

ILLINOIS FLAG COMMISSION FINAL REPORT



The contents of this report are submitted by the members of the Illinois Flag Commission to the General Assembly, pursuant to Public Acts 103-0513 and 103-0811

April 2025

April 1, 2025

To the Members of the Illinois General Assembly,

Pursuant to Public Acts 103-0513 and 103-0811, this report highlights the activities and findings of the Illinois Flag Commission.

In 2023, the Illinois General Assembly approved Senate Bill 1818 (Public Act 103-0513), which created the Illinois Flag Commission.

Flag Commission members were charged with soliciting new flag designs and seeking public input on whether Illinois should adopt a new state flag.

Illinois Flag Commission members served as volunteers with no compensation. In addition, no additional resources were spent by the state related to the Flag Commission or efforts to promote the contest or provide technical support.

Flag Commission members received many inquiries about the cost associated with replacing a flag if a new one was chosen. However, a detailed cost analysis was not included in the statute.

The Flag Commission held meetings between July 2024 and April 2025.

Respectfully,

Illinois Flag Commission Members

Najjar Abdul-Musawwir
Benjamin Grantham Aldred
State Senator Terri Bryant
Tim Butler
Sherrell L. Byrd, Jr.
Cristina Colunga
Andrew Conneen
Sierra Force
George Howard
Dave Joens
Gabrielle Lyon

Tim Mellman
Matthew G. Prochaska
Tom Rooney
Michelle Renae Smith
Will Stephens
Tandra Taylor
Toby Trimmer
State Senator Doris Turner
State Representative Dave Vella
State Representative Tom Weber

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Flag Commission Membership

Najjar Abdul-Musawwir	Professor, SIU School of Art and Design Appointed by: Speaker of the House of Representatives
Benjamin Grantham Aldred	Assistant Professor and Reference Librarian, UIC Appointed by: Speaker of the House of Representatives
Terri Bryant	State Senator, 58 th Legislative District Appointed by: Minority Leader of the Senate
Tim Butler	President, Illinois Railroad Association Appointed by: Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
Sherrell Byrd	Pastor, Southern Missionary Baptist. Vietnam Veteran Appointed by: Office of the Governor
Cristina Colunga	Artist, Elgin Appointed by: President of the Senate
Andrew Conneen	Teacher, Stevenson High School, District 125 Appointed by: President of the Senate
Sierra Force	Graphic Designer, Illinois State Board of Education Appointed by: State Superintendent of Education
George Howard	Retired U.S. Army Appointed by: Minority Leader of the Senate
Dave Joens (Chair)	Director, Illinois State Archives, Retired Dec. 2024 Appointed by: Secretary of State
Gabrielle Lyon	Executive Director, Illinois Humanities Appointed by: Office of the Governor
Tim Mellman	Student, Vexillologist Appointed by: President of the Senate

Matthew Prochaska	Circuit Clerk, Kendall County Appointed by: Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
Tom Rooney	Teacher, West Leyden High School, District 212 Appointed by: Minority Leader of the Senate
Michelle Renea Smith	Artist, The Drawing Room, Springfield Appointed by: Office of the Governor
Will Stephens	Mayor, City of Murphysboro Appointed by: Minority Leader of the Senate
Tandra Taylor	Interim Director, SIUE's Institute for Community Justice and Racial Equality Appointed by: President of the Senate
Toby Trimmer	Dep. Director, Illinois Department of Natural Resources Appointed by: Chairperson of the Board of the Illinois State Museum
Doris Turner	State Senator, 48 th Legislative District Appointed by: President of the Senate
Dave Vella	State Representative, 68 th House District Appointed by: Speaker of the House of Representatives
Tom Weber	State Representative, 64 th House District Appointed by: Minority Leader of the House of Representatives

Purposes of the Commission

Senate Bill 1818 (Public Act 103-0513) was sponsored by State Senator Doris Turner and State Representative Kam Buckner and signed into law on August 7, 2023. Later, House Bill 4261 (Public Act 103-0811) extended the deadlines for the commission to perform the following tasks:

- Convene the first meeting of the commission by June 30, 2024.
- Select by January 1, 2025, a group of no more than 10 new flag designs to be voted on by the public.
- Issue a report on the findings and activities of the commission to the General Assembly by April 1, 2025.

Additionally, the Secretary of State's office was tasked with providing staff and technical support to assist the commission at no additional cost. Other statutory information may be found in Appendix A.

Requirements of the Commission

The following statutorily defined mandates were required prior to the commission accepting any flag designs:

- Establish and adopt goals and guiding principles for flag designs.
- Establish a process for the submission of proposed designs.
- Establish guidelines for the assessment of those proposed designs.
- Engage in a public awareness campaign with the design community, advocacy groups, Illinois schools, universities, and public libraries.
- Incorporate the input of children and young people in the Illinois.
- Create a publicly accessible website that would provide:
 - Historical information about the current state flag.
 - A timeline and explanation of the process to be used to redesign the state flag.
 - An online suggestion box for residents to offer flag design ideas.
 - A survey function for residents to vote on potential flag designs.

Implementing a Plan of Action

The North American Vexillological Association (NAVA) is the world's largest association of flag scholars and enthusiasts. Their members have assisted in efforts to adopt new flags in Utah, Minnesota, Massachusetts and other governmental entities. NAVA volunteered resources and assistance to the Flag Commission.

At the Flag Commission's July 3, 2024, meeting, Steven Wheatley, a NAVA member and Illinois resident, provided guidance and best practices to the commission on behalf of NAVA including:

- Distributing to commission members the publication, "Good Flag, Bad Flag," by author Ted Kaye, which is a compilation of findings based upon consultations with other specialists in the field.
- Offering best practices in the design elements that are hallmarks of good flag design.
- Emphasizing that public engagement, awareness of the effort, and the process of soliciting and evaluating designs is paramount.

There was consensus among the members on the following goals and guiding principles:

- Make the public aware that the current flag and two other historical versions of the Illinois flag would be considered along with any new design solicitations.
- Utilize the Illinois State Board of Education to engage students throughout the state.
- Utilize the Illinois State Library to engage citizens through the public library system.
- Utilize the Secretary of State's office to create a website that would serve as a portal for accepting flag designs and ultimately allowing the public to vote on a group of no more than 10 new designs: ilsos.gov/stateflag.
- Allow a 6-week period for citizens to submit their flag designs either electronically or by mail.
- Provide a process for each commissioner to review flag designs and select their 10 recommendations for further consideration.
- Provide time for commissioners to publicly narrow down the recommendations to a group of 10 by the end of 2024.
- In January 2025, unveil 10 proposed flag designs for the public to vote on.

Timeline and Promotion

At its August 7, 2024 meeting, the commissioners voted on flag design rules and flag submission rules. These documents can be found in Appendix B and Appendix C.

The Secretary of State's Department of Information Technology developed a submission portal and began accepting flag designs on Tuesday, September 3, 2024. The period for flag submissions was open through Friday, October 18, 2024, which the Secretary of State's office promoted through unpaid media and on its social media platforms.

Individuals submitting flag designs were asked to briefly describe their relationship to Illinois and explain the symbolism of their design. Submissions were limited to three per individual, unless that person was a teacher or parent/guardian submitting on behalf of a minor or a student.

On September 5, 2024, Senator Doris Turner and fellow commissioners announced the opening of the submission portal and provided details on how to submit designs. A press release and digital graphic was developed by the Secretary of State's office and widely distributed by media outlets, schools, libraries and shared on social networks to help promote the message about the flag design contest. Commission members were also tasked with helping publicize the flag submission process.



State Senator Doris Turner takes questions at a press conference in Springfield, announcing the start of the public voting period. She was joined by Illinois Flag Commission members (pictured left to right) Matthew Prochaska, Gabrielle Lyon, Rev. Sherrell Byrd, Dr. Tandra Taylor, and Dave Joens– 9/5/24

Submission Period and Public Reception

A total of 4,844 submissions were received, including hand drawings and digital artwork. Approximately 115 schools in Illinois submitted flag designs. Teachers, art instructors, and librarians used this opportunity to enhance social science lessons, teach the importance of civic engagement and inspire artistic creativity. The design contest also became a useful tool for students to become more familiar with the state symbols of Illinois and the history of the state flag.

The collage features several news articles and a central promotional graphic. The articles include:

- 5 CHICAGO:** "Voting opens to choose Illinois state flag redesign, including option to keep current one" (January 28, 2025).
- THE SOUTHERN ILLINOISIAN:** "Illinoisans can now vote on final 10 flag designs" (January 11, 2025).
- The State Journal-Register:** "Nearly 5,000 designs submitted for new Illinois state flag. What happens next?"
- EFFINGHAM DAILY NEWS:** "Voting in state flag redesign begins in January" (December 20, 2024).

The central graphic, titled "Want to Make History?", features the current Illinois state flag and includes the following text:

Want to Make History?

The Illinois Flag Commission is seeking input in re-designing the state's 55-year-old flag!

