

PEORIA COUNTY DEMOCRATS



FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

IT IS THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR - PETITION SEASON!

Petition season has started for the 2024 election season, and we need your help! A number of local and state candidates are collecting signatures for their run for office in 2024 including State Senator Dave Koehler, Illinois House Representative Jehan Gordon-Booth, United States Representative Eric Sorenson, Zoey Carter (running for Illinois State Representative District 93), John Spears (running for Circuit Court Judge), and Sean Donahue (running for Circuit Court Judge). If you would like to sign any of these petitions or the ones for County level Democrats, please email rick@peoriademocrats.org. Check out our first-time candidates in the Get to Know the Candidates section on the following pages to learn more about Zoey, John, and Sean.

DID YOU KNOW...

The Peoria County Democrats headquarters is open from 12:30-5:00 p.m. on most Wednesdays (call 309 369 5330 to verify). Stop by to volunteer for events, sign candidate petitions, or just to chat with Chairman Fox. Located in Campus Town Shopping Center at 1200 W. Main Street, Peoria, IL.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- October 20, 6-8 p.m., Tazewell County Democrats – Shirley Houghton Memorial Dinner - Free tickets available contact rick@peoriademocrats.org
- October 26, 2023, 5-7 p.m., Bob Spears Fundraiser – Jimmy's Bar
- October 29, 1-4 p.m., Petition Collection/Notarization Party hosted by Sen. Koehler & Rep Gordon Booth – The Fieldhouse Bar & Grill
- November 18, 12-4 p.m., Petition Notarization, Peoria Democrats HQ Campus Town
- November 27-December 4, Petition filing period
- December 3, 1- 3 p.m, Peoria Democrats Holiday Party – Laborers Local 165 Hall

GET TO KNOW THE CANDIDATES



Zoey Carter – Running for Illinois State Representative District 93

Q: Why are you running for this office?

A: I absolutely love Central Illinois and have a lifelong connection here. School, marriage, and jobs have all been here in Central Illinois. I also know what it's like to live below the poverty line and what those struggles are like. I grew up in a lower income household; I've had months at a time where I lived off of Ramen noodles and mac and cheese; and after 32 years of living here, I'm like everyone else. We need help here in Central Illinois and I, along with most other people, am tired. Tired of having to travel for care and assistance. I'm tired of my friends, family, and neighbors struggling to get by and I'm tired of our representative not listening to us. And that's why I decided to run. To help my community and be the voice for everyone, including those who are unable to speak up.

Q: What will your top three priorities be if elected to this position?

A: If elected, the three biggest issues I have consistently been hearing about, and will be focusing on are:

- 1) Healthcare - Making sure that everyone, no matter where or who they are, has equal healthcare and can access that healthcare everywhere across the state.
- 2) Keeping companies accountable - Making sure that companies are paying fairly, that utilities are charging correctly and that citizens are not being taken advantage of.
- 3) Housing - Making sure that we fight homelessness, and hard. Fight against companies buying homes and raising the home prices sky high, and making sure that current homeowners and renters are able to afford their housing needs.

Q: Anything else you would like to add?

A: Like I have mentioned, I have spent my whole life here in Central Illinois. I graduated from Pekin Community High School in 2009 and attended Illinois Central College for Computer Information Systems and Business Management. I've been in Retail Management, most recently as an Assistant Store Leader at Kroger in Pekin; I've volunteered with different programs and events with Peoria Proud; and have assisted with youth programs in the past at Laramie Baptist Church. I also come from a background of small business owners, with my family previously owning Pekin Weldors in North Pekin. Please reach out to me at 309.297.6567 with any questions!

GET TO KNOW THE CANDIDATES



Sean Donahue – Running for Circuit Court Judge

Q: Why are you running for this office?

A: I have been blessed to be appointed to the bench and be a part of a segment of the community that is charged with keeping it orderly, free, accountable, safe and upstanding. I truly believe that a strong judiciary is fundamental to a well-functioning society. As a Judge, I feel that I am able to have a direct impact on individuals' lives and the community at large through the decisions made from the bench. Our Circuit Judges not only appoint the Associate Judges but make decisions that affect the operation of the entire 10th Judicial Circuit. It is important that the individuals elected as Circuit Judges truly care about the health and well-being of our Circuit, and I do. I believe that I have the respect of

the Peoria County bar and am an asset to our Judiciary and possess all the qualities that make a solid Circuit court judge.

