

[Reilly Cook](#), May 20, 2025

A bill to ban the sale of firefighter protective gear containing “forever chemicals” is gaining momentum in the Illinois General Assembly, as lawmakers, union leaders and firefighters themselves warn that the very equipment designed to save lives may be silently endangering them.

Normal council approves measures to address housing, homelessness

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 20, 2025

Actions related to housing development at Beech Street and Shelbourne Avenue, and updates to plans at Carden Springs were all approved at Monday's town council meeting.

Central Illinois humanities organizations ask for state funding after federal cuts

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 16, 2025

Illinois organizations dedicated to the humanities and the arts are asking state lawmakers for help as they scramble to make up for federal funding cuts. One of them is the McLean County Museum of History.

Sen. Duckworth criticizes Trump's plans to accept new plane from Qatar and cut staff at the VA

[Ben Howell](#), May 16, 2025

U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth spoke Friday on several recent developments concerning the Trump administration, including President Trump’s plan to accept a Boeing jet from Qatar and recent moves on aviation and veterans programs.

A Bloomington mother and son with Celiac disease share their stories to create awareness

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 16, 2025

Rachele Ackerman noticed her 4-year old son, Jackson, felt constant pain in his stomach and was growing slower than his peers. So, Ackerman took her son to multiple doctors to find what was wrong. It wasn’t until one doctor recommended a visit to the gastroenterologist that progress was made.

Bloomington residents get letters ahead of 10-year lead service line replacement

[Eric Stock](#), May 16, 2025

Bloomington's water department has been mailing letters to residents ahead of its 10-year plan to remove all of its lead water lines.

Attorneys general ask educators for courage on DEI policies

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 16, 2025

A group of state attorneys general is asking educators at all levels to have courage in the face of lost funding and lawsuit threats by the federal administration.

Q&A: McLean County Board chair Elizabeth Johnston talks rural public transit, homelessness, and long-term planning

[Colin Hardman](#), May 16, 2025

Five months after taking over as McLean County Board chair, Democrat Elizabeth Johnston talks to WGLT about rural public transportation, homelessness, carbon sequestration, and comprehensive planning.

McLean County Board formalizes transit provider swap, upgrades jail to protect guards

[Colin Hardman](#), May 15, 2025

The board previously announced its intent to vacate an earlier transit agreement in a process that hands over operations formerly under Show Bus to Connect Transit.

Illinois legislature passes bill to create stricter hiring policies for law enforcement

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 15, 2025

Illinois lawmakers passed a bill in the House that would create stricter hiring processes for police agencies.

Governor's office cuts revenue projection by \$500M in latest downward estimate

[Ben Szalinski](#), May 14, 2025

Gov. JB Pritzker's office is now projecting state revenues to come in about a half-billion dollars below the baseline projections assumed during his February budget address.

Following Bloomington's backing, Home Sweet Home begins negotiations to acquire shelter village site

[Eric Stock](#), May 13, 2025

The Bloomington City Council has given its official endorsement of The Bridge, a shelter village of close to 50 tiny sleeping cabins for the unhoused in Bloomington-Normal. Here's what's next.

Bloomington City Council lends its support to shelter village proposal

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#), May 12, 2025

A plan to build a village of small cabins for unhoused individuals just south of downtown Bloomington received a green light Monday night from the city council.

A Rockford Democrat wants to offer a 'different vision' in Illinois' 16th Congressional District

[Collin Schopp](#), May 12, 2025

A lifelong resident of Rockford is joining a growing field of candidates from both the left and right looking to unseat Illinois' U.S. Congressman Darin LaHood in 2026.

Clock ticks on lifting Illinois' nuclear moratorium as environmental groups want a say

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 12, 2025

Illinois' energy demand will outmatch its supply by 2030, according to a Power Bureau study. That's why some lawmakers are trying to end a 40-year moratorium on the construction of large-scale nuclear reactors.

Domestic violence law named in memory of Karina Gonzalez takes effect on Mother's Day

[Kaitlin Washburn](#), May 12, 2025

A law strengthening protections for domestic violence victims took effect on Mother's Day. Karina's Law, signed by Gov. JB Pritzker in February, addresses several risks associated with guns and domestic violence.

How Native American advocates are influencing Springfield

May 12, 2025

In the past several years, Native American advocacy groups have scored what they call major victories in state government.

Normal Planning Commission greenlights Essex housing development near Collie Ridge

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 9, 2025

Thursday's meeting was well attended by residents who live near the property that is currently used for farming.

Connect Transit ready to take over rural public transit in McLean County starting in July

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 8, 2025

Connect Transit, the transit agency that provides public transportation in Bloomington-Normal, confirms it will be taking over rural transportation in McLean County on July 1.

Big sewer construction project will disrupt homeless encampment in Normal

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 6, 2025

The Town of Normal wants a homeless encampment removed by the end of the month.

Rep. Sorensen labels proposed Trump cuts to SNAP food aid and LIHEAP programs 'cruel' and un-American

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 6, 2025

Democratic U.S. Rep. Eric Sorensen calls Trump administration plans to zero out home heating and cooling help for "very low-income" people "cruel."

Normal extends deadline for short-term rentals, gets pushback on Illinois Art Station hirings

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 6, 2025

The Town of Normal extended its moratorium on short-term rental properties by one month. The move was made during Monday's town council meeting, the first for newly sworn-in council member Rory Roberge.

State revenue projections improve as economic uncertainty grows

[Ben Szalinski](#), May 5, 2025

Hundreds in Bloomington join another nationwide anti-Trump protest

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 1, 2025

May Day protests against Trump administration policies took place across the nation on Thursday, including one outside the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts.

Brady sworn in as Bloomington mayor, with housing and infrastructure top of mind

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 1, 2025

New and returning city council members were sworn in Thursday as Dan Brady officially becomes mayor of Bloomington.

Illinois GOP lawmakers want to ban transgender athletes from women sports through legislation and Trump administration

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 1, 2025

Republican state lawmakers have signaled they want to ban transgender girls from competing on girls school sports teams in Illinois.

Bloomington council passes housing incentive plan, recognizes outgoing members

[Colin Hardman](#), April 29, 2025

With a more reliable incentive plan for developers, the council is hoping to bring in multiple types of housing the city needs.