Submit your design *today!*
Accepting submissions Sept. 3 through Oct. 18

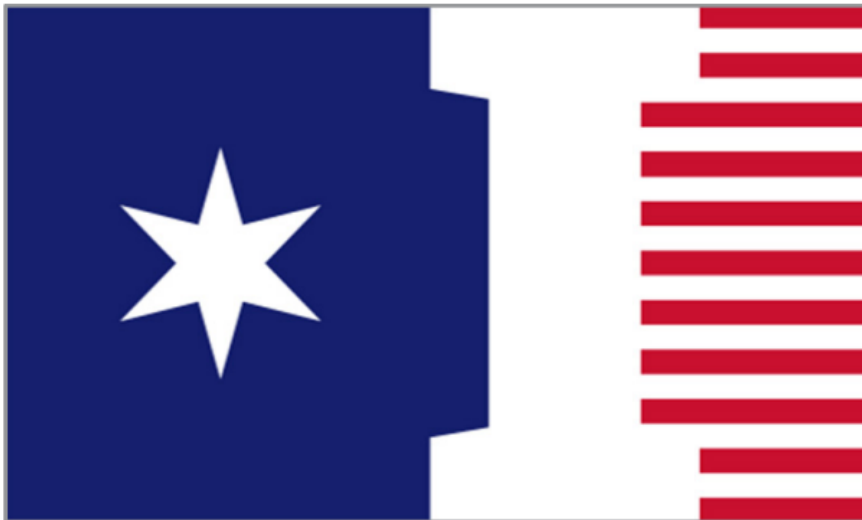
At the bottom of the graphic, it reads: SECRETARY of STATE ALEXI GIANNOULIAS

Top Ten Flag Designs Selected by the Commission

Each Commission member chose their ten favorite flag designs and submitted their choices to the full Commission for discussion. After winnowing down the more than 4,800 flag designs to 82, the Commission met on December 9, 2024, to review those designs and select ten to forward to the public for consideration. Commissioners engaged in three rounds of review before taking a final vote on the Top Ten. The commission did have the authority to slightly modify designs to provide for sharper detail, variations to certain colors, or added symmetry.

The commission ultimately voted to submit the following designs to the general public for a vote:

#4669



Relationship to Illinois: In the fall of 2004, I lived in Chicago and was studying industrial design at UIC. My great grandfather, Harry James McCartney was an engraver in Chicago. He worked downtown at the Sears, Roebuck and Co where he illustrated and engraved images of lamps, heaters, and other household accessories that were printed on the pages of the Sears mail-order catalogue. His father was James A. McCartney, a civil war veteran from Illinois. He became the IL Attorney General from 1881- 1885.

Explain the meaning behind your flag: The 21 red and white stripes represent Illinois as the 21st state of this union. The blue field with the six-pointed white star represents Chicago. The negative space between the blue and white fields form the shape of an “I” to represent Illinois.

Design revisions: None.

#4321



Relationship to Illinois: The students who worked on this flag are high school students living in Illinois named Johnna and Spresalynn.

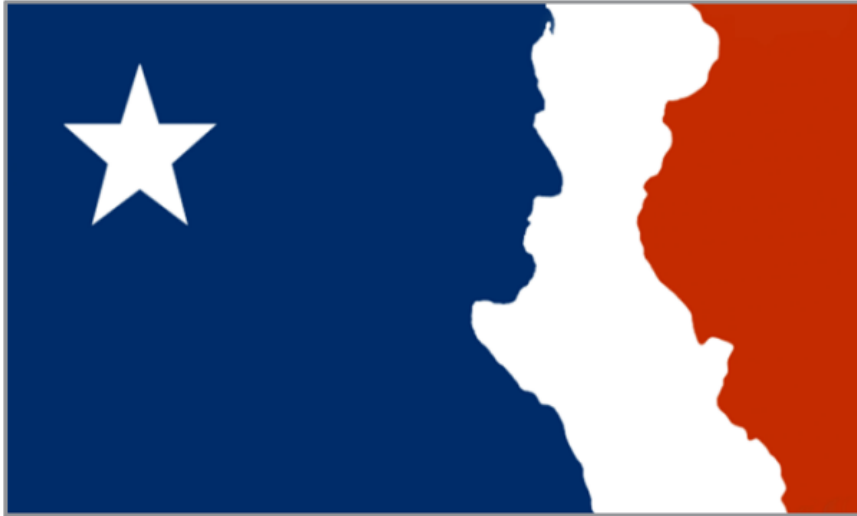
Explain the meaning behind your flag: The state butterfly, the Monarch, is the focal point of this flag that includes 21 stars for Illinois being the 21st state (the large star represents Illinois). The orange represents success, determination, and creativity while the blue stands for trust, loyalty, and sincerity and strength.

Design revisions: The commissioners suggested a simpler image of a butterfly that would be easier to replicate and requested for the star arrangement to be more symmetrical.



Original submission

#4220



Relationship to Illinois: Born and raised. From 1984-2002, I spent my childhood in central Illinois, I've lived and worked in Bloomington/Normal for 26 of my 40 years of life. My dad, sister, niece, and the majority of my aunts and uncles are still here. All of my grandparents are buried here. I found out about this commission only days ago after spending two years abroad. I found this old design from 2016 just today. It needs works. It lacks our current eagle, perhaps to be placed in white silhouette above the star.

Explain the meaning behind your flag: This slice of Old Glory is also a nod to the French flag, banners which both stood here. A single star shines our contribution to the union. Abe's silhouette reminds us of our past. The red field highlights our present: Illinois' most iconic border, formed by the mighty Mississippi. It's steady flow, as progress itself, cuts through our banner in white leading us ever to the future. The flag still lacks any representation of our Illiniwek and Miami heritage, which should be added by their progeny.

Design revisions: None.

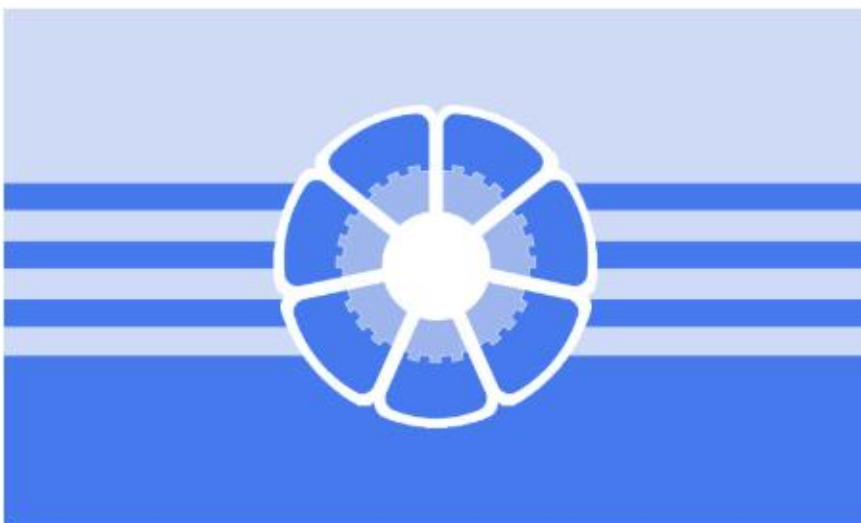
#4129



Relationship to Illinois: As someone born, raised, and educated in the state of Illinois, I am proud to call Illinois home and plan to do so for life. I believe strongly that my character and view of the world as a citizen and as an architect has been shaped by the cultural, geographic, economic, historic, and architectural diversity of our state.

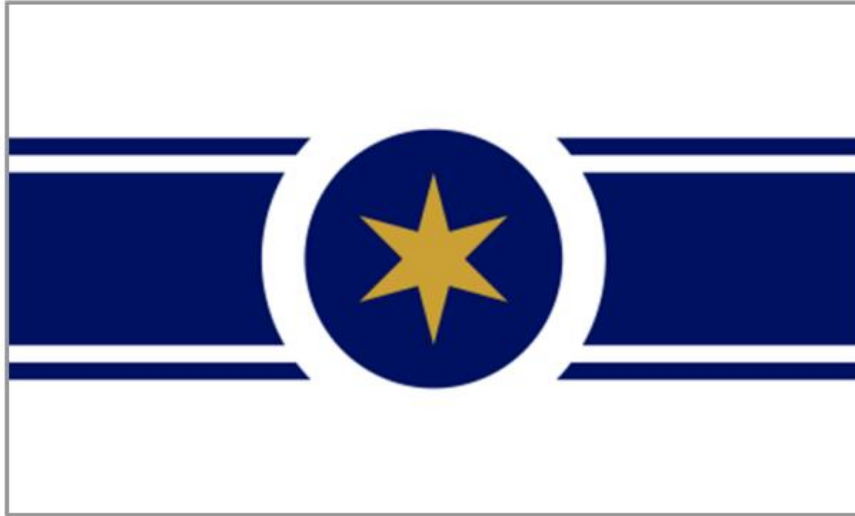
Explain the meaning behind your flag: The four dark blue bars in this submission represent the four geographic features that hold the greatest geographic, economic, and historic significance in the creation of Illinois: Lake Michigan, the Mississippi River, the Ohio River, and the Chicago River/ Illinois River system. The corn kernels and 21-pronged gear that form our state flower, the violet, represent the agricultural and industrial foundations of our state and its status as the 21st state admitted to the Union.

Design revisions: The commissioners suggested changing the light blue to “union blue.”



Original submission

#3754



Relationship to Illinois: I've lived here for nearly 10 years and have grown to love this state. It's an excellent place to settle down, with welcoming people who have always made me feel at home. From stunning city views to beautiful countryside, my appreciation for this state has deepened.

Explain the meaning behind your flag: A large gold star in the center draws attention, much like the standout features of our state. Gold color symbolizes out the richness in our state, people, land and views. A horizontal blue line symbolizes lake Michigan, separating the sky from the rich land. Two smaller lines add a neat, elegant touch. The central circle abstractly represents the view from above Abraham Lincoln's hat.

Design revisions: None.

#3679



Relationship to Illinois: Ever since I was a kid, I've been proud to call Springfield my home. I come from generations of Illinoisans and have chosen to raise my family here as well. I've spent much of my life exploring the state and experiencing its wonders firsthand what I've found is there is much to what makes Illinois great: our rich history, our landscape, our variety of people and the places they live. My designs reflect these qualities in a way that can hopefully inspire others to share my pride for my home.

Explain the meaning behind your flag: The outline of Abraham Lincoln symbolizes liberty, opportunity and the equality of all people. The outline of Illinois symbolizes the pride we share for our state. The circle of 21 stars represents our communal togetherness and honors our state being the 21st to join the USA. The white star symbolizes Chicago and its upper-right location. Dark blue represents our blue-collar attitude and industrial power. Gold represents our prairie and agricultural history. White represents our 3679 bright spirit.

