

OFFICIAL STATE SYMBOLS



**Great Seal of the
State of Illinois
(1868-present)**

The official state symbols of the State of Illinois are designated by Acts of the General Assembly.

The Great Seal: The first seal used in what is now Illinois was that of the Northwest Territory, first used in 1788. The Seal of the Illinois Territory followed in 1809.

After Illinois gained statehood in December 1818, the First General Assembly passed a law on Feb. 19, 1819, requiring the Secretary of State to procure a permanent state seal. The design chosen was a duplicate of the Great Seal of the United States. Gunsmith Philip Creamer was paid \$85 to produce an engraving device that would affix an imprint of the seal to any document. The First Great

Seal of Illinois was used until 1839 when it was recut. The new version became the Second Great Seal.

Secretary of State Sharon Tyndale was responsible for creating the seal in use today. In January 1867, he asked Sen. Allen C. Fuller to sponsor a bill authorizing a new state seal. Tyndale proposed reversing the words “State Sovereignty, National Union” in light of the Civil War, but a bill was passed on March 7, 1867, creating a new seal with the original wording. Tyndale did change the banner’s placement on the seal with “Sovereignty” being upside down, decreasing its readability.

The state seal has been recut several times since 1868, but Tyndale’s design has remained unchanged. The current seal depicts an eagle with a banner in its beak with the state motto, “State Sovereignty, National Union.” The words “Seal of the State of Illinois” and “Aug. 26, 1818” — the date the first Illinois Constitution was signed — encircle the design.

On Aug. 26, 2002, Secretary of State Jesse White announced that Illinois State Archives staff had uncovered the oldest-known impression of the original state seal while processing 19th-century Madison County court records. As a result of the discovery, dated Nov. 18, 1819, the artist’s rendition of the First State Seal reflects previously unknown details now visible on the new find.

The Secretary of State is the keeper of the Great Seal of the State of Illinois. Reproduction or use of the state seal or the state flag is permissible only in strict accordance with Chapter 5 of the *Illinois Compiled Statutes*.



**Seal of the Illinois
Territory (sketch)
(circa 1809-1819)**



**First Great Seal of the
State of Illinois
(circa 1819-1839)**



**Second Great Seal of
the State of Illinois
(circa 1839-1868)**



State Flag: Illinois has had two official state flags. The first was adopted on July 6, 1915, after a vigorous campaign by Mrs. Ella Park Lawrence, state regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

Following a contest among Illinois DAR chapters to design an Illinois flag, the Rockford chapter's entry, designed by Miss Lucy Derwent, was chosen. State Sen. Raymond D. Meeker introduced a bill making the DAR's design the official state flag, and it became law on July 6, 1915.

More than 50 years later, a move to design a new flag was initiated by Chief Petty Officer Bruce McDaniel of Waverly, then serving in Vietnam. The identity of the Illinois flag hanging among other state flags in his mess hall was often questioned because it did not carry the state's name. Therefore, McDaniel requested the word "Illinois" be added to the flag.

A bill to amend the original Flag Act of 1915 was sponsored by State Rep. Jack Walker of Lansing, and a new flag with the word "Illinois" was approved by the General Assembly and signed into law by Gov. Richard B. Ogilvie on Sept. 17, 1969. Ogilvie then appointed a committee to develop specifications for the new state flag to ensure its uniformity of design and color in its reproduction by flag makers.

Mrs. Sanford Hutchison of Greenfield, who had done extensive research on the official design of the state seal, submitted a flag design that contained all the required elements as specified by law. Her design — a white field with the word "Illinois" and an exact replica of the state seal — became the official state flag of Illinois on July 1, 1970.

State Tree — White Oak: In 1907, Mrs. James C. Fessler of Rochelle suggested to state officials that Illinois schoolchildren vote for a state tree and state flower. They subsequently selected the native oak for the state tree, and Sen. Andrew J. Jackson of Rockford introduced a bill making it official in 1908. In 1973, a special poll of some 900,000 children changed the official state tree from the native oak to the white oak, and it was signed into law that year.

State Flower — Violet: When the schoolchildren voted on the state tree, they also selected the violet as the state flower, and it became law at the same time in 1908.