With hate crimes on the rise, Illinois lawyers and lawmakers are split on hate speech bill

[Cesar Toscano](#), April 28, 2025

With hate crimes rising across Illinois in the last five years, lawmakers are considering a bill that would allow people to sue if they receive threatening flyers on private property due to protected identity characteristics.

Pritzker remains quiet on future plans, despite growing national appearances

[Alex Degman](#), April 25, 2025

Gov. JB Pritzker has been introducing himself to larger audiences recently, but he maintains his focus is on Illinois.

Sorensen celebrates federal grant that adds NPD officers, enhances community policing

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 24, 2025

Mayor Chris Koos said the Central Illinois lawmaker was key to Normal police winning a grant to significantly increase the department's budget.

Illinois pushes to preserve historical sites tied to the Underground Railroad

[Cesar Toscano](#), April 24, 2025

Illinois has a deep connection to the Underground Railroad. That's why lawmakers are pushing an initiative to preserve sites connected to this key part of history.

Bloomington receives \$2 million state grant for streetscape work

[Courtney Conroy](#), April 23, 2025

Gov. JB Pritzker announced Thursday the roll out of state-funded grant awards totaling \$30 million for 25 grantees through the Rebuild Illinois Downtowns and Main Streets and Research in Illinois to Spur Economic Recovery programs.

McLean County health providers worry about Medicaid cuts

[Charlie Schlenker](#), April 23, 2025

Several service providers in Bloomington-Normal say proposed Medicaid cuts threaten health care locally. The U.S. House recently passed a measure that would slice \$880 billion over the next decade.

Longtime Illinois U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin won't seek reelection

[Dave McKinney](#), April 23, 2025

The 80-year-old Democrat told WBEZ in an Illinois exclusive that age was a factor in his not seeking a sixth term in Congress.

Bloomington council weighs housing incentive options, hears annual report from police chief

[Colin Hardman](#), April 22, 2025

The Bloomington City Council on Monday received a presentation on how to make incentives more understandable and effective to developers.

Normal council rejects bids for public sculpture park, recognizes Harris

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 21, 2025

The town council also authorized the filing of the Community Development Block Grant consolidated plan during the meeting.

Photos: Protesters in Normal urge U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood to protect Medicaid funding

[Eric Stock](#), April 21, 2025

Residents concerned about potential cuts to federal Medicaid staged a protest Monday outside the office of Republican U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood, who represents parts of Bloomington-Normal.

Hearing set for Lorenz campaign complaint; local GOP omits \$28K from new disclosure report

[Ryan Denham](#), April 21, 2025

A new disclosure filed by the McLean County Republican Party failed to report the transfer of \$28,000 to former Normal mayoral candidate Kathleen Lorenz – the same money that sparked a complaint against her with the State Board of Elections.

Bloomington among cities in series of nationwide protests against Trump administration's policies

[Cindy Alcazar](#), April 19, 2025

Protesters in Bloomington chanted “deport Trump” and “Hey, ho-ho, Donald Trump has got to go” on Saturday in the second of a series of nationwide protests against Trump administration policies.

House Speaker 'Chris' Welch's charity taking money from donors with a stake in Springfield decisions

[Robert Herguth](#), April 18, 2025

His Black Excellence in Bleu has raised more than \$1 million since it was formed last year, some of that from groups with a stake in his legislative decision-making. Unlike campaign contributions, such giving is harder to track.

McLean County working to become fully ADA compliant online

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 18, 2025

The Department of Justice released guidance that state and local governments must create fully accessible websites and social media presences to avoid lawsuits related to the American with Disabilities Act.

Bloomington mayor: Downtown apartment project worth the price in incentives

[Charlie Schlenker](#), April 17, 2025

Mayor Mboka Mwilambwe thinks it's worth paying the redeveloper of the downtown State Farm building a bundle over the next two-plus decades to get the project completed.

During Chicago visit, former President Biden unleashes on Trump and Musk over Social Security cuts

[Tina Sfondeles](#), April 16, 2025

Former President Joe Biden's remarks in Chicago at the 2025 national conference of Advocates, Counselors, and Representatives for the Disabled marked his first public rebuttal of the Trump administration in the early days of his post-presidential life.

Bloomington council OKs \$318M budget, approves major redevelopment projects

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#), April 14, 2025

A busy Monday night meeting saw the Bloomington City Council approve a balanced budget for the fiscal year starting May 1, and move forward with redevelopment agreements at two prominent locations in the city.

Bloomington working to address utility billing error

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#), April 14, 2025

The City of Bloomington is working to address a utility billing issue that resulted in some customers paying more than they should have.

Write-in candidates rarely win; one is Heyworth's new mayor

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 11, 2025

Eric Moore has a long list of service activities in his hometown of Heyworth, including a decade as a volunteer firefighter. The political newcomer ran for mayor as a long-shot write-in candidate — and won.

Illinois House passes bills to ban Native American and disability mascots from school sport teams

[Cesar Toscano](#), April 11, 2025

The Illinois House has approved a bill that would ban portrayals of Native Americans in school logos, names and mascots, and another bill that would force a Southern Illinois school to drop its use of the Midgets nickname.

Ban on carbon capture near Mahomet Aquifer wins unanimous approval in Illinois Senate

[Cesar Toscano](#), April 11, 2025

State senators voted unanimously, 55-0, this week to ban carbon sequestration near the Mahomet Aquifer. That's the sole source of water for nearly 1 million people in the region, including much of McLean County.

State Rep. Regan Deering thinks USDA should move to Central Illinois

[Eric Stock](#), April 10, 2025

Republican state Rep. Regan Deering of Decatur said the move would provide a big economic boost to the region and improve coordination between farmers and agribusiness leaders.

Photos: Conservative political activist Charlie Kirk draws hundreds at ISU stop

[Emily Bollinger](#), April 8, 2025

Conservative political activist Charlie Kirk drew a crowd of hundreds — and some counter-demonstrators — during an event Tuesday at Illinois State University.

Illinois proposes a victim-first approach to combat human trafficking

[Cesar Toscano](#), April 8, 2025

There were more than 2,000 human trafficking victims in Illinois from 2019 to 2023, according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. By one tally, nearly one-third of those victims live in Central Illinois.