Design revisions: None.

#2752



Relationship to Illinois: I have lived in Illinois for my entire life (40 years). I grew up in Naperville and then moved to Chicago where I lived for about 18 years before moving to Des Plaines.

Explain the meaning behind your flag: My flag uses a silhouette design of the state of Illinois as the focal point. I always felt Illinois had a distinct outline. 21 stars circle the state to symbolize it being the 21st state to enter the Union. Additionally, I used the circular design to symbolize Illinois being a kind of center of the country, whether it is geographically or from Chicago serving as a hub for train and air traffic. Finally, the blue edges represent the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan which flank the state.

Design revisions: Formatting to conform with 3 x 5 ratio.



Original submission

#2246



Relationship to Illinois: My connection to Illinois runs deep. My ancestors came from Ireland in the early 1900s and settled in Gridley, IL, where they farmed corn, soybeans, and raised livestock. My father grew up on that same farm, while my mother was raised in Champaign. They met at Illinois State University, where I also earned my Bachelor of Arts in graphic design. I've lived in Illinois my entire life, and its agricultural landscapes and smalltown values make me proud to call Illinois home.

Explain the meaning behind your flag: The 21 stripes represent Illinois as the 21st state and reflect its agricultural roots, resembling rows of crops and the open prairie. Three six-pointed stars represent the state's three regions* northern, central, and southern* and their 18 points reference Illinois' founding in 1818. A sun on the horizon, also featured on our current state flag, represents renewal. The colors* Blue for unity, Green for agriculture, and Yellow for a bright future* honor Illinois' history and natural beauty.

Design revisions: None.

#896



Relationship to Illinois: My late wife Maureen Thomas (1952-2023) was born and raised in Oak Park, Illinois.

Explain the meaning behind your flag: The idea of mine is simply an embellishment to the existing flag (helps to save money on an entire new design). Placing red and blue vertical bars on each end (with a narrow white stripe in between the colors) eliminates the ‘seal-on-bedsheet’ look. Not overly imaginative, but practical and economic.

Design revisions: The commissioners suggested removing the text, “Illinois.”



Original submission

#200



Relationship to Illinois: I am 18 years old and a lifelong resident, born in Moline and currently living in Rock Island. My parents were also born and raised in this state.

Explain the meaning behind your flag: The flag is divided into 7 stripes, in a pattern of white and blue alternating. The biggest blue stripe represents Lake Michigan while the smaller blue stripes represent the state's various rivers such as the Mississippi and the Illinois. The center blue stripe contains 20 smaller stars surrounding a center star, which represent Illinois as the 21st state. The small white stripes represent the state's industry and commerce while the bigger white stripes represent the state's agriculture.

Design revisions: None.

Illinois State Flag and Historical Versions

In addition to considering new flag designs, commissioners unanimously supported the idea of the current flag and two historical Illinois flags being brought forward for consideration in the voting process. Those three additional flags are listed below.

Current Flag



The first official flag of Illinois was adopted in 1915, almost 100 years after Illinois became a state in 1818. Lucy Derwent of the Rockford Daughters of the American Revolution chapter placed the Great Seal on a plain white background. More than 50 years would pass before any suggestions to change the flag were proposed.

In 1968, Representative Jack Walker sponsored a bill to amend the Flag Act of 1915, by adding, "ILLINOIS" beneath the Great Seal. This bill was approved and signed into law on September 16, 1969. However, this law, like the Flag Act of 1915, did not address specific flag design specifications. Governor Richard Ogilvie appointed a flag committee to ensure that the flag's elements, proportions, and colors would be used consistently.

Those recommendations, along with a colored painting of the flag, were submitted to Governor Ogilvie by the committee. On July 1, 1970, a new flag design created by Florence Hutchison of Greenfield, "a white field carrying the word 'ILLINOIS' and the emblem portion of the state seal," was approved and began flying atop the State Capitol in Springfield.

Centennial Flag



The Centennial Flag was created to commemorate 100 years of Illinois' statehood. The flag consists of 10 stars on each side of a white and blue banner with a larger 21st star to represent the state being the 21st to be admitted to the Union.

Sesquicentennial Flag



The Sesquicentennial Flag was created to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the state. This flag is dark blue with an outline of Illinois in the middle of a white "I". The center is surrounded by 20 five-pointed stars with a larger 21st star to represent that Illinois was the 21st state admitted to the Union.

Voting Process and Vote Totals

Public voting was open for a 5-week period from January 10 to February 14, 2025. During this time, the public was allowed to vote online for one flag every 24-hours. Votes could not be altered once they were cast.



The ability to vote on potential new flag designs was once again publicized to teachers and librarians through the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois State Library. Students, vexillologists, historians and citizens alike became actively engaged in the process. Commission members also participated in publicizing the voting period.

A total of 383,861 votes were cast with the following votes recorded below, from highest to lowest:



1. Current State Flag
165,602 votes



2. #2246
32,898 votes



3. #3679
29,478 votes



4. #896
26,559 votes



5. #4129
25,653 votes



6. #4220
21,981 votes



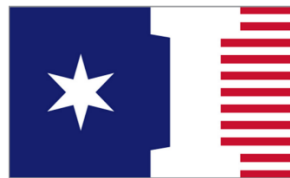
7. #4321
18,574 votes



8. #2752
15,739 votes



9. Centennial
15,159 votes



10. #4669
10,113 votes



11. #200
9,840 votes



12. #3754
7,169 votes



13. Sesquicentennial
5,096 votes

Final Recommendation

This final report is issued to the General Assembly indicating the process of this flag commission, the vote totals as provided by members of the general public through the voting period, and with the appendices attached.

Schools, Community Groups & Youth-Based Organizations

Thank you for your participation in the flag design contest.

Abraham Lincoln Elementary School
All Saints Catholic Academy
Altamont Grade School
Annie Keller Regional Gifted Center
Avery Coonley School
Ball Chatham School District
Barrington High School
Belvidere Community Unit School District
Blessed Sacrament Catholic School in Quincy
Bloomington Junior High School
Bourbonnais Upper Grade Center
Bradley University
Broadmeadow Elementary School in Rantoul
Carbondale Community High School
Cerro Gordo School District
Chadwick-Milledgeville Elementary School
Chicago Public Schools
Chrisman High School
College of DuPage
Columbia College Chicago
Concordia University Chicago
Cuba High School
Delavan School District
DePaul University
East St. Louis Senior High School
Eastland Elementary School
Elgin High School
Elwood School
Evanston Township High School
Ewing Grade School
Fairfield Community High School
Fairview South Elementary School
Gallstel Language Academy
Geneseo School District
Genoa-Kingston Middle School
Girl Scout Daisy Troop 3725
Glenbrook North
Glenview Public Schools
Governors State University
Grant Community High School
Hamilton High School
Harper College
Highcrest Middle School
Holy Childhood School in Mascoutah
Illini West High School
Illinois Math and Science Academy
Illinois State University
Illinois Valley Central High School
Intrinsic High School
Je-Neir Elementary School
Johnsburg High School
Johnston City High School
Keeneyville Elementary School District
Kingston Elementary School
Lake Forest College
Lake Land College
Lane Tech College Prep High School
Leman Middle School
Lewis University in Romeoville
Lisle High School
Lowpoint-Washburn Schools
Lundahl Middle School
Mahomet Seymour Junior High School
Maple School
Maroa-Forsyth School District
Meadowbrook Intermediate School
Meridian Middle School
Metea Valley High School
Montessori Academy for Peace in Decatur
Morton West High School
Mt. Zion Junior High School
Neuqua Valley High School
Neuqua Valley High School
Next Generation School
Northern Illinois University
Northwestern University
Oak Park and River Forest High School
Oswego School District
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Academy
Palos East Elementary
Patrick Henry Elementary School
Paw Paw Junior High School

Pearl City High School
Peoria Christian School
Prairie School of DuPage
Putnam County High School
Reavis High School
Red Bud High School
Ridgewood High School
Riley School District
Rochester High School
Rogers Park Montessori School
Roosevelt University
Saints Dennis and Joseph Catholic Academy
Selmaville Grade School
Seneca Grade School
Senn High School
Springfield School District 186
Springwood Middle School

St. Thomas Catholic School in Philo
Stevenson High School
Stevenson Middle School
Sward Elementary School
Thurgood Marshall Middle School
University of Chicago
University of Illinois Chicago
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Waubaussee Community College
Warrensburg-Latham Elementary School
Waubonsie Valley High School
West School in Glencoe
Western Springs School District
White Heath Elementary School
Wilmette Public Schools
Wilson Middle School
Woodland Middle School

SB1818 Enrolled

AN ACT concerning the Illinois State flag.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Illinois Flag Commission Act.

Section 5. Illinois Flag Commission.

(a) The Illinois Flag Commission is hereby established.

(b) The purposes of the Commission are to develop new State flag designs and to make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning whether the current State flag ought to be replaced with a redesigned State flag.

(c) The Commission shall consist of the following members:

(1) the Secretary of State or the Secretary of State's designee, who shall serve as Chair of the Commission;

(2) 3 members appointed by the Governor;

(3) 4 members appointed by the President of the Senate, not more than one of whom may be a current member of the General Assembly;

(4) 4 members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, not more than one of whom may be a current member of the General Assembly;

(5) 4 members appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, not more than one of whom may be a current member of the General Assembly;

(6) 4 members appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, not more than one of whom may be a current member of the General Assembly;

(7) the State Superintendent of Education or the Superintendent's designee; and

(8) the Chairperson of the Board of the Illinois State Museum or the Chairperson's designee.

