

101st General Assembly

Office of the Senate President

The Senate President is the presiding officer of the Illinois Senate, elected by the 59 members of the Senate to serve a two-year term. The Illinois Constitution, statutes and rules define the functions and responsibilities of the office.

The President appoints Senate members to standing committees and to permanent and interim study commissions, designating one member as chair. The President also appoints the Majority Leader and Assistant Majority Leaders, who serve as officers of the Senate.

With the Speaker of the House, the Senate President shares primary responsibility for legislative procedures and operations. By strategically directing the flow of legislation, the President ultimately sets the pace of work in the Senate. The President is required to approve all vouchers for the expenditure of funds appropriated for use by the Senate and to certify that all bills passed by the Senate are in accordance with Senate rules.

As chair of the Senate Operations Commission, the President oversees a seven-member management committee responsible for deciding Senate policy, hiring Senate employees, purchasing supplies, renting equipment, and maintaining the Senate chambers and office, among other duties.

In addition to presiding over the Senate, the President is the leader of the majority party in the Legislature's upper chamber. Likewise, the Senate Minority Leader, selected by the minority party and formally elected by all Senate members, speaks on behalf of the minority party. Responsibilities of the Senate Minority Leader include appointing members to serve on certain boards, commissions and standing committees, and selecting assistant leaders and staff.



John J. Cullerton
Senate President

Since becoming Senate President in 2009, **John J. Cullerton** (Democrat) has built a reputation for calm leadership, an eye toward bipartisanship and pragmatic consensus building, all of which have been the hallmark of nearly every major accomplishment to come out of the Senate over the past decade.

Over his nearly 40 years in government, Cullerton has emerged as a keen negotiator focused on progress through compromise. With the start of the 101st General Assembly, he now leads one of the largest and most diverse collections of Senators in Illinois' vibrant 200-year history.

Cullerton began his service in the General Assembly in 1979 when he was elected to the Illinois House, where he served as Speaker Pro Tempore and Democratic Floor Leader.

He was appointed to the Illinois Senate in 1991 and then elected the following year to represent the 6th Senate District on Chicago's North Side.

Early in his legislative career, Cullerton focused on traffic safety issues, sponsoring the state's first child safety and motorist seat belt laws that have since saved thousands of lives. As chairman of the Senate's Judiciary Committee, he was involved in overhauling and modernizing the state's complex criminal code through the work of the independent Criminal Law Edit, Alignment and Reform (CLEAR) Commission.

In 2009, Cullerton was elected Senate President by his colleagues. One of his first assignments was overseeing the impeachment trial of then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Cullerton's tenure as Senate President has been marked by historic social, financial and educational reforms. Under his leadership, the state recognized marriage equality, ended the death penalty, renewed convention business at McCormick Place and fundamentally improved how public schools are funded.

Cullerton and former Republican Leader Christine Radogno are credited with a bold, bipartisan “Grand Bargain” effort to break a more than two-year budget impasse that threatened the financial security of the entire state and its institutions.

Cullerton received both his undergraduate and law degrees from Loyola University in Chicago. He is a partner with the Chicago law firm of Thompson Coburn. Cullerton and his wife, Pamela, live in Chicago and have five children and three grandchildren.

Kimberly A. Lightford (Democrat) began serving as the first African-American woman Senate Majority Leader in January 2019. She was sworn in as a Senator representing the 4th Legislative District in November 1998 after winning her election to serve the remaining term for retiring Sen. Earlean Collins. In 2009, she was appointed Assistant Majority Leader.

Lightford is known as an education expert, leading the drive to start the state’s universal preschool program, putting the best teachers in classrooms, and reforming disciplinary practices that were disproportionately affecting at-risk and minority students. She is responsible for raising the minimum wage in Illinois three times, including a 2019 measure that gradually increases it to \$15 per hour.

As the youngest African-American woman elected to the Senate, she led legislation that established the Equal Pay Act in Illinois.

A lifelong resident of her district, Lightford was born May 10, 1968, in Chicago, and raised in Maywood. Lightford holds a bachelor’s in public communications from Western Illinois University and a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Illinois at Springfield. She gained extensive management experience working at the Illinois Department of Central Management Services, the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Illinois Secretary of State’s office.

Lightford is committed to community pride. She offers free supplemental services in reading, math and writing for middle school students; each year honors grandparents raising grandchildren; and hosts an amazing back-to-school event.



Kimberly A. Lightford
Senate Majority Leader



Bill Brady
Senate Republican Leader

Bill Brady (Republican) was first elected by his peers as Senate Republican Leader in August 2017 and re-elected again in January 2019. He has served the residents of the 44th District as their state Senator since May 2002, and prior to that, he served as state Representative for the 88th District from 1993 to 2001. He currently serves on the Senate Executive Committee.

During his tenure as a legislator, Brady has worked to increase education accountability and funding, and he has also sponsored reforms of workers’ compensation and medical malpractice laws. He has championed reforms in the state’s insurance and financial industries that became a national model, sponsored laws that promote highway safety through more training for young drivers, and led the way in efforts to restore integrity to state government, ensuring the best use of the taxpayers’ dollars.