Normal council OKs Connect Transit expansion beyond Bloomington-Normal

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 7, 2025

The City of Bloomington also needs to approve the change that could fill a void left by Show Bus services that McLean County elected not to continue.

The U.S. is behind on foreign investments, says retired diplomat Geeta Pasi in final ISU lecture

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 7, 2025

Ambassador Geeta Pasi concludes her tenure in the first-of-its-kind position at ISU this semester, and gave her final remarks last week in a public presentation.

Abrupt \$1 million loss for Illinois Humanities after Trump cuts funding

[Mike Davis](#), April 7, 2025

Cuts to the National Endowment for the Humanities could have a trickle-down effect on Illinois museums, history programs and higher education.

Illinois bill would limit 'crime-free' laws that evict tenants for too many 911 calls

[Elvia Malagón](#), April 7, 2025

The Cook County suburb amended the ordinance that forced Diamond Jones out of her rental home, and housing advocates are pushing statewide for further changes to these types of local laws.

Hemp hangup: Why Illinois leaders have failed to regulate delta-8

[Mitchell Armentrout](#), April 7, 2025

In a Springfield debate that pits big cannabis companies against the burgeoning hemp industry, all agree weedlike products such as delta-8 should be kept away from kids. So why haven't lawmakers figured out how to regulate them?

State Sen. Emil Jones III bribery trial set to begin 2 ½ years after indictment

[Hannah Meisel](#), April 7, 2025

Jury selection is scheduled to begin Monday morning in the federal corruption trial of state Sen. Emil Jones III, D-Chicago, who stands accused of accepting alleged bribes from a red-light camera company executive whose cooperation with the feds has also brought down several other Chicago-area politicians.

Hundreds in Bloomington participate in nationwide 'Hands Off!' rally against Trump and Musk

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 5, 2025

A large crowd of protesters gathered in downtown Bloomington on Saturday afternoon for a "Hands Off!" rally to speak out about actions taken by President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk.

Complaint filed against Lorenz over \$28,000 campaign contribution during Normal mayoral race

[Ryan Denham](#), April 4, 2025

A complaint has been filed with the State Board of Elections against former Normal mayoral candidate Kathleen Lorenz, alleging she violated campaign finance laws by accepting a \$28,000 contribution from a donor who funneled the money to her through the local GOP.

Dan Brady says Bloomington faces a pending financial storm as he assumes mayor role

[Eric Stock](#), April 4, 2025

Dan Brady says the city faces several big challenges as he prepares to take the mayor's office next month: public safety, water problems and what he calls a pending storm — the city's financial crunch.

Mother pushes for a teen driver safety bill in Illinois after her son dies in a car crash

[Cesar Toscano](#), April 3, 2025

81 Illinois teen drivers and passengers died in car accidents in 2023, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation. Tragedies like these instantly change the lives of families and friends. For one mother — it led her to push for change.

Donor says campaign contribution flap in Normal is just 'gossip' and that he didn't know Chris Koos was his cousin

[Ryan Denham](#), April 2, 2025

Campaign contributor Greg Shepard played an unusual role in the Normal mayoral election. He spoke to WGLT on Wednesday but was largely evasive.

Illinois attorney general joins lawsuit against Trump public health care cuts

[Tina Sfondeles](#), April 2, 2025

Kwame Raoul called the abrupt termination of funds earmarked in Illinois for wastewater surveillance, laboratory investments and boosting the public health workforce “both callous and unlawful.”

Abby Scott wins open Bloomington City Council seat while Jenna Kearns is re-elected

[Eric Stock](#), April 2, 2025

Jenna Kearns defeated Ben Zimmerman, to retain her seat in Ward 1, while Abby Scott defeated Roger Bedeker in Ward 9.

2 incumbents and 1 newcomer earn spots on Heartland Community College's Board of Trustees

[Melissa Ellin](#), April 2, 2025

Two incumbents are headed back to the Heartland Community College Board of Trustees, along with one newcomer, following Tuesday's election.

McLean County voters approve 1% school sales tax

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 2, 2025

The new sales tax takes effect July 1. Earning around 53% of the vote, the referendum was one of several factors contributing to an increased voter turnout compared to previous municipal elections.

Voter turnout jumps to 28% across McLean County

[Ryan Denham](#), April 1, 2025

McLean County saw a significant increase in voter turnout in Tuesday's election, up to 28%. The average in recent mayoral elections was 20%.

Dan Brady pledges a 'safer, stronger Bloomington' as mayor while Mboka Mwilambwe finishes 3rd

[Eric Stock](#), April 1, 2025

According to unofficial results on Tuesday, Dan Brady [48%] won decisively over city council member Cody Hendricks [33%] and mayor Mboka Mwilambwe [19%].

Voters in Normal retain Mayor Chris Koos for a 6th term

[Charlie Schlenker](#), April 1, 2025

Mayor Chris Koos of Normal has won a 6th full term in office, defeating challengers Kathleen Lorenz and Chamberly Harris.

Contested Normal Township races are a clean sweep for the Democrats

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 1, 2025

A hotly contested supervisor race broke toward Democrat Krystle Able. It was opponent Chad Berck's third attempt to enter local politics.

How the county has spent taxpayer money on mental health and public safety

[Melissa Ellin](#), April 1, 2025

Over the past several years, individuals and groups have expressed dissatisfaction with transparency related to a public fund for mental health and public safety. WGLT dove into the data to see exactly how money has been spent and why there are \$19 million in reserves.

Arts and Culture

Illinois Shakespeare Festival's 2 comedies and a tragedy hone in on themes of identity, justice and the collective power of theater

[Lauren Warnecke](#), June 20, 2025

The 2025 Illinois Shakespeare Festival marks a first-ever production of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" and two directorial debuts by Central Illinois natives Kim McKean and Vanessa Stalling.

'Sunset on the Longest Day' reboot plants a living land acknowledgment at ISU's Horticulture Center

[Lauren Warnecke](#), June 17, 2025

Illinois State University's Horticulture Center will soon be the official home of an interactive art piece that celebrates indigenous culture and communities.

Bloomington looks to adopt new housing rehabilitation strategy

[Joe Deacon - WGLT](#), June 16, 2025

Bloomington city leaders plan to implement a multi-faceted strategy aimed at addressing vacant properties throughout the city over the next several years.