(d) In furtherance of its purposes under this Act, the Commission shall:

(1) establish and adopt goals and guiding principles for the redesign of the State flag;

(2) establish a process for the submission of proposed designs for a new or revised State flag and guidelines for the assessment of those proposed designs;

(3) create a publicly accessible website that provides:

(A) historical information about the State flag;

(B) a timeline and explanation of the process to be used to redesign the State flag;

(C) an online suggestion box through which residents can offer design ideas for the State flag; and

(D) a survey function through which residents can vote on potential State flag designs;

(4) engage in a public awareness campaign with the design community and advocacy groups, as well as Illinois schools, universities, and public libraries, concerning the Commission's efforts to redesign the State flag;

(5) select, on or before September 1, 2024, a group of no more than 10 proposed flag designs that:

(A) represent the State; and

(B) adhere to the guiding principles established by the Commission under subparagraph (1);

(6) develop a review and selection process for proposed flag designs that incorporates the input of children and young people in the State;

(7) on or before December 3, 2024, submit to the General Assembly a written report that describes:

(A) the proposed flag designs submitted to the Commission;

(B) the process used by the Commission to review the proposed flag designs submitted to it;

(C) the group of no more than 10 proposed flag designs selected by the Commission;

(D) the Commission's recommendation for a revised or new State flag; and

(E) the Commission's recommendations to the General Assembly concerning whether the current State flag ought to be retained or replaced with a revised or new State flag.

(e) The appointing authorities shall make appointments to the Commission as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, and the Chair of the Commission shall convene the first meeting of the Commission by no later than September 1, 2023. Subsequent meetings of the Commission shall convene at the call of the Chair of the Commission. A majority of all the appointed members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and all recommendations of the Commission shall require approval of a majority of the members of the Commission. Meetings of the Commission are subject to the Open Meetings Act.

(f) Members of the Commission shall serve without compensation but may be provided, from moneys appropriated to the Secretary of State for implementation of this Section, a per diem established by the Secretary of State to cover reasonable meal, travel, and lodging expenses incurred by Commission members as a result of their duties under this Section.

(g) The Office of the Secretary of State shall provide administrative support to the Commission.

Section 10. Repealer. This Act is repealed on January 1, 2026.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.

Illinois Compiled Statutes

GENERAL PROVISIONS **(5 ILCS 460/) State Designations Act.**

(5 ILCS 460/1) (from Ch. 1, par. 2901-1)

Sec. 1. This Act may be cited as the State Designations Act.
(Source: P.A. 87-273.)

(5 ILCS 460/5) (from Ch. 1, par. 2901-5)

Sec. 5. State seal.

(a) The reproduction of the emblem only on the "great seal of the State of Illinois" is authorized and permitted when reproduced in black or in the national colors upon a white sheet or background and bearing underneath the emblem in blue letters the word "Illinois" and being an actual reproduction of the great seal, except for the outer ring, for use as a State banner or insignia under the conditions and subject to the restrictions provided by the laws of the United States and the State of Illinois as to the United States or State flag or ensign.

(b) It is lawful for the Secretary of State as custodian of the "great seal of the State of Illinois" to permit at his or her discretion the inspection and examination of the seal for the purpose of copying or reproducing the emblem only on the great seal for the uses and purposes authorized by this Section.
(Source: P.A. 87-273.)

PUBLIC ACT 76-1347.

FLAGS.

STATE BANNER TO INCLUDE WORD "ILLINOIS".

11. Amends Section 1 of Act of 1915. § 2. Effective Date.
§ 1. State Banner.

(House Bill No. 340. Approved September 16, 1969.)

AN ACT to amend Section 1 of "An Act to authorize the reproduction of the emblem on the 'great seal of the State of Illinois' for use as a State banner", approved July 6, 1915.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly:

Section 1. Section 1 of "An Act to authorize the reproduction of the emblem on the 'great seal of the State of Illinois' for use as a State banner", approved July 6, 1915, is amended to read as follows:

§ 1. ~~That~~ The reproduction of the emblem only on the "great seal of the State of Illinois" *is* ~~be~~ authorized and permitted when reproduced in black or in the national colors upon a white sheet or background *and bearing underneath the emblem in blue letters the word "Illinois" and being an actual reproduction of the great seal except for the outer ring thereof* for use as a State banner or insignia under the conditions and subject to the restrictions provided by the laws of the United States and the State of Illinois as to the United States or State flag or ensign.

§ 2. This Amendatory Act shall take effect July 1, 1970.

Passed in the General Assembly June 24, 1969.

Approved September 16, 1969.

(Ill. Rev. Stat. Chap. 56¹/₄, Par. 11.)

Changes or additions indicated by *italics* deletions by ~~strikeout~~.

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

ILLINOIS FLAG COMMISSION FLAG DESIGN RULES

USER

The user for this project is the State and the people of Illinois. The goal is to consider proposals for a redesigned state flag that reflects the history, culture and community of the State of Illinois.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Pursuant to SB1818, the Illinois Flag Commission is tasked with developing new State flag designs and to make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning whether the current State flag ought to be replaced with a redesigned State flag. The new State flag designs submitted by Eligible Participants should be representative of the entire State of Illinois.

DELIVERABLES

Provide a written statement and a visual representation of the proposed flag design, including colors, shapes and symbols.

TIMELINE

The project will span six weeks, beginning on Tuesday, September 3, 2024, and ending on Friday, October 18, 2024. On or before January 1, 2025, the Commission will select a group of no more than 10 proposed flag designs that represent the state of Illinois and adhere to the guiding principles established by the Illinois Flag Commission as set forth herein and in the Illinois Flag Commission Submission Rules.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The selected designs will be evaluated based on the ability to meet the Commission's Submission Rules and the ability to reflect the identity of Illinois. Upon selection of the 10 proposed flag designs, the Illinois Flag Commission will facilitate an online survey of the chosen 10 flag designs by the public.

FLAG DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES:

Designers are encouraged to thoroughly research the history, cultures, and communities of the State of Illinois and use the state's unique character to create a flag that truly represents the entire state. Collaboration with local communities and organizations is allowed and encouraged to ensure the design is culturally sensitive and inclusive.

While the recommendations and best practices are not required for flag submissions to be considered by the Illinois Flag Commission, the [North American Vexillological Association](#) recommends the following best practices for flag design:

- **Simplicity and Recognizability:** The Flag should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory and can be easily recognizable from a distance.
- **Distinctive Color:** Limit the number of colors on the flag to three to four, contrasting nicely and coming from the standard color set.
- **Enduring Appeal:** The flag design should represent the values and unity of the State of Illinois.
- **Symbolism:** The flag's images, icons, colors, and/or patterns should relate to what it symbolizes.
- **Symmetry:** The design should be symmetrical to a degree.
- **Flag Dimensions:** The typical standard flag proportions (3 feet in width; 5 feet in length) will be considered, a different shape that accentuates a distinctive design may also be considered.
- **Simple Iconography:** The design should be simple enough to be easily reproduced and recognizable even when scaled down.
- **Typical display:** Consider the flag's visibility when it is displayed on a pole, without the full design visible, and the impact of weather elements when displayed.

ILLINOIS FLAG COMMISSION FLAG SUBMISSION RULES

ELIGIBILITY

Submissions of flag designs are open to everyone, unless specifically prohibited below. Submissions by those under 18 years of age will be accepted when submitted by a parent/legal guardian, teacher, or representative of the minor's school. Void where prohibited by law. Individuals who meet the requirements are referred to herein as "Eligible Participants."

The following persons are not eligible for Submission:

- Persons who are members of the Illinois Flag Commission or provide administrative support to the Illinois Flag Commission;
- Immediate family and persons living in the same household as members of the Illinois Flag Commission; and
- Employees of the Illinois Secretary of State.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND DEADLINES

Eligible Participants must submit entries online at the Illinois Flag Commission website (ilsos.gov/stateflag) or via U.S. Mail. Entries must be submitted or postmarked by Friday, October 18 at 11:59 p.m. Central Time. Electronic submissions are strongly encouraged. Eligible Participants may submit **up to 3 entries** for the flag design.

Mailed submissions can be addressed to:

Illinois Secretary of State
c/o Department of Legislative Affairs
501 S. Second Street, Room 476
Springfield, Illinois 62756

Mailed submission materials will not be returned.

SUBMISSIONS MUST INCLUDE

- Eligible Participant's name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number.
- Digital files may be no larger than 5 MB or, for mail submissions, a design for a new state flag shall be on a sheet of paper no larger than 8 ½ x 11 inches.
- A brief statement on the rationale design, explaining the design choices, highlighting how they meet the project objectives and represent the State of Illinois.

- A very brief statement, no more than 100 words, on Eligible Participant’s connection to the State of Illinois.

Flag design submissions **must** meet design criteria from the Illinois Flag Commission’s approved Design Brief.

Flag design submissions **must not**:

- Contain any obscene or profane wording or imagery. Such entries will be disqualified and discarded.
- Contain symbols, emblems or likenesses that represent only a single community regardless of whether real or stylized.
- Be generated by artificial intelligence (AI).

SELECTION AND NOTIFICATION OF FINALISTS

The administrative staff of the Illinois Flag Commission will review every submission and submit every eligible entry to the Illinois Flag Commission.

The Illinois Flag Commission will evaluate every eligible entry on the following criteria:

- Ability to reflect, in the proposed design, Illinois’s shared history, resources, and diverse cultural communities.
- Ability to meet the requirements and recommendations of the design brief.

Finalists will be notified by email or regular mail.

GRANT OF RIGHTS

Upon submission of the Eligible Participant’s entry form, in consideration for the opportunity to participate in the Illinois Flag Commission competition, each Eligible Participant understands and agrees that upon submission to the Commission that all entries and submissions shall become the sole property of the State of Illinois and will not be returned to the participant.

By entering the submission, each Eligible Participant affirms that the design is an original work, designed by the Eligible Participant, has not been copied from others or from previous designs, including their own; and does not violate the intellectual property rights of any other person or entity. Each Eligible Participant understands that any plagiarized works discovered will be disqualified.

