

# OFFICIAL STATE SYMBOLS

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

## Great Seal of Illinois



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

The first seal used in what is now Illinois was that of the Northwest Territory 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 that remains in use today. In January 1867, he asked state 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” reading upside down, decreasing its legibility.

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. 26th 1818” — the date the first Illinois Constitution was signed — encircle the design.

In August 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 sketch of the First State Seal reflects previously unknown details 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)

## Illinois State Flag



Illinois has had two official state flags. Ella Park Lawrence, state regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), led a vigorous campaign that included a contest among Illinois DAR chapters to design the first state flag. The Rockford chapter's entry, designed by 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 in July 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. McDaniel requested that the word "Illinois" be added to the flag.

A bill to amend the original Flag Act of 1915, adding the word "Illinois" to the flag, was signed into law by Gov. Richard B. Ogilvie in September 1969. Ogilvie then appointed a committee to develop specifications for the new state flag to ensure uniformity of design and color in its reproduction by flag makers. Florence Hutchison of Greenfield 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 in July 1970.

## Official State Symbols

**State Tree — White Oak:** In 1908, Illinois schoolchildren voted for a state tree. The native oak was selected and became law that same year. In 1973, a special poll of nearly 900,000 children changed the state tree from the native oak to the white oak, and it was signed into law later that year.

**State Flower — Violet:** When schoolchildren voted on the state tree, they also selected the violet as the state flower, which became law 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. (See page 423 for lyrics.)

**State Bird — Cardinal:** In 1928, the Macomb branch of the National Federation of Professional Women's Clubs suggested that schoolchildren select a state bird. The cardinal was chosen from five birds common in Illinois and designated the state bird in 1929.

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

**State Mineral — Fluorite:** A bill designating fluorite as the official state mineral was passed in 1965. Calcium fluorite is a glass-like mineral used in making steel, enamels, aluminum, glass and 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 insect, which became law in 1975.

**State Animal — White-tailed Deer:** The white-tailed deer was selected the state animal by Illinois schoolchildren in 1980 and became official by law in 1982. Native to North America, the deer 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 9 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:** In 1989, big bluestem was named Illinois' official prairie grass. Big bluestem was chosen in a poll of students conducted by the state Department of Conservation. Named for its bluish purple stem, big bluestem is the tallest prairie grass in Illinois.

**State Fossil — Tully Monster:** A soft-bodied marine animal that lived 280-340 million years ago, the Tully monster was designated 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.

**State Dance — Square Dance:** In 1990, the square dance became the official state dance. This dance has been in recorded history since 1651.

**State Soil — Drummer Silty Clay Loam:** A bill designating Drummer silty clay loam as the state soil became law in 2001. Future Farmers of America members from Monticello High School and Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences lobbied for the bill's passage. Rich, dark Drummer soils are found on more than 1.5 million acres in nearly half of Illinois' counties.

**State Snack Food — Popcorn:** Students from Cunningham Elementary School in Joliet, along with their teacher Fran Hollister, saw their class project — to make popcorn the official snack food of Illinois — become law in 2003.

**State Amphibian — Eastern Tiger Salamander:** Following a statewide online voting contest, a law was passed in 2005 making the eastern tiger salamander the state amphibian. The species is the largest Illinois terrestrial salamander.

**State Reptile — Painted Turtle:** Through the same voting contest, Illinois citizens also selected the painted turtle as the state reptile, which also became law in 2005. The painted turtle is among the world's most colorful aquatic turtles.

**State Fruit — Goldrush Apple:** A fourth-grade class at Woodlawn Elementary School chose the Goldrush apple as the state fruit, and it became law in 2007. The sweet-tart apple has a golden color with a bronze blush and is noted for its disease resistance and long storage life.

**State Vegetable — Sweet Corn:** Fourth-grade students from Chatham Elementary School proposed sweet corn as the state vegetable, which became law in 2015.

**State Pie — Pumpkin Pie:** A bill designating pumpkin pie as the official state pie became law in 2015. About 85 percent of consumed pumpkin in the United States comes from Illinois.

## Official State Song

### “Illinois”

By thy rivers gently flowing, Illinois, Illinois,  
O'er thy prairies verdant growing, Illinois, Illinois,  
Comes an echo on the breeze, rustling through the leafy trees,  
And its mellow tones are these, Illinois, Illinois,  
And its mellow tones are these, Illinois.

From a wilderness of prairies, Illinois, Illinois,  
Straight thy way and never varies, Illinois, Illinois,  
Till upon the inland sea, stands thy great commercial tree,  
Turning all the world to thee, Illinois, Illinois,  
Turning all the world to thee, Illinois.

When you heard your country calling, Illinois, Illinois,  
Where the shot and shell were falling, Illinois, Illinois,  
When the Southern host withdrew, pitting Gray against the Blue,  
There were none more brave than you, Illinois, Illinois,  
There were none more brave than you, Illinois.

Not without thy wondrous story, Illinois, Illinois,  
Can be writ the nation's glory, Illinois, Illinois,  
On the record of thy years, Abraham Lincoln's name appears,  
Grant and Logan, and our tears, Illinois, Illinois,  
Grant and Logan, and our tears, Illinois.

*Music by Archibald Johnston; lyrics by Charles H. Chamberlain.*

To listen to a rendition of the state song, visit [www.illinois.gov](http://www.illinois.gov).