Union Avenue's 'Moonlight Madness' reimagines 1955 for 2025

Lauren Warnecke, June 13, 2025

The band's first full-length album of all-original songs isn't afraid to veer slightly from the rules, but they're a rockabilly band "through and through."

The sound fits the song on Joe Stamm Band's new LP 'Little Crosses'

Lauren Warnecke, June 12, 2025

The band previews songs from the new album this weekend at the Tailgate N' Tallboys festival in Bloomington.

History Maker Sally Rudolph: Showing up still the best way to see government in action

Lauren Warnecke, June 9, 2025

The 10 years Sally Rudolph spent on the McLean County Board were some of its most productive. Her political career was sparked by an invitation to join the League of Women Voters in 1969.

Teen Art Group starts 'A Conversation' about inspiration in new show at University Galleries

Lauren Warnecke, June 4, 2025

Four Bloomington High School students developed the exhibition over the school year, starting with pieces from University Galleries' permanent collection.

30+ ways to hear free live music in Bloomington-Normal this summer

Lauren Warnecke, June 2, 2025

WGLT's summer music guide highlights various places to catch free (and nearly free) live music around Bloomington-Normal.

Mural celebrating anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Lost Speech unveiled in downtown Bloomington

Paul J. Aguilar, May 30, 2025

A mural celebrating 169 years since Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous "lost speech" in Bloomington was unveiled Thursday evening downtown.

Ren Faire meets hot club jazz in a Sweet Nothings musical at the Bistro

Lauren Warnecke, May 29, 2025

"The Satyr's Last Lament" is not a feel-good musical, but more of a cautionary tale. And there are kazoos.

Video: Wayfinding circus-themed murals connect library to downtown Bloomington

[Emily Bollinger](#), May 29, 2025

Fifteen colorful circus-theme sidewalk murals connect downtown to the Bloomington Public Library. A celebration is set for 10 a.m. Saturday, May 31, at the library.

'An assault upon the promise of America': NEA cancels literary grants affecting Normal-based Obsidian

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 28, 2025

The literary arts organization centering Black, African and African diasporic artists received a form letter canceling two previously-approved grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Matthew Curry is back in Bloomington to stay awhile

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 22, 2025

Matthew Curry's new album, "One for the Ride," is his first in six years.

Central Illinois humanities organizations ask for state funding after federal cuts

[Cesar Toscano](#), May 16, 2025

Illinois organizations dedicated to the humanities and the arts are asking state lawmakers for help as they scramble to make up for federal funding cuts. One of them is the McLean County Museum of History.

'When I was 35 years old, I became Black': Ruth Anne King's journey to identity

[Emily Bollinger](#), May 15, 2025

Author and musician Ruth Anne King is coming to the Bloomington Public Library to share the inspirations for her memoir titled When I was 35 years old, I became Black.

Bloomington's Jazz UpFront venue celebrates 10 years in business

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), May 15, 2025

Owners and attendees of Bloomington's Jazz UpFront venue reflect on the club's legacy after 10 successful years in business.

Lincoln Art Institute is beating the odds, surviving through flexibility — and an Airbnb

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 15, 2025

Lincoln Art Institute co-owners Jason Hoffman and Marcia Cook realized they couldn't do it all, pausing monthly art exhibitions to focus on renovating their historic 1915 building and diversifying revenue streams.

Normal Public Library hosts first 'Kid Market' for young entrepreneurs

[Ben Howell](#), May 14, 2025

The Normal Public Library is hosting its first “Kid Market” on Saturday, May 17, to bring a different kind of shopping experience to town.

Trump's proposed NEA cut will hurt small communities most — but artists have been here before

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 14, 2025

The Trump administration recently issued letters retracting arts grants that, so far, have not impacted NEA-supported projects like the Uptown underpass. But the long-term impact of reduced federal funding will have greatest impact on smaller and rural communities.

Fairview Aquatic Center renamed to honor former Normal Mayor Kent Karraker

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), May 12, 2025

Normal's Fairview Aquatic Center was renamed the Karraker Aquatic Center on Monday in honor of former mayor Kent Karraker.

Carl's Pro Band closure leaves behind a legacy of great service and sound

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 9, 2025

Carl's Pro Band in Bloomington is closing as co-owner Carl Thacker retires. Assets are being taken over by The Music Shoppe, now Bloomington-Normal's only music store.

3 things to do this weekend: See a play, buy plants, have brunch with Mom

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 9, 2025

Options abound for Mother's Day bunches this Sunday. Or, take her to Community Players for the opening weekend of their laugh-out-loud play, "Moon Over Buffalo."

Illinois Art Station transition 'up for interpretation' as Town of Normal takes over

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 8, 2025

Members of the public have questioned the hiring process and other details of the transition from an independent nonprofit to a program of the town's Cultural Arts Department. Illinois Art Station's founder said the organization was experiencing financial trouble and likely to fold.

Women artists 'take up space' at the biggest gallery in town

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 8, 2025

A show at Hangar Art Co. in downtown Bloomington centers female artists and artistry. Their work will remain on display throughout the month of May.

A living land acknowledgment breaks ground at Horticulture Center — with the help of horses and oxen

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 6, 2025

During a muddy "field day" last weekend, artist Ruth Burke drove her team of oxen, Clark and Sparky, over the one-acre plot that will be home to a living art installation of native plants.

A corny kickoff to McLean County Museum of History's Sculpture on the Square

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), May 5, 2025

Artist Herb Eaton's 10-foot corn statue "Star-Crossed Pollinators" now stands on the southwest lawn of the McLean County Museum of History, commemorating the 25th anniversary of Corn on the Curb.

McHistory: Irish tenor John McCormack stirred and stirred up Bloomington-Normal

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 2, 2025

Imagine, if you will, how big a deal it would be if Taylor Swift gave a concert in Bloomington-Normal. That's the equivalent to the appearance of lyric tenor John McCormack on Nov. 24, 1924.

In latest exhibition, Bloomington photographer David Proeber examines the roles women play in religion

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 2, 2025

Retired Pantagraph photo editor David Proeber's fine art photography looks at Biblical texts in a contemporary context. His new book is connected to a complementary exhibition at the McLean County Arts Center.