All Eligible Participants agree that their names may become publicly known as a result of the work of the Commission or because of the Illinois Freedom of Information Act [5 ILCS 140].

GENERAL

By participating in this submission, each Eligible Participant agrees to be bound by these Official Rules and to the decisions of the Illinois Flag Commission which are final and binding on all matters relating to the submission. The State of Illinois, the Illinois Flag Commission, the members and support staff of the Illinois Flag Commission and any related State agency or office, and related organizations, their agents and employees have no liability whatsoever for any injuries, losses, or damages of any kind which result from the Illinois Flag Commission's selection process or by participation in the submission or flag design process.

NO FEE IS REQUIRED; NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER. ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS WILL NOT BE COMPENSATED OR REWARDED FOR THEIR ENTRIES.

**ILLINOIS FLAG COMMISSION
BYLAWS**

August 7, 2024

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1818 [Public Act] was created in 2023 by the Illinois General Assembly. This legislation requires the Illinois Flag Commission to develop new State flag designs and to make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning whether the current State flag ought to be replaced with a redesigned State flag;

WHEREAS, the current Illinois state flag was created in 1911 by Lucy Derwent of the Rockford Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) chapter and formally adopted by the State in 1915;

WHEREAS, in addition to the 1915 flag and its amended version in 1968, there also exists a 1918 Illinois Centennial Flag, a 1968 Illinois Centennial Flag, and a 2018 Illinois Bicentennial flag;

WHEREAS, the Illinois Flag Commission does desire to adopt these Bylaws to ensure the orderly and efficient work of the Commission on behalf of the Illinois General Assembly and the people of the State of Illinois.

Article I. Definitions

A. Business: Proposing motions or resolutions and voting on motions or resolutions brought forth during a meeting of the Commission or a subcommittee of the Commission.

B. Bylaws: The bylaws of the Illinois Flag Commission, the Commission's second highest-ranking governing document.

C. Commission: The Illinois Flag Commission.

D. Electronic Means: Communication by email or electronic messaging.

E. Enabling Legislation: Senate Bill 1818 as amended and HB4261, which together constitute the Commission's highest-ranking governing documents.

F. Majority Vote: 50% + 1 of the sitting members of the Commission or a subcommittee vote in the affirmative of a motion, resolution, or the election of a representative.

G. Previous Notice: Written notice provided to all voting members of the Commission at least 30 days prior to a pending action requiring their participation (i.e. voting or meeting).

H. Properly Noticed: Written notice provided to all voting members of the Commission at least 14 days prior to a pending action requiring their participation (i.e. voting or meeting).

I. Roll Call: Members vote as their names are called by the Commission's secretary. The members votes are public.

J. Quorum: A quorum at any meeting of the Commission shall be necessary to transact business and shall be defined as a majority of the total membership. The total membership then is 22 members, a quorum consists of 12 members.

K. Sitting Members: The voting members present at a meeting of the Commission or a subcommittee.

L. Virtual Meeting: A meeting held through real-time interactions that takes place over the Internet using integrated audio and video, chat tools, and application sharing, such as Microsoft Teams or Webex.

M. Written Notice: Notification of and distribution of associated documents for a meeting of the Commission is provided to members of the Commission or a subcommittee by email, electronic calendar invite, hand delivery, or U.S. Mail, and provided to the public when required by the Open Meetings Act.

Article II. Purpose, Objectives and Governing Instruments

A. Purposes and Powers. The purposes of the Commission are:

(1) To develop new State flag designs and to make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning whether the current State flag ought to be replaced with a redesigned State flag.

(2) To establish a process for the submission of proposed designs for a new or revised State flag and guidelines for the assessment of those proposed designs;

(3) To create a publicly accessible website that provides:

- a. Historical information about the State flag;
- b. A timeline and explanation of the process to be used to redesign the State flag;
- c. An online suggestion box through which residents can offer design ideas for the State flag; and
- d. A survey function through which residents can vote on potential State flag designs.

(4) To engage in a public awareness campaign with the design community and advocacy groups, as well as Illinois schools, universities, and public libraries, concerning the Commission's efforts to redesign the State flag;

(5) To select on or before January 1, 2025 a group of no more than 10 proposed flag designs that:

- a. Represent the State; and

b. Adhere to the guiding principles established by the Commission.

(6) To develop a review and selection process for proposed flag designs that incorporates the input of children and young people in the State;

(7) To submit to the General Assembly, on or before April 1, 2025 a written report that describes:

a. The proposed flag designs submitted to the Commission;

b. The process used by the Commission to review the proposed flag designs submitted to it;

c. The group of no more than 10 proposed flag designs selected by the Commission;

d. The Commission's recommendation for a revised or new State flag; and

(8) The Commission's recommendations to the General Assembly concerning whether the current State flag ought to be retained or replaced with a revised or new State flag.

B. Governing Instruments

(1) The Commission shall be governed by the enabling legislation and these bylaws.

(2) The Commission may adopt policies or procedures that are subservient to the enabling legislation and these bylaws.

C. Nondiscrimination Policy

(1) The Commission will not practice or permit any unlawful discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, race, color, national origin, ability level, or any other basis prohibited by law.

(2) All communications by the Commission shall comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that all meetings and work product can be accessed using assistive devices.

Article III. Membership

A. The membership of the Commission is set forth in SB1818 and includes the following:

(1) The Secretary of State or the Secretary of State's designee, who shall serve as Chair of the Commission;

(2) 3 members appointed by the Governor;

(3) 4 members appointed by the President of the Senate, not more than one of whom may be a current member of the General Assembly;

(4) 4 members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, not more than one of whom may be a current member of the General Assembly;

(5) 4 members appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, not more than one of whom may be a current member of the General Assembly;

(6) 4 members appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, not more than one of who may be a current member of the General Assembly;

(7) The State Superintendent of Education or the Superintendent's designee; and

(8) The Chairperson of the Board of the Illinois State Museum or the Chairperson's designee.

B. Compensation: Members of the Commission shall serve without compensation but may be provided, from moneys appropriated to the Secretary of State for the Commission, a per diem established by the Secretary of State to cover reasonable meal, travel, and lodging expenses incurred by Commission members as a result of their duties under this Section.

C. The Commission shall be led by its Chairperson, as designated by the Secretary of State, pursuant to the enabling legislation. The Chairperson shall have the following responsibilities:

(1) Schedule meeting dates and call meetings of the Commission;

(2) Serve as the head of the Commission;

(3) Chair all meetings of the Commission;

(4) In consultation with the administrative support staff, set the agenda for meetings of the Commission;

(5) In consultation with the Commission, establish subcommittees if practicable.

D. Members

(1) Members shall adhere to the requirements of the enabling legislation and these bylaws to ensure the Commission performs the statutorily required work of the Commission.

(2) Members must complete the OMA electronic training and file a copy of the Certificate of Completion with the Chairperson.

(3) Pursuant to the enabling legislation, the Office of the Secretary of State shall provide administrative support staff to assist the Commission. Those duties include:

- a. Participating in all meetings of the Commission;
- b. Serving as the trustee of the Commission's records and work products;
- c. In consultation with the Chairperson, scheduling meetings of the Commission;
- d. In consultation with the Commission, drafting and preparing the final report of the Commission;
- e. Providing technical support to the Commission and maintaining the Commission's website;
- f. In consultation with the Chairperson, preparing the agenda for the Commission meetings and ensuring the posting of the agenda in accordance with the Open Meetings Act;
- g. Keeping minutes of all meetings of the Commission; and
- h. Providing guidance with respect to the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") and the Open Meetings Act and serving as the FOIA Officer for the Commission.

Article IV. Report to the General Assembly

Pursuant to HB4261, this Commission shall file a written report with the General Assembly on or before April 1, 2025 that describes: (A) the proposed flag designs submitted to the Commission; (B) the process used by the Commission to review the proposed flag designs submitted to it; (C) the group of no more than 10 proposed flag designs selected by the Commission; (D) the Commission's recommendations for a revised or new State flag; and (E) the Commission's recommendations to the General Assembly concerning whether the current State flag ought to be retained or replaced with a revised or new State flag.

The final report from the Commission shall reflect the views and opinions of all members of the Commission, whether by agreement, concurrence, or dissent from the majority opinion.

Article V. Attendance, Voting, Removal and Resignation

A. Meeting Attendance. It is the preference of the Commission that members attend meetings in person.

B. Voting

(1) Unless otherwise stated herein, all voting will be done by roll call.

(2) Unless otherwise stated herein, ratification of business that arises before the Commission shall be determined by a majority vote of the Commission's sitting members.

C. Removal

(1) Members may be removed from the Commission by a supermajority vote of the Commission's members at a properly noticed meeting for:

- a. Missing more than two scheduled meetings in a row without prior excusal. In instances of extenuating circumstances, this requirement may be waived for a member by a vote of the Commission; or
- b. Engaging in conduct that is disruptive to the work of the Commission. "Engaging in conduct that is disruptive" does not include speaking in dissent or disagreeing with the majority of the Commission.

(2) Positions of Commission members removed from the Commission will be filled in the same manner as set forth in the enabling legislation and all efforts will be made to ensure that the replacement member meets the same statutorily required criteria for selection as the member to be replaced.

D. Resignation

(1) Commission members who choose to resign from the Commission must do so in writing by email or letter to the Chairperson.

(2) Positions of Commission members resigning from the Commission will be filled in the same manner as set forth in the enabling legislation and all efforts will be made to ensure that the replacement member meets the same statutorily required criteria for selection as the member resigning.

Article VI. Organization

A. Order of Governing Documents

- (1) Enabling Legislation
- (2) Bylaws
- (3) Policies
- (4) Roberts Rules of Order, most current version.