Brady was born May 15, 1961, in Bloomington, Illinois. He graduated from Central Catholic High School and Illinois Wesleyan University. Over the course of his professional career, he has founded and operated several businesses, mostly focused in the areas of housing development and marketing.

Bill and his wife, Nancy, live in Bloomington. They have three adult children and four grandchildren.

Office of the Speaker of the House

The Speaker of the House of Representatives derives responsibility and influence over legislative activities through statutes, constitutional mandates and House rules of procedure. Chosen by members of the House, the Speaker invites participation from a wide range of philosophies from members of both parties in determining a legislative agenda.

As the presiding officer of the House, the Speaker determines when the House will meet and what type of business it will conduct. As manager of debate on bills, resolutions and amendments, the Speaker is responsible for recognizing members, formally calling votes, deciding parliamentary issues and maintaining decorum in the House chambers.

The comprehensive duties of the office include managing all House offices, facilities, professional and clerical staff, custodians, and security personnel. Administratively, the Speaker signs and authenticates all acts, proceedings, orders, writs, warrants and subpoenas issued by the House.

In organizing a team to help ensure smooth operation of House proceedings, the Speaker selects the Majority Leader, Deputy Majority Leaders and Assistant Majority Leaders. The Speaker may appoint chairs and majority members of standing committees, which are the public forums of proposed legislation.

Traditionally, the Office of the Speaker of the House has a profound bearing on the effectiveness of Illinois government and citizen representation in the state.



Michael J. Madigan
Speaker of the House

Michael J. Madigan (Democrat) was re-elected Speaker of the House in January 2019.

As Speaker, Madigan has worked to build consensus, improve the quality of life for residents across all regions of Illinois, and work in a cooperative and bipartisan manner to address Illinois' most pressing issues. He advocates for honest, efficient government and has fought to strengthen the financial security of middle-class families. Under his leadership, the Legislature has enacted sweeping ethics laws, the first campaign finance limits in state history, and needed reforms to the state budget process and workers' compensation system.

Madigan is focused on protecting critical services like health care; quality schools; services for the elderly, disabled and struggling families; and resources for other vulnerable residents.

Madigan is also leading House Democratic efforts to revitalize Illinois' economy by lifting up the middle class. Madigan has passed legislation demanding equal pay for women, protecting access to health care for individuals with pre-existing conditions, and raising wages for working families while also providing assistance to small and medium-sized employers.

Madigan helped pass landmark education funding reform, increasing investment in public elementary and high schools.

Speaker Madigan was first elected as a delegate to the 1970 Constitutional Convention and then as a state Representative the same year. He was born April 19, 1942, in the district he now represents. He graduated from the University of Notre Dame and Loyola University School of Law and practices law in Chicago.

Madigan and his wife, Shirley, have three daughters, a son and four grandchildren.



Greg Harris
Majority Leader

Greg Harris (Democrat) was elected to the Illinois General Assembly in 2006 and became Majority Leader of the House of Representatives in 2019. Harris represents the 13th District, which includes parts of Uptown, Ravenswood, Lincoln Square, North Center, West Ridge and Bowmanville. A gay elected official who is also openly living with HIV, Harris is the first openly gay person in Illinois to become a member of legislative leadership.

Harris has been a major sponsor of health care reform and insurance reform, and he has led House Democrats' efforts to protect lifesaving services like breast cancer screenings, child care and health care for the elderly. In 2013, Harris led a historic effort to make Illinois one of the first states to pass legislation ensuring equal rights for same-sex couples. He continues to focus on the needs of Illinois' homeless and at-risk youth, comprehensive breast cancer services, marriage equality, trans issues, protecting people with disabilities, nursing home quality and affordable health care.

Harris previously served as House Majority Conference Chair, chaired the Appropriations-Human Services Committee and served as the House Democrats' lead budget negotiator. Harris is a member of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Leadership Council. He also served as chairman on the Violence Prevention Task Force and is a member of the Racial and Ethnic Impact Research Task Force, the Quality of Life Board, and the House Task Force on Sexual Discrimination and Harassment.

Jim Durkin (Republican) was first elected House Minority Leader in August 2013. He served in the House from 1995 to 2002, when he became the Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate. He returned to the General Assembly in 2006 when he was elected to represent the 82nd District.

In 2008-09, Representative Durkin served as the ranking Republican on the House Special Investigative Impeachment Committee that recommended impeachment and removal from office for former Gov. Blagojevich. During the 99th General Assembly, Durkin sponsored the Illinois firearm trafficking law to keep illegally acquired guns out of the hands of gang members. He also successfully negotiated property tax freeze legislation and legislation to combat Illinois' heroin crisis. Prior to being elected Republican Leader, Durkin served as an Assistant Republican Leader, was a member of the Illinois Task Force on Gang Violence, fought to protect children from sexual predators, and is a founding member of the Illinois Legislative Diabetes Caucus.

Durkin received his bachelor's from Illinois State University and his law degree from The John Marshall Law School. He is a former assistant Cook County state's attorney and assistant Illinois attorney general and currently serves as counsel for the law firm of Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr, LLP.

Durkin and his wife live in Western Springs with their family.



Jim Durkin
Republican Leader