3 things to do this weekend: Meet a mayor, smell the roses, read a poem

[Lauren Warnecke](#) May 2, 2025

The annual Red Carpet Corridor Festival has activities at communities along Route 66 from Joliet to Bloomington-Normal.

A big show and a big announcement: Fukumura joins Cleveland Orchestra as Illinois Symphony plays Shostakovich, Nabors

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 1, 2025

Plus, 2022 Van Cliburn Medal Winner Anna Geniushene makes her Illinois Symphony debut this weekend playing Ravel's Piano Concert in G Major.

3 things to do this weekend: See a movie, knit and purl, learn about Lincoln's first love

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 25, 2025

Biographer and historian Guy Fraker will give a talk about Ann Rutledge, rumored to be Abraham Lincoln's first sweetheart.

Town of Normal goes in a new direction with Illinois Art Station staff

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 24, 2025

The two full-time staff members of the Normal nonprofit hoped to keep their jobs as it transitioned to the town's Cultural Arts Department. Neither was hired.

Original 'Star Wars' trilogy to screen at Normal Theater — maybe for the first time

[Ryan Denham](#), April 24, 2025

The Normal Theater has shown thousands and thousands of films since it opened 88 years ago. But one galactic trilogy has never graced the iconic Uptown marquee.

Nomad Theatre Company to bring AI-generated performance to Coffeehouse in Normal

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 23, 2025

Founders of Nomad Theatre Company preview an upcoming event happening this weekend featuring AI-generated performance prompts.

Coalescence Theatre Project announces 2025-26 'Season of Resistance'

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 23, 2025

The Twin City theater company committed to works by, for and about diverse audiences includes its second production of India Nicole Burton's work and a workshop production of Gaby Labotka's Rare Wolves, directed by the playwright.

B-N Youth Symphony preps for concert as a POV conducting exhibit launches at CDM

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 19, 2025

The concert concludes Logan Campbell's second full year on the podium after decades of leadership by Deanne Bryant. Campbell sought to keep the positive culture of the youth orchestra — while upping the rigor and repertoire.

3 things to do this weekend: See a play, hunt for eggs, save the planet

[Lauren Warnecke](#)

, April 18, 2025

A plethora of Easter egg hunts are on tap for the weekend, plus the tail end of Heartland Theatre's living room comedy 'Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike.'

A 'New Yorker' cartoonist is trying to change the conversation about AI in the arts

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 17, 2025

Amy Kurzweil's graphic memoir "Artificial: A Love Story" centers around a chatbot built with her father, inventor Ray Kurzweil, to "talk" to her late grandfather. Kurzweil gave Wednesday's keynote at the AI and the Humanities conference at ISU.

ISU alum and 'Ted Lasso' co-creator Brendan Hunt is back on campus for 3-day residency

[Ryan Denham](#), April 16, 2025

Brendan Hunt, one of Illinois State University's most accomplished theater grads, is back on campus — the place that helped inspire his breakout character on the TV series Ted Lasso.

Illinois Wesleyan University breaks ground for future Petrick Idea Center

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 15, 2025

Illinois Wesleyan University's future Petrick Idea Center had a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday where several guest speakers discussed what the center will provide for the campus and local community.

A Central Illinois filmmaker harnesses centuries of syrup making in his backyard

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 9, 2025

Photographer and filmmaker Jason Lindsey first started sugar making during the pandemic as a way to get over the winter-spring hump. The centuries' old practice is threatened by climate change — capturing in his short film, 'It's Time.'

Abrupt \$1 million loss for Illinois Humanities after Trump cuts funding

[Mike Davis](#) April 7, 2025

Cuts to the National Endowment for the Humanities could have a trickle-down effect on Illinois museums, history programs and higher education.

3 things to do this weekend: Pick up trash, go to a gala and soak up string orchestra

[Lauren Warnecke](#) April 4, 2025

Ecology Action Center has organized two service days this Earth Month cleaning up plastic waste in McLean County. The first is this Saturday at ISU Farm in Lexington.

New Bloomington-Normal tourism chief gets settled as her agency ramps up for Route 66 Centennial

[Paul J. Aguilar](#) April 3, 2025

Bloomington native Melissa Chrisman moved back to her hometown to lead the Convention and Visitors Bureau. Planning for the Route 66 Centennial in 2026 is her biggest project so far.

Jenny Scara returns to old stomping grounds with new songs for Gender Envy Fest

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 3, 2025

Music was on the back burner for the Redbird goal-tender until a few years ago. Jenny Scara is now all in, forging a career in Chicago.

Rob Fazzini, Sally Rudolph, Father Doug Hennessy in new class of McLean County History Makers

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 2, 2025

The McLean County Historical Society announced the recipients of the 2025 History Makers Awards Wednesday at the McLean County Museum of History.

Save the dates: Community Players, Heartland, Prairie Fire reveal 2025-26 seasons

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 2, 2025

Three of Bloomington-Normal's theatre companies have announced their seasons of plays and musicals. Here's a rundown.

Education and Schools

Heartland Community College seeks candidates to fill trustee vacancy

[Eric Stock](#), June 18, 2025

Cecelia Long, who has been on the board since 2021, said she is stepping down to pursue professional and personal opportunities outside of the district.

McLean County to issue corrected tax bills for Olympia and Ridgeview school district taxpayers

[Eric Stock](#), June 3, 2025

The McLean County treasurer's office plans to mail updated tax bills next week to property owners in two school districts where tax rates were incorrectly calculated.

Attorneys general ask educators for courage on DEI policies

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 16, 2025

A group of state attorneys general is asking educators at all levels to have courage in the face of lost funding and lawsuit threats by the federal administration.

Heartland Community College announces transfer partnership with Millikin University

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 29, 2025

Heartland Community College and Millikin University announced a new transfer partnership that will make the transition between schools easier for Heartland graduates.

El Paso-Gridley's Michael Melick named Illinois Historical Society teacher of the year

[Lauren Warnecke](#), April 28, 2025

El Paso's Project XV voting rights museum began as a class project in Michael Melick's course. The state historical society gives a \$1,000 prize to one teacher each year for outstanding ways of engaging Illinois history.