B. Meetings

(1) Meetings will be held at specified times and places convenient and open to the public, as determined by the Chairperson after consultation with the members of the Commission. At the Chairperson's discretion, a meeting may be cancelled or rescheduled within a reasonable time prior to the scheduled meeting date. The time and place of all such meetings scheduled or rescheduled shall be given to the Commission members as soon as practicable prior to the meeting date.

(2) The parliamentary authority for the Commission shall be the [Robert's Rules of Order](#), as amended.

(3) Meetings may be held in-person or virtually, provided virtual meetings meet the requirements of the Open Meetings Act.

(4) In-person meetings shall provide a virtual meeting option for members.

(5) The Commission shall conduct each meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. (5 ILCS 120).

C. Remote Participation. Any member of the commission may participate remotely in a meeting by audio video conference only to the extent authorized by the Open Meetings Act. (5 ILCS 120/7).

D. Public Comment

(1) Pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, public comment will be made possible at each meeting. Comments are limited to the subjects on the agenda and shall be no more than three minutes per commentor and one hour in aggregate.

(2) The Chairperson may further limit public comment to fit the allotted time on the agenda.

E. Communication among Chairperson and Commission members. Any communication related to Commission business or surveys involving members must be channeled through Commission administrative support staff to prevent any violations of the Open Meetings Act.

Article VII. State Mandated Training and Conflicts of Interest

A. All members of the Commission shall complete all mandatory training required of Illinois boards and commissions, including Open Meetings Training available on the website of the Illinois Attorney General. A signed acknowledgment of completion of the training shall be submitted to designated Commission administrative staff.

B. No Commission member shall accept any stipend, fee, gratuity, or consideration of any kind or nature from any person, unit, agency, or organization for the purpose of influencing a vote, decision, or recommendation of a member on a matter before the Commission.

C. The decision of the Chairperson with respect to conflict of interest situations shall be final unless the situation involves the Chairperson, in which case a majority vote of the Commission shall render a final decision.

Article VIII. Amendments

- A. These bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Commission, provided that written notice has been given to all members of the Commission at least 30 calendar days ahead of the meeting date and a copy of all proposed amendments are delivered to all members by electronic means, hand delivery, or U.S. mail.
- B. The adoption of amendments to these bylaws shall be determined by a roll call vote requiring a majority of the Commission's members.
- C. Copies of proposed amendments provided to Commission members as outlined above must be done using underline and strikethrough editing. New language must be underlined and deleted language must use strikethrough.

Article IX. Construction

In the case of any conflict between the enabling legislation and these bylaws, the enabling legislation shall control.

Illinois State Flag Commission
Andrew Conneen, Minority Report
3-26-25

I write separately to note the Illinois State Flag Commission's final report does not make a recommendation pertaining to the retention or possible replacement on the State flag as directed by Senate Bill 1818 [Public Act 103-0513].

I offer the following recommendations based on the results of the Illinois Flag Commission's process for the submission of proposed new designs and the public responses for different State flag proposals:

- While the current State flag won an overwhelming plurality of public support in the multiweek online voting contest, it should be noted a majority of responses indicated support for different flag options. An online process to evaluate public support that allows respondents to rank preferences of the different flags could provide a more reliable measurement of support.
- The result of the responses and public submissions for flag redesigns indicate both support for the State flag featuring the Great Seal of Illinois and support for a flag with redesigned elements of the Great Seal of Illinois. The Illinois General Assembly should consider narrowing the scope of any future State flag redesign to feature only elements of the Great Seal of Illinois.
- The creation of the Illinois Flag Commission by Senate Bill 1818 [Public Act 103-0513] provided a unique opportunity for the public to both propose and evaluate a range of policy choices. The process embodied the American civic principle of policy making in a democratic republic. The process combined robust democratic participation and public input with republican guidance and decision making by elected representatives and their appointees. The participation in this process by hundreds of students modeled the Illinois civics education mandates passed by the Illinois General Assembly since 2016. The Illinois General Assembly should explore whether other potential policy choices could be shaped by similar commissions that create a process for wider public input about policy making.

Illinois state flag finalist feedback and revisions

Steven Wheatley, Brian Cham and Brandon Hundt
March 6, 2025

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Introduction

This document serves as a report from vexillologists about Illinois' finalist flags. We thank the commission for our ongoing and fruitful partnership, especially inviting us to give presentations and embracing the initial design tweaks we contributed after the commission's December 2024 meeting. While our prior suggestions were general in nature, this report collates the public and expert commentary on the finalists to supplement the commission's discussions as it prepares a report to the General Assembly.

The voting results show a majority support (57%) for a new flag, which is encouraging, though the public is split on exactly which new flag they prefer. The lack of a clear winner invites opportunities for further design tweaks to the strongest designs based on public and expert feedback. By perfecting the finalists, we can ensure that Illinois ends up with the best possible flag to serve the public for generations to come.

For each design, we summarize both the strengths and opportunities for improvement. The feedback points are collated from various sources, so they may contradict each other and there may be various different ways to leverage these points to improve the designs. As such, we have included multiple design variants mocked up by expert vexillologists to graphically demonstrate these improvements and act as a starting point for further discussion. These variants conform to the standard aspect ratio (3:5) and Pantone color shades used by flag manufacturers (Appendices [1](#) and [2](#)), and we are happy to contribute vector files suitable for manufacturing.

Should you decide to tweak designs that proved popular with the public, we are happy to collaborate further in this area, based on best practices from other state flag efforts. Possibilities for further contributions we can offer are listed in the [Conclusions section](#).

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. We hope this report is useful and appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this significant endeavor.

Authors

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Brian Cham (briancham1994@gmail.com)

- YouTube Co-ordinator and flag design consultant for North American Vexillological Association
- Expert advisor and design collaborator for official state flags of Utah, Minnesota, Maine and Illinois, with crucial contributions to final flag designs
- International speaker about flags and flag design
- Member of NAVA, UK Flag Institute and New Zealand Flag Association

Brandon Hundt (brandonhundt@gmail.com)

- Finalist for state flag of Minnesota
- Writer about flags in many professional publications
- Member of NAVA

With input from Ted Kaye (sec@nava.org) and many others

- Secretary of the North American Vexillological Association (NAVA)
- Author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*

Interpretation of voting results

The voting results show a majority support (57%) for a new flag, which is encouraging, though the public is split on exactly which new flag they prefer. The lack of a clear winner invites opportunities for further design tweaks to the strongest designs based on public and expert feedback. By perfecting the finalists, we can ensure that Illinois ends up with the best possible flag to serve the public for generations to come.

Current flag vs. new flag?

Design name	Votes	Votes (percentage)
All new flag concepts	218,259	56.86%
Current state flag	165,602	43.14%
<i>Total</i>	<i>383861</i>	<i>100%</i>

Which new flag?

Design name	Votes	Votes (percentage)
2246	32,898	15.07%
3679	29,478	13.51%
896	26,559	12.17%
4129	25,653	11.75%
4220	21,981	10.07%
4321	18,574	8.51%
2752	15,739	7.21%
Centennial Flag	15,159	6.95%
4669	10,113	4.63%
200	9,840	4.51%
3754	7,169	3.28%
Sesquicentennial Flag	5,096	2.33%
<i>Total</i>	<i>218,259</i>	<i>100%</i>

Finalist designs (in order of voting)

2246




Three strengths:

1. The design evokes the lush agricultural prairies of Illinois.
2. The design can be interpreted as a landscape without explanation.
3. The design is relatively simple.

Three opportunities for improvement:

1. The triple arrangement of six-pointed stars is too reminiscent of the flag of Chicago, which could create resentment from the rest of the state. This can be improved by replacing them with different stars.
2. The stripe arrangement is too numerous, so they blend into each other at a distance and. This can be improved by reducing the number of stripes.
3. Commentators noted the overall layout resembles the Barack Obama campaign logo, which could lead to partisan accusations. This can be improved by overhauling the whole color scheme or removing the stripes.

Image	Explanation
	Barack Obama's famous 2008 campaign logo

Variants:

Image	Explanation
	<p>2246B changes the stars to seven pointed stars (the 21 total points refer to Illinois' statehood number), adds a fimbriation to the sun to separate the bright yellow and white, and reduces the number of stripes to improve the visual impact of the elements at a distance.</p>
	<p>2246C reduces the color scheme to Old Glory Blue and white to make the color scheme more distinct and avoid resembling the Barack Obama campaign logo.</p> <p>The three white stripes represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois). The three Old Glory Blue stripes represent Lake Michigan, the Illinois River and the Mississippi River.</p>
	<p>2246D simplifies the ground to a single solid stripe, to completely avoid any resemblance to the Barack Obama campaign logo.</p> <p>The Old Glory Blue stripe represents the gently flowing rivers of the state. The design retains the white field to promote familiarity and continuity.</p>
	<p>2246E simplifies the ground to a single solid stripe, to completely avoid any resemblance to the Barack Obama campaign logo.</p> <p>Using Harvest Orange would better contrast with the Old Glory Blue, stand out among other US state flags and represent the state's agriculture.</p>

3679





Three strengths:




1. The shape of the state of Illinois is unique.
2. Abraham Lincoln is a famous figure and resonates with the public.
3. The radially symmetrical layout draws the eye's focus to the center.

Three opportunities for improvement:

1. The Illinois and Lincoln shapes are too small and blobby to be discerned at a distance and compete with each other for visual focus. This can be improved by picking either Lincoln's profile or the Illinois shape to emphasize as the sole emblem, maximizing its impact at a distance.
2. The stars are too small and dark to be seen against the dark blue background. This can be improved by making them all white and large, or by redesigning them.
3. The flag resembles the state flag of Indiana and the flag of Europe (shown below) when hanging limp, which could lead to visual confusion and accusations of unoriginality. This can be improved with the same suggestions in point 2 above.