Q: What will your top priorities be if elected to this position?

A: It is imperative that the court system be fair and equitable and accessible to all. Regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status or any other factor, everyone should be treated equally and fairly in the judicial system. I have strived to ensure that anyone who appears before me is treated fairly, with respect, and understands the basis for my ruling. More and more people are choosing to act as Self Represented Litigants; it's important that the judiciary accept this and do our best to ensure that these individuals are treated fairly.

As a Judge, I feel it is my responsibility to run an efficient Courtroom and ensure that participants are seen in a timely manner. Likewise, I ensure that I am always prepared for any matter that is before me and ready to address participants/litigants. When individuals come to court, it is our responsibility to be prepared and rule in a timely manner so their lives/cases can move forward.

Since being appointed in 2017, I have witnessed a lot of change in how the Courts run and in the statutes that we interpret. From the regular utilization of Zoom to the Safe-T act, the practice of law and the laws themselves are ever changing. Sometimes it is hard to accept this change, but it is important that we do. Many of the changes have made the legal system more accessible to individuals and more equitable. As a Judge, I have acknowledged and embraced this change and will continue to do so.

Q: Anything else you would like to add?

A: I was born and raised in Kickapoo and still live on the property I was born on. I have attended Illinois Central College, U of I Champaign/Urbana, and SIU in Carbondale for Law School. After undergrad, I joined the Laborer's Local 165. I worked for 2 years as a Union laborer prior to attending law school and during my summer breaks during law school. I received my Juris Doctorate in 2004. I returned to Peoria and worked as an Assistant State Attorney for Kevin Lyons until 2006 when I went into private practice with Gerald (Jerry) Brady forming Brady & Donahue, eventually becoming a solo practitioner when Jerry became the State Attorney. I also was a part time public defender from 2006-2014. In 2017, I was appointed to the bench and just finished my 6th year. I have sat in a general civil court room, traffic, DUI, misdemeanor and was the Problem Solving Court (drug, mental health, veterans) judge for 4 years. During my 19 years as an Attorney and Judge there literally is not a courtroom in the 10th Judicial Circuit I have not been in.

GET TO KNOW THE CANDIDATES



John Spears – Running for Circuit Court Judge

Q: Why are you running for this office?

A: As a lifelong Peoria County resident, I aspire to serve our community in a meaningful and impactful manner. Throughout my career as a lawyer, I have worked on both sides of the criminal justice system: as a prosecutor and public defender. This has supplied me with a wealth of experience. As a lawyer, I confront many of the unique challenges that our community faces in the legal system on a daily basis. As a judge, I will serve the citizens of Peoria County by running a fair and impartial courtroom. Those who appear in court will always be heard and can expect to receive a just outcome.

Q: What will your top priorities be if elected to this position?

A: First, I will contribute to the citizens of Peoria County by upholding principles of due process and the rule of law. Our community deserves honest and proportional decision-making from its judiciary. Accordingly, judges must follow the law despite any personal views. This includes Illinois and federal statutes, binding precedent, and the Constitutions of Illinois and the United States. A bias-free courtroom warrants the advancement of these fundamental principles.

My next priority is to maintain public trust in our legal system. Being a judge requires dependable service to the community, not the other way around. Our entire judicial system rests on citizens' faith and belief in judges. Perhaps now more than ever, our judiciary acknowledges the importance of transparency and public confidence. As a judge, I will decide cases fairly and impartially, and free of political influence or intimidation.

Finally, I vow to ensure that citizens' legal rights are protected and justice served. Every person who appears in court has a back-story. Typically, court affairs involve serious issues. Many cases involve victims and offenders, and both parties are equally entitled to certain rights. It is important that our community can depend on getting fair treatment in the courtroom regardless of his or her reasons for being present.

Q: Anything else you would like to add?

A: Outside of practicing law and raising a family, I am proudly involved in a number of local organizations and groups. For years I have been active on the Peoria Area Prostate Awareness Society as the treasurer. I am a member of St. Philomena Church, the Peoria and Tazewell County Bar Associations, the Friends of Clonmel, and the Itoo Society. I am involved with the annual Mike McLaughlin Fund to benefit the Kelly Needham Award and the Paul Rutherford and Jerry Brady Christmas Basket Drive. Over the past two years, I have also been employed as an adjunct professor at Illinois Central College in the Legal Department. Please feel free to contact me at spearsforjudge2024@gmail.com or (309) 369-8807.