Boys and Girls Club of Bloomington-Normal cuts more than half its staff

[Charlie Schlenker](#), April 24, 2025

The Boys and Girls Club of Bloomington-Normal has cut "55% of its team" as part of the response to a loss of grant funding.

Most in Illinois want more funding for higher education

[Anna Savchenko](#), April 22, 2025

A new poll finds support across the political spectrum for funding for colleges that serve underrepresented students.

Illinois Wesleyan University breaks ground for future Petrick Idea Center

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 15, 2025

Illinois Wesleyan University's future Petrick Idea Center had a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday where several guest speakers discussed what the center will provide for the campus and local community.

The U.S. is behind on foreign investments, says retired diplomat Geeta Pasi in final ISU lecture

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 7, 2025

Ambassador Geeta Pasi concludes her tenure in the first-of-its-kind position at ISU this semester, and gave her final remarks last week in a public presentation.

Hundreds in Bloomington participate in nationwide 'Hands Off!' rally against Trump and Musk

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 5, 2025

A large crowd of protesters gathered in downtown Bloomington on Saturday afternoon for a "Hands Off!" rally to speak out about actions taken by President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk.

After Minnesota killings, elected officials in B-N say violent rhetoric here comes at a cost

[Ryan Denham](#), June 20, 2025

Elected officials in McLean County say the lawmaker shootings in Minnesota are frightening – and that they've been on the receiving end of violent rhetoric themselves.

Unit 5 restricts classroom cellphone use, but does not ban devices in school

[Jim Stahly Jr.](#), June 19, 2025

The new rules require phones and devices such as smart watches, tablets and MP3 players to be put away unless a student is using it for “educational purposes” and granted permission from the instructor. But students can have them on their person, provided they "are not used, seen or heard during instructional time."

‘You gotta smile’: Normal Community celebrates baseball team’s best season in history

[Eric Stock](#), June 15, 2025

The Ironmen finished with a record 37 wins with just five defeats and the program's first third-place finish at state.

Video: District 87 and Unit 5 offer free meals for children and teens during summer

[Emily Bollinger](#), June 12, 2025

District 87 and Unit 5 are offering free breakfast and lunch to anyone 18 years old and younger for the summer.

McLean County school leaders disappointed new state budget doesn’t help more with busing and other mandated costs

[Braden Fogerson](#), June 4, 2025

Public school educators got some of what they wanted in the new state budget, but McLean County superintendents say there are still some issues left unresolved — such as transportation costs.

Retiring educators in McLean County share lessons learned over their careers

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 23, 2025

WGLT spoke with retiring teachers and staff from Bloomington High School, Tri-Valley Elementary School and Grove Elementary School.

Unit 5 teachers make voices heard on cell phones in the classroom

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 22, 2025

The district's phone policy was updated in a revision to Unit 5’s student behavior code.

Carl's Pro Band closure leaves behind a legacy of great service and sound

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 9, 2025

Carl's Pro Band in Bloomington is closing as co-owner Carl Thacker retires. Assets are being taken over by The Music Shoppe, now Bloomington-Normal's only music store.

Unit 5 approves borrowing for needed facilities repairs

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 17, 2025

The revenue from the countywide sales tax will help to pay the debt off, but that will not roll in before the summer when repairs are most needed.

Unit 5 board hears results of survey on cell phone use in classrooms

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 17, 2025

Rules regarding cell phone use in school varies by district, and sometimes even by school, across McLean County. The Illinois Senate has passed a bill aimed at ending phone use during class instruction.

Eastern Illinois Foodbank to end monthly distribution at Normal West

[Charlie Schlenker](#), April 14, 2025

A food distribution that serves hundreds of Bloomington-Normal residents each month is ending.

McLean County voters approve 1% school sales tax

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 2, 2025

The new sales tax takes effect July 1. Earning around 53% of the vote, the referendum was one of several factors contributing to an increased voter turnout compared to previous municipal elections.

Video: District 87 and Unit 5 offer free meals for children and teens during summer

[Emily Bollinger](#), June 12, 2025

District 87 and Unit 5 are offering free breakfast and lunch to anyone 18 years old and younger for the summer.

BHS seniors raise money for bus stop bench, making life 'marginally better' and leaving a legacy

[Emily Bollinger](#), May 27, 2025

A group of Bloomington High School seniors raised money money to install a bench at the Connect Transit stop near the school.

Retiring educators in McLean County share lessons learned over their careers

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 23, 2025

WGLT spoke with retiring teachers and staff from Bloomington High School, Tri-Valley Elementary School and Grove Elementary School.

Listen: What Bloomington High School students are excited about this summer

[Ryan Denham](#), May 21, 2025

WGLT recently visited Bloomington High School for a career fair. While we were there, we asked BHS students what they were excited about this summer. Here's what they said.

Carl's Pro Band closure leaves behind a legacy of great service and sound

[Braden Fogerson](#), May 9, 2025

Carl's Pro Band in Bloomington is closing as co-owner Carl Thacker retires. Assets are being taken over by The Music Shoppe, now Bloomington-Normal's only music store.

Bloomington Career Academy students tour — and help build — their future space under renovation

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 29, 2025

District 87 bought the Willie G. and Gloria Brown Education Center building to address overcrowding of pre-K and Bloomington Career Academy classes.

D87 optimistic, but acknowledges challenges of banning cell phones at BHS

[Colin Hardman](#), April 24, 2025

District 87 will implement the ban in the fall, with a structure of tiered consequences for violations. District officials hope teachers and parents will help support it.

McLean County voters approve 1% school sales tax

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 2, 2025

The new sales tax takes effect July 1. Earning around 53% of the vote, the referendum was one of several factors contributing to an increased voter turnout compared to previous municipal elections.

Transportation

Hard Things: Could 220 mph passenger rail service be next?

[Charlie Schlenker](#), June 18, 2025

It took more than 30 years to bring 110 mph passenger train service from Chicago to St. Louis. It could take that or longer to get true high-speed rail along the same corridor.

Hard Things: How slow but tenacious work brought faster passenger trains to Illinois

[Charlie Schlenker](#), June 16, 2025

How does society do hard things? In this first part of our new series "Hard Things," WGLT unpacks the generational project that brought faster passenger train service to Illinois.

