



Voting: Down-ballot Candidates

by the League of Women Voters of DeKalb County

October 10, 2024

Candidates for national office draw so much of our attention in presidential election years that it can be hard to find information for the other candidates on the ballot who represent us in local offices.

Research shows that about one-third of voters do not fill out the entire ballot during a typical presidential election, even though local elections have a much greater effect on our day-to-day living than national elections. From the U.S. Vote Foundation:

The good news is that voters don't have to vote for everything on the ballot in order for the votes they do cast to be valid. Which is how it should be. But the bad news is that not voting down-ballot for state and local representatives and not voting on local issues – school bonds and referenda and funding for police and social services – means wasting an opportunity to have the broadest impact possible. [<https://www.usvotefoundation.org/downballot>]

The U.S. Vote Foundation also notes that local elections help build local consensus and create a pool of talent for future state and national leadership roles.

Voters may not feel confident voting for state and local candidates because it is not easy to find background information on them. In addition to acquiring reliable information about the candidates, we may find that we need a better understanding of what these elected jobs entail, especially at the county level.

In this year's election, in addition to US President, US Representative, and State Representative, there will be several county offices including: the county board, circuit clerk, coroner, and state's attorney on the ballot. There may also be local and state referenda and ballot questions. There are dozens of elected offices in DeKalb County. (Find the list here: <https://dekalbcounty.org/government/elected-officials/>). Here are descriptions of the county offices on the ballot in the upcoming election.

DeKalb County Board is composed of 12 districts with two representatives each who live within their districts. The County Board has a significant impact on local daily life because of the large

number of programs, services, and facilities it oversees. Members also make appointments to a wide variety of special-purpose boards and commissions. They serve on oversight boards and committees. The County Board also makes taxation and budget decisions. Some of the county programs and facilities in which you may have a personal interest include the forest preserves, senior housing and healthcare options, veterans' services, and alternative energy programs like solar and wind farms. Showing support for these and many other local services by voting for the best candidate strengthens local government.

Here is the County Board's website: <https://dekalbcounty.org/government/county-board/>

The Circuit Clerk is elected for a 4-year term and keeps records, processes paperwork, and collects fees and fines for the Circuit Court Judge.

The Coroner is elected for a 4-year term and investigates and determines the cause and manner of deaths that occur in the county.

The State's Attorney is elected for a 4-year term and decides which criminal and regulatory cases to prosecute and provides advice and represents the County in legal matters.

For more information about county elections, visit the DeKalb County Clerk's election page at: <https://dekalbcountyclerkil.gov/election-information/>. The League of Women Voters of DeKalb County provides nonpartisan information on voting, elections, and the candidates. You will find resources at our website: LWVDKC.org/vote.