

As a 20-year resident of Central Illinois, public servant, community leader and former Chair of the Democratic Party of McLean county (the first Black woman Chair), I personally attest to the richness of this region and the need to redistrict with representation in mind. McLean County has an estimated population of 171,517 with a demographic make up of 51.5% female, 8.4 % African American, 5.2% Hispanic/ Latino, and 5.1 % Asian (2019 data). We are also the largest county in Illinois geographically and have held the rank as the richest county in the state. Where many counties are experiencing an exodus in population growth, McLean county continues to have an ever growing economy and political base. With the right support via redistricting we can continue to serve as an asset to the state.

The following are a few important attributes we possess:

- home to a major, public university and a small, private liberal-arts university within walking distance of each other
- a leading agricultural county in the nation but with a large service industry presence (headquarters for two large insurance companies)
- an urban presence but with substantial rural communities
- a major commitment to green space, tremendous parks and recreation services
- largely insulated from unemployment jumps unlike the state or the nation
- a highly educated workforce

I'm committed to protecting all that we have to offer and to protecting downstate Democrats, which is why I strongly advocate for the inclusion of more diverse communities within the remapping process for the 13th district. For so long, west Bloomington (a predominately Black and Brown community) has been neglected but has preserved and is becoming a growing force as it relates to civic and political engagement.

The Democratic Party of McLean County has a great deal to be proud of. Over the last four years we've raised our profile while expanding outreach, increased voter engagement and turnout, closed the gap in areas that were traditionally Republican strongholds, made many historical strides with strong, diverse candidates and have broken records for both candidate recruitment and candidates running for office. Where other counties with similar political make-ups are struggling, the McLean County Democrats continue to make progress. In 2017, four Democrats were elected to lead Normal Township unseating Republican incumbents for supervisor and three trustee seats. In 2018, Democrats picked up two

McLean County Board seats and built momentum with the #BlueWave as a result of a highly contested County Clerk and Governor's race. And during the 2020 General Election, in the face of a pandemic,

-Democrats won McLean County at 52% for the Presidential race

-In the 18th congressional District we increased by 5,500 Democratic votes and;

-In the 13th congressional District we increased by 1,400 Democratic votes

We have held onto existing county board seats, by defending District 6 and District 8. Keeping those gains going, we have now earned two more seats in District 4 District 7.

My suggestions for the placement of new congressional, legislative, representative, or judicial boundaries would be to remove Christian and Macoupin counties from the 13th and include the West side of Bloomington, IL. I also suggest that St. Clair County be moved into the 13th, then redistrict Calhoun, Green, Jersey, and Macoupin counties into the 18th. If possible, I believe we should make the 12th and 15th into one district and give the eastern part of the 15th to the 16th. Thoughtful redistricting can provide proper representation, jobs, economic development, equitably diverse housing, tax revenue for our schools and communities blighted by negligence. It can provide the much need care and service for Springfield and Bloomington.

Sincerely,

Nikita Richards
202 Packard Street
Bloomington, IL 61701
(309) 660-2275
Nikitarichardsillinois@gmail.com