Airport director says CIRA is strong, stable amid uncertainty elsewhere

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 27, 2025

Technical troubles at major airports can have trickle down effects in smaller facilities like the Central Illinois Regional Airport in Bloomington. Airport Director Carl Olson said, for instance,

cutting the number of flights at Newark because of limited staff capacity can increase ticket prices and suppress demand for travel down the chain.

CIRA taxis down \$70 million capital projects runway

Charlie Schlenker, May 21, 2025

The Central Illinois Regional Airport has about \$70 million in infrastructure projects underway, or in a six-year pipeline. Some are moving faster than others.

Connect Transit ready to take over rural public transit in McLean County starting in July

Cesar Toscano, May 8, 2025

Connect Transit, the transit agency that provides public transportation in Bloomington-Normal, confirms it will be taking over rural transportation in McLean County on July 1.

Higher Education

Students can soon earn automatic admission to state's universities, hoping to keep more in Illinois

Vivienne Hughes, June 23, 2025

High school and community college students in Illinois will soon be able to earn automatic admission to most state public universities based on their GPA — without even having to apply.

Heartland Community College provost Rick Pearce to retire

Lauren Warnecke, June 17, 2025

Rick Pearce, the No. 2 administrator at Heartland Community College, plans to retire this month after more than a decade at the Normal college.

Heartland graduate recognized as a distinguished Illinois community college alumnus

Ben Howell, June 11, 2025

Sim Sandhu, a graduate of Heartland Community College [HCC], has been selected as the recipient of the Community College Distinguished Alumni award from the Illinois Community College Trustees Association. Sandhu attended HCC from 2013 to 2014.

IWU physics professor says federal rejection of student visas and STEM scholarships is unwise

Charlie Schlenker, June 4, 2025

An Illinois Wesleyan University physics professor says the Trump administration's effort to choke off the supply of international students at U.S. universities is unwise. The administration is taking a hard line on visa approvals for international students, particularly those from China.

Heartland Community College president is critical of proposed federal education aid cuts

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 29, 2025

The head of Heartland Community College says federal proposals to reduce the amount of and eligibility for Pell Grants and other changes to higher education are "out of touch" with the world and students of today.

Smoothing transfers to other colleges is a complex task for community colleges

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 29, 2025

Most community college students say they want to end up with a four-year degree. Few actually complete that dream.

Illinois program to increase faculty diversity in higher education is in doubt

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 19, 2025

The future of a state-funded program to increase the diversity of faculty at colleges and universities in Illinois is in doubt as the Trump administration continues to pressure higher education to abandon DEI values.

Attorneys general ask educators for courage on DEI policies

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 16, 2025

A group of state attorneys general is asking educators at all levels to have courage in the face of lost funding and lawsuit threats by the federal administration.

Illinois Wesleyan adds permanent provost, dean of faculty

[Lauren Warnecke](#), May 13, 2025

John Miles brings nearly 20 years of experience at small, liberal arts institutions. He joins Illinois Wesleyan University in July.

Illinois Wesleyan University puts rules on paper about demonstrations

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 12, 2025

One of the responses Illinois Wesleyan University has made to a complaint of alleged antisemitism filed with the U.S. Education Department is to codify rules that satisfy both First Amendment protections of free speech and the priority to make sure discourse is civil.

Illinois Wesleyan University president cites institutional progress over his first year

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 9, 2025

After his first school year on the job, new Illinois Wesleyan University President Sheahon Zenger paints a portrait of an institution "re-claiming its birthright" as a liberal arts education center in Central Illinois.

Q&A with ISU's president about union contracts, balancing the budget, and pushing back on the Trump administration

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 7, 2025

Labor negotiations, spending cuts, creating a new model for budget planning, developing the new College of Engineering, and, oh yes, graduation this weekend — Illinois State University has a lot on its plate right now.

Rivian executive Julie Hoeniges named to ISU's Board of Trustees

[Charlie Schlenker](#), May 2, 2025

Gov. JB Pritzker has named a Rivian executive to the board of trustees at Illinois State University. Julie Hoeniges is director of trade compliance at Rivian. She is an ISU graduate.

B-N universities have opioid overdose prevention tools. Not all students know

[Melissa Ellin](#), April 25, 2025

None of the higher education institutions in Bloomington-Normal report having overdoses on campus, but health officials still encourage students to take advantage of prevention training and be prepared.

ISU and IWU presidents join statement opposing 'unprecedented government overreach and political interference'

[Ryan Denham](#), April 24, 2025

Illinois State University President Aondover Tarhule is one of over 400 college and university leaders who've co-signed a public statement opposing what they call "unprecedented government overreach and political interference now endangering American higher education."

Heartland Community College Board to vote on \$6.4 million in spring construction projects

[Courtney Conroy](#), April 22, 2025

The Heartland Community College Board of Trustees is scheduled to vote Tuesday night on three construction projects slated to begin this spring.

Advocates hope this is the year for a higher education funding formula

[Charlie Schlenker](#), April 17, 2025

Over the last decade, state funding for Illinois State University has dropped by more than a third after inflation. And it has declined as a share of the total university budget for more than three decades. That could change if the state legislature passes a measure this spring.

Illinois Wesleyan University breaks ground for future Petrick Idea Center

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 15, 2025

Illinois Wesleyan University's future Petrick Idea Center had a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday where several guest speakers discussed what the center will provide for the campus and local community.

Faculty union members vote 'overwhelmingly' to ratify first contract with Illinois State University

[Ryan Denham](#), April 14, 2025

Illinois State University's faculty union said Monday that its members have voted "overwhelmingly" to ratify its first contract. It includes a 4.5% pay increase that takes effect in just over two weeks.

In ISU lecture, historian will explain Hitler's rapid rise to power

[Charlie Schlenker](#), April 11, 2025

A noted historian says it's fair to compare President Trump and Adolf Hitler, at least in one respect.

'Chilling silence': Waves of Illinois' international university students lose their visas

[Jackson Brandhorst](#), April 10, 2025

The federal government has revoked the visas of some international students studying at universities across Illinois, but college administrators are sharing few details, including how many students have been impacted.

Trump administration revokes visas of some ISU students

[Charlie Schlenker](#), April 9, 2025

Illinois State University is among the many higher education institutions affected by Trump administration revocations of international student visas.