Image	Explanation
	State flag of Indiana
	Flag of Europe

Variants:

Image	Explanation
	<p>3679B turns the portrait of Abraham Lincoln into the central emblem, enlarges it and adjusts the entire design to frame it. This emphasizes Lincoln’s profile as the main focus and improves its impact at a distance without any visual clutter or distractions.</p>
	<p>3679C Adds three vertical stripes to reference the first three letters of “Illinois” to reduce visual clutter.</p> <p>The three stripes also represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois).</p> <p>The vertical stripes also represent the grid and skyline of a city, transportation, rows of agriculture, and gently flowing rivers (Illinois, Mississippi and Ohio rivers).</p>
	<p>3679D turns the portrait of Abraham Lincoln into the central emblem, enlarges it and adjusts the entire layout to frame it vertically. This emphasizes Lincoln’s profile as the main focus and improves its impact at a distance.</p> <p>The design also replaces the circle of small stars with three large seven-pointed stars that have a more distinct visual impact at a distance. The three stars represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) and the 21 total points represent Illinois’ statehood number.</p> <p>The two Old Glory Blue stripes represent the Illinois River and Lake Michigan.</p>



Three strengths:

1. The red, white and blue color scheme connects with the flag of the United States.
2. The sun rising on the waters is a distinctive element.
3. The layout is symmetrical, framing the central emblem well.

Three opportunities for improvement:

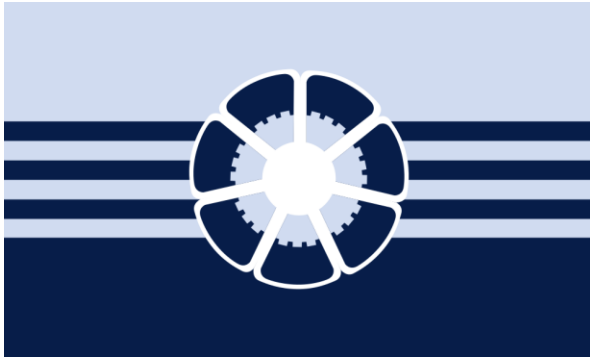
1. The seal is quite complex and the details get cluttered and compete for focus at a distance. This can be improved by simplifying it to emphasize one sole emblem.
2. The design is too heavily derived from the current flag, so it feels unexciting and unoriginal to the public. This can be improved by differentiating it from the current flag.
3. The flag is too similar to Iowa’s flag (shown below), which could lead to visual confusion and accusations of unoriginality. This can be improved by differentiating it from the flag of Iowa.

Image	Explanation
	<p>State flag of Iowa</p>

Variants:

Image	Explanation
	<p>896B simplifies the seal to emphasize the bald eagle. This emphasizes the eagle as the main focus and improves its impact at a distance without any visual clutter or distractions.</p>
	<p>896C simplifies the seal to emphasize the bald eagle. It adds three large seven-pointed stars representing the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) and the 21 total points represent Illinois' statehood number.</p> <p>It also simplifies the stripes to Old Glory Blue to lessen the resemblance to Iowa's flag when waving or at a distance.</p>
	<p>896D simplifies the seal to emphasize the sun rising over the lake, because this key element is the most distinct part of the current flag.</p> <p>It also simplifies the stripes to Old Glory Blue to lessen the resemblance to Iowa's flag when waving or at a distance.</p>

4129



Three strengths:




1. The symbolism evokes both industry and agriculture, and the state flower.
2. The symmetrical layout frames the central emblem as a strong graphical focus.
3. The horizontal layout evokes the agricultural prairies of the state.

Three opportunities for improvement:

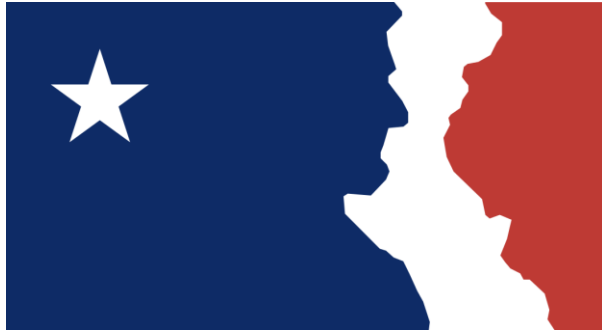
1. The central emblem, combining corn kernels with a cogwheel, is very complex and the details would be lost at a distance. This can be improved by either removing it or redesigning it so that its features are more visible and familiar.
2. The central emblem is inscrutable without an explanation. This can be improved by redesigning it so that its meaning is more visible and familiar.
3. The white and light blue have contrast issues. This can be improved by changing the color scheme.

Variants:

Image	Explanation
The image shows the logo from the previous block but with the central emblem removed. It consists of a light blue top section, followed by a dark blue stripe, a white stripe, another dark blue stripe, and a light blue bottom section.	4129B removes the central emblem to reduce visual clutter.

	<p>4129C removes the central emblem to reduce visual clutter.</p> <p>The Harvest Orange would better contrast with the Old Glory Blue, stand out among other US state flags and represent the state's agriculture.</p>
	<p>4129D focuses on the charge rather than the stripes. It darkens the blue to Old Glory Blue for greater contrast.</p> <p>The redesigned charge emphasises the key details for greater discernibility. The seven kernels, seven cogs and seven star points add up to 21, referencing Illinois' statehood number.</p>
	<p>4129E focuses on the charge rather than the stripes. It darkens the blue to Old Glory Blue for greater contrast.</p> <p>The redesigned charge emphasises the key details for greater discernibility. The seven kernels, seven cogs and seven star points add up to 21, referencing Illinois' statehood number.</p> <p>The Harvest Orange would better contrast with the Old Glory Blue, stand out among other US state flags and represent the state's agriculture.</p>

4220




Three strengths:

1. The red, white and blue color scheme connects with the flag of the United States.
2. Abraham Lincoln is a famous figure and resonates with the public.
3. The star in the upper left corner will mark the flag when it is hanging on a staff indoors.

Three opportunities for improvement:

1. When waving in the wind, the white shape would be odd and the outlines of Lincoln and the state would be too subtle to recognise, especially when viewed from the reverse. Many commentators made derogatory references to Lincoln sniffing Iowa. This can be improved by turning this section into straight lines.
2. The star is too small. This could be improved by making it larger.
3. The red, white and blue color scheme is too derivative of national symbolism. This can be improved by using a more distinct color scheme.

Variants:

Image	Explanation
	4220B conforms the aspect ratio and Pantone colors to manufacturing standards, straightens the lines and makes the star larger for better visual discernibility at a distance.

		<p>4220C replaces the red with Harvest Orange, which would better contrast with the Old Glory Blue, stand out among other US state flags and represent the state's agriculture.</p>
		<p>4220D replaces the star with three large seven-pointed stars, representing the three regions of Illinois (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) and the total 21 points represents Illinois' statehood number.</p> <p>The Harvest Orange would better contrast with the Old Glory Blue, stand out among other US state flags and represent the state's agriculture.</p>

4321



Three strengths:

1. The harvest orange color is very distinct and would stand out amongst other US state flags, even at a distance.
2. The monarch butterfly is also very distinct and would become an iconic symbol of Illinois, as no other US state flag includes a butterfly.
3. The radially symmetrical layout frames the central emblem as a strong graphical focus.

Three opportunities for improvement:

1. The stars are too small. This can be improved by making them bigger or replacing them with an arrangement of three large seven-pointed stars where the total 21 points represent Illinois' statehood number.
2. The blue and orange do not contrast well. This can be improved by making the blue darker or the orange brighter.
3. The dark blue field is plain and similar to many other US state flags, especially when hanging limp. This can be improved by adding more of the orange.

Variants:

Image	Explanation
This variant of the flag design features a larger, more prominent circle of orange stars surrounding the central orange monarch butterfly. The background is a darker shade of blue, referred to as Old Glory Blue, to provide greater contrast with the orange elements.	<p>4321B makes the circle of stars more prominent and darkens the blue to Old Glory Blue for greater contrast.</p>



4321C replaces the circle of small stars with three large seven-pointed stars that have a more distinct visual impact at a distance. The three stars represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) and the 21 total points represent Illinois' statehood number. It also darkens the blue to Old Glory Blue for greater contrast.

The two vertical orange stripes represent the agricultural and industrial sides of Illinois, and subtly reference a city grid or skyline. The addition of more orange helps the flag to stand out among other US state flags at a distance.

The vertical stripe layout gives more space and freedom to the butterfly compared to the constraining circle of stars.



4321D replaces the circle of small stars with three large seven-pointed stars that have a more distinct visual impact at a distance. The three stars represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) and the 21 total points represent Illinois' statehood number.

The two vertical Old Glory Blue stripes represent the Illinois River and Lake Michigan, and subtly reference a city grid or skyline. The vertical stripe layout gives more space to the butterfly compared to the constraining circle of stars.



Three strengths:




1. The shape of the state of Illinois is unique.
2. The symmetrical layout draws the viewer’s eye towards the center.
3. The dark blue and white color scheme is distinct among US state flags and connects with the Illinois Centennial Flag.

Three opportunities for improvement:

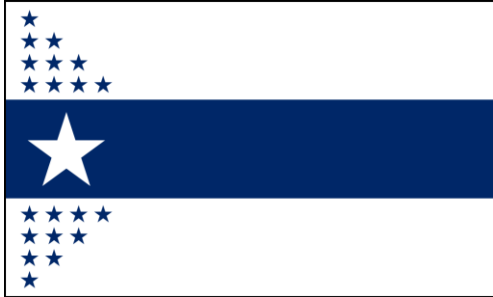
1. The flag image is not in the 3:5 ratio used by manufacturers. This can be improved by adjusting the aspect ratio of the whole flag without distorting its elements.
2. The shape of the state of Illinois is too complex and would not be discernible at a distance or when viewed in reverse. Like the new Minnesota flag, this can be improved by stylizing it.
3. There are too many elements on the flag that compete for focus, making it cluttered at a distance. This can be improved by simplifying the design to emphasize one sole emblem.