State Song — "Illinois": With music by Archibald Johnston and lyrics by Charles H. Chamberlain, "Illinois" served as the state's unofficial song for many years before the 54th General Assembly passed a bill making it official in 1925. The bill was introduced by Sen. Florence Fifer Bohrer, the first woman to serve as an Illinois State Senator.

State Bird — Cardinal: In 1928, the Macomb branch of the National Federation of Professional Women's Clubs urged that Illinois schoolchildren select a state bird. The cardinal was chosen from a list of five birds conspicuous in Illinois. Rep. James Foster introduced a bill that was adopted in 1929.

State Slogan — "Land of Lincoln": The slogan that appears on Illinois license plates was adopted in 1955 by the General Assembly. That same year, Congress passed a special act granting the State of Illinois a copyright for exclusive use of the "Land of Lincoln" insignia.

State Mineral — Fluorite: A bill designating fluorite the official state mineral was passed in 1965. Calcium fluorite, commonly called "fluorite," is a glass-like mineral used in making steel, enamels, aluminum, glass and many chemicals. Illinois is the largest producer of fluorite in the United States.

State Insect — Monarch Butterfly: In 1974, a Dennis School third-grade class in Decatur proposed the orange and black monarch butterfly as the state's official insect. Rep. Webber Borchers of Decatur introduced a bill in the General Assembly, which was signed into law by Gov. Daniel Walker in 1975.

State Animal — White-tailed Deer: The state animal was selected by a vote of Illinois schoolchildren in 1980. The white-tailed deer was selected from candidates nominated by the General Assembly and the Illinois State Museum. A bill was signed into law by Gov. James R. Thompson, effective Jan. 1, 1982. The deer, native to North America, has a gray coat that turns reddish brown in summer and an eye-catching tail that is bright white on the underside.

State Fish — Bluegill: The state fish was selected by schoolchildren in 1986. A member of the sunfish family, the colorful bluegill reaches only about nine inches in length and weighs an average of 14 ounces, but it has a reputation as one of the best fighting game fish.

State Prairie Grass — Big Bluestem: On Aug. 31, 1989, Gov. Thompson signed into law a bill designating the big bluestem as Illinois' official prairie grass. Big bluestem was chosen in a poll of students conducted by the state Department of Conservation. Named for the bluish purple cast of its stem, big bluestem is the tallest prairie grass in Illinois.

State Fossil — Tully Monster: A soft-bodied marine animal that lived 280 to 340 million years ago, the tully monster was designated as the state fossil in 1989. An impression of the tully monster was discovered in 1955 by amateur archaeologist Francis J. Tully of Joliet. Since then, more than 100 specimens have been found in Grundy, Kankakee, Will and Fulton counties.

State Dance — Square Dance: In 1990, Gov. Thompson signed into law a bill designating the square dance as the official state dance. The square dance, first associated with the early American settlers, has been in recorded history since 1651.

State Soil — Drummer Silty Clay Loam: On Aug. 2, 2001, Gov. George Ryan signed legislation establishing drummer silty clay loam as the official state soil. Students from Monticello High School's FFA and Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences' FFA lobbied for the bill's passage. Illinois is known for its thick, dark prairie soils, and drummer silty clay loam is the most common. Drummer soils are found on more than 1.5 million acres in nearly half of Illinois' counties. Corn and soybeans are the principal crops.

State Snack Food — Popcorn: On Aug. 4, 2003, second- and third-graders from Cunningham Elementary School in Joliet, along with their teacher Fran Hollister, witnessed Gov. Rod Blagojevich sign Senate Bill 185, which made their class project — to make popcorn the official snack food of Illinois — become law.

State Amphibian — Eastern Tiger Salamander: In the culmination of a statewide online voting contest sponsored by Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn, Rep. Bob Biggins, the Brookfield Zoo and the Chicago Herpetological Society, Gov. Blagojevich signed legislation in July 2005 making the eastern tiger salamander the state amphibian. The species is the largest Illinois terrestrial salamander, growing to more than 12 inches in length and often mistaken for a lizard or even a baby alligator.

State Reptile — Painted Turtle: When the citizens of Illinois elected the state's official amphibian, they also voted for the painted turtle as the state reptile, which also became law in July 2005. The painted turtle is among the world's most colorful aquatic turtles and is a familiar sight in lakes and ponds across the state.