ISU professor's new book explores Karl Marx's abiding influence in the U.S.

[Charlie Schlenker](#), April 8, 2025

The spirit of Karl Marx is alive and well and living in America. That's according to Illinois State University history professor Andrew Hartman, whose new book is "Karl Marx in America."

Learning opportunity: Heartland's HALO program marks 15th anniversary

[Braden Fogerson](#), April 3, 2025

The Heartland Academy for Learning Opportunities offers a higher education experience to students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities or other learning challenges.

Environment and Nature

Canadian wildfire smoke causes unhealthy air quality in Bloomington-Normal

[Charlie Schlenker](#) June 5, 2025

Canadian wildfire smoke has caused unhealthy air quality in Bloomington-Normal. The Ecology Action Center in Normal is recommending people stay indoors whenever possible.

Draft environmental report favors Clinton nuclear plant license renewal

[Charlie Schlenker](#), June 3, 2025

A supplemental environmental impact statement filed this spring by Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will likely advance the operating license renewal request filed by Constellation Energy, owner of the Clinton nuclear power plant.

Canada Geese droppings contaminate swimming pond at Comlara Park beach

[Eric Stock](#), May 29, 2025

McLean County Parks and Recreation staff has been trying to keep Canada Geese away from the beach at Comlara Park, to no avail.

U of I Extension's Master Gardeners program marks 50 years of research-based advice

[Ben Howell](#), May 23, 2025

The University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners program is marking 50 years of operation in McLean and surrounding counties. The program teaches volunteers research-based gardening skills to take back to their communities.

Constitution Trail extension breaks ground at Heartland Community College

[Paul J. Aguilar](#), April 24, 2025

Country Financial Trail will allow access from Raab Road, Vermillion Way and Heartland Community College's The Corn Crib parking lot. The trail will wrap around Birky Pond and run alongside 13 acres of soon-to-be restored prairie land.

12 tornadoes confirmed in Central Illinois after Wednesday's storms

[Eric Stock](#), June 20, 2025

While two of the tornadoes were southeast of Bloomington-Normal, the bulk of the twisters were in west-central Illinois. The strongest was an EF-2 reported northeast of Jacksonville in Morgan County.

Dust storms in Central Illinois increase as farmers continue to explore conservation practices

[Ben Howell](#), June 18, 2025

A dust storm, also known as a haboob, forms when strong, straight-line winds meet soil residue sitting among crops, collecting the dust there, rising it from the ground and bringing it together to form a wall-like cloud.

Canadian wildfire smoke causes unhealthy air quality in Bloomington-Normal

June 5, 2025

Regional Alternative School students tend to garden in west Bloomington

June 2, 2025

Canada Geese droppings contaminate swimming pond at Comlara Park beach

May 29, 2025

U of I Extension's Master Gardeners program marks 50 years of research-based advice

Ben Howell, May 23, 2025

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Central Illinois lawmakers split votes on Mahomet Aquifer bill, which now heads to the governor

Cesar Toscano, May 21, 2025

The Illinois House on Tuesday voted to ban carbon capture near the Mahomet Aquifer in a 91-19 vote. It's already passed the Senate and now goes to the governor.

McLean County to observe Ride of Silence honoring victims of bicycle traffic incidents

Joe Deacon - WGLT, May 19, 2025

A slow and quiet procession in observance of cyclists injured and killed on public roadways is planned for Wednesday night in Bloomington-Normal.

Bloomington City Council lends its support to shelter village proposal

Joe Deacon - WGLT, May 12, 2025

A plan to build a village of small cabins for unhoused individuals just south of downtown Bloomington received a green light Monday night from the city council.

Clock ticks on lifting Illinois' nuclear moratorium as environmental groups want a say

Cesar Toscano, May 12, 2025

Illinois' energy demand will outmatch its supply by 2030, according to a Power Bureau study. That's why some lawmakers are trying to end a 40-year moratorium on the construction of large-scale nuclear reactors.

A living land acknowledgment breaks ground at Horticulture Center — with the help of horses and oxen

Lauren Warnecke, May 6, 2025

During a muddy "field day" last weekend, artist Ruth Burke drove her team of oxen, Clark and Sparky, over the one-acre plot that will be home to a living art installation of native plants.

Illinois State's cilantro will soon be grown on campus, inside new Vertical Farm

Lauren Warnecke, May 2, 2025

ISU's College of Applied Science and Technology, Department of Agriculture and Office of Sustainability unveiled a new vertical farm this week, which will grow food for campus dining services.

Ecology Action Center's advice: Wait and see about electric rates

Charlie Schlenker, April 29, 2025

The Ecology Action Center in Normal urges Bloomington-Normal residents to stay in the municipal electric aggregation program even with hefty rate increases coming this summer.

Constitution Trail extension breaks ground at Heartland Community College

Paul J. Aguilar, April 24, 2025

Country Financial Trail will allow access from Raab Road, Vermillion Way and Heartland Community College's The Corn Crib parking lot. The trail will wrap around Birky Pond and run alongside 13 acres of soon-to-be restored prairie land.

Plastic is in your brain. Researchers and advocates still aren't sure how that impacts health

Lauren Warnecke, April 22, 2025

Illinois lawmakers are trying to curb plastic production by limiting foam food containers and single-use plastic bags, which contribute to rising plastic levels in lakes and groundwater sources like the Mahomet Aquifer.

Regional Climate Centers shut down abruptly this week. Here's why it matters

Héctor Alejandro Arzate, April 18, 2025

The closure of four of the six Regional Climate Centers across the U.S. occurred after funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ran out. A recent report stated that the Trump administration plans to propose a 25% cut to NOAA's budget next fiscal year.

Ban on carbon capture near Mahomet Aquifer wins unanimous approval in Illinois Senate

Cesar Toscano, April 11, 2025

State senators voted unanimously, 55-0, this week to ban carbon sequestration near the Mahomet Aquifer. That's the sole source of water for nearly 1 million people in the region, including much of McLean County.

EPA chief hopes a change to what's protected under the Clean Water Act can win over farmers

Kate Grumke, April 7, 2025

The Trump administration wants to rewrite the definition for what counts as protected 'waters of the United States.' The rule has caused frustration among farmers, but environmental attorneys worry a change could lead to more pollution.