Variants:

Image	Explanation
	<p>2752B removes the light blue stripes and disk and replaces the central element with a stylized shape of Illinois to reduce visual clutter at a distance.</p>

	<p>2752C removes the circle of stars and frames the stylized shape of the state within a vertical triband of white and Old Glory Blue. This emphasizes it as the main focus and improves its impact at a distance without any visual clutter or distractions.</p>
	<p>2752D replaces the shape of Illinois with three large seven-pointed stars that would be easier to recognize in reverse. The three stars represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) and the 21 total points represent Illinois' statehood number.</p>
	<p>2752E combines the unique Illinois state shape of 2752C with the meaningful three-star arrangement of 2752D to cover more symbolism.</p>

Illinois Centennial Flag



Three strengths:

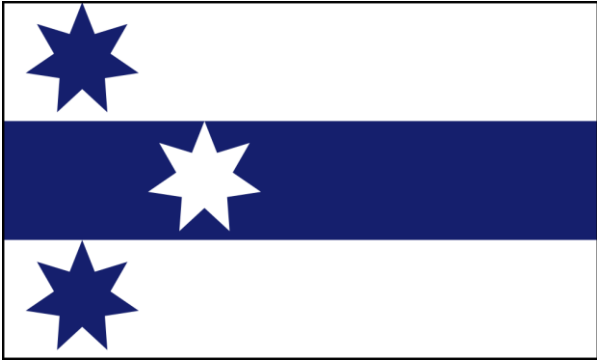
1. The design is simple.
2. The blue and white color scheme is distinct among US state flags.
3. The design has historical precedent and familiarity.

Three opportunities for improvement:

1. The white field bleeds into any white background, distorting the features of the flag.
2. The stars are too small, making them indistinct at a distance.
3. Modern mockups are historically inaccurate reconstructions of the original design with incorrect star sizes and arrangements.

Variants:

Image	Explanation
	<p>Centennial B is a more historically accurate rendition of the Centennial Flag with larger stars and a tighter arrangement, based on contemporaneous sources.</p>



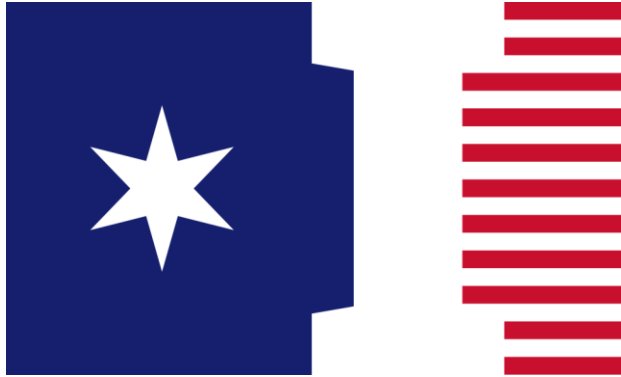
Centennial C replaces the arrangement of stars with three large seven-pointed stars that have a more distinct visual impact at a distance. The three stars represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) and the 21 total points represent Illinois' statehood number.



Centennial D replaces the arrangement of stars with three large seven-pointed stars that have a more distinct visual impact at a distance. The three stars represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) and the 21 total points represent Illinois' statehood number.

It also moves the blue stripe to the bottom to better resemble the gently flowing rivers underneath the stars.

4669



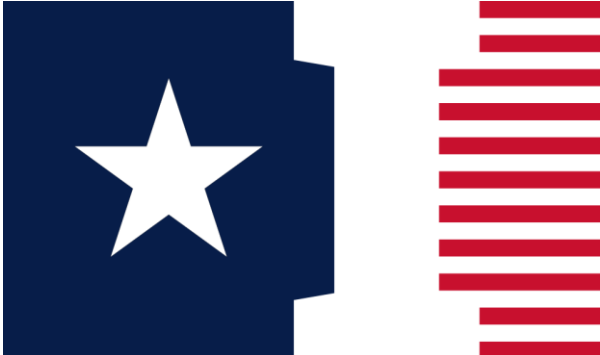
Three strengths:

1. The outline of the stripes cleverly resembles the shape of the state of Illinois.
2. The large letter “I” would be graphically effective at a distance.
3. The vertical symmetry improves the alignment of all graphical elements.

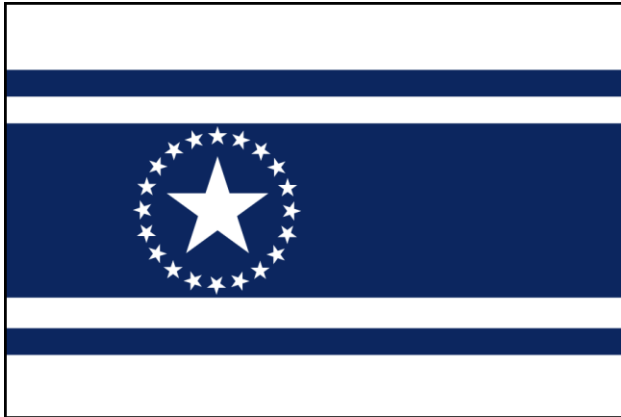
Three opportunities for improvement:

1. The six-pointed star is too reminiscent of the flag of Chicago, which could create resentment from the rest of the state. This can be improved by replacing it with a five-pointed star.
2. The serifs of the letter “I” could be lost at a distance. This can be improved by replacing it with a sans-serif “I” or three vertical stripes to represent the first three letters of “Illinois”.
3. The stripes on the fly end are likely to fray over time and become even smaller. This can be improved by removing dependence on symbolism near the fly.

Variants:

Image	Explanation
	<p>4669B turns the star into a five-pointed star and makes it slightly larger to avoid resemblance to the flag of Chicago.</p>

	<p>4669C removes the serifs from the “I” for better discernibility at a distance.</p>
	<p>4669D replaces the “I” with three vertical stripes to reference the first three letters of “Illinois” to reduce visual clutter.</p> <p>The three stripes also represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois).</p> <p>The vertical stripes also represent the grid and skyline of a city, transportation, rows of agriculture, and gently flowing rivers (Illinois, Mississippi and Ohio rivers).</p>
	<p>4669E replaces the “I” with three vertical stripes to reference the first three letters of “Illinois” to reduce visual clutter. The star is turned into a five-pointed star to distinguish it from Chicago.</p> <p>The three stripes also represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois).</p> <p>The vertical stripes also represent the grid and skyline of a city, transportation, rows of agriculture, and gently flowing rivers (Illinois, Mississippi and Ohio rivers).</p> <p>The design retains the white field to promote familiarity and continuity.</p>





Three strengths:

1. The design is simple.
2. The design has a strong, single focus in the form of the central star.
3. The dark blue and white color scheme is distinct among US state flags and connects with the Illinois Centennial Flag.

Three opportunities for improvement:

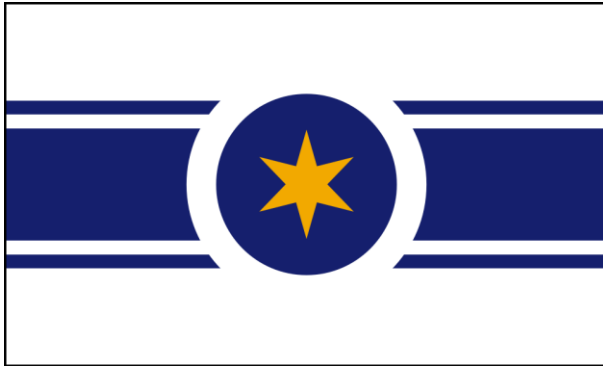
1. The white at the edges will bleed into any white background, distorting the appearance of the flag. This can be improved by moving the thinner blue stripes to the edge.
2. The circle of stars is too small to be discerned at a distance. This can be improved by reducing or redesigning the stars to keep the focus on the main star.
3. The flag resembles the national flags of Israel and North Korea (shown below), which are extremely controversial. This can be improved by moving the stars and stripes slightly to lessen the visual resemblance to those flags.

Image	Explanation
	National flag of North Korea
	National flag of Israel

Variants:

Image	Explanation
	<p>200B moves the stripes outwards to fill the white area and give the stars more room for enlargement, achieving maximum visual impact.</p>
	<p>200C moves the stripes outwards to fill the white area and give the stars more room for enlargement, achieving maximum visual impact. It removes the circle of stars to put the focus on the single central star.</p>
	<p>200D moves the stripes outwards to fill the white area and give the stars more room for enlargement, achieving maximum impact.</p> <p>It replaces the circle of small stars with three larger seven-pointed stars that have a more distinct visual impact at a distance. The three stars represent the three regions (Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) and the 21 total points represent Illinois' statehood number.</p>

3754



Three strengths:

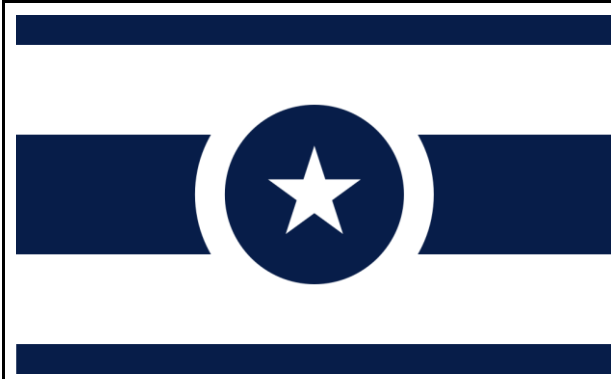
1. The design is simple.
2. The design has a strong, single focus in the form of the central star.
3. The symmetrical layout frames the central emblem as a strong graphical focus.

Three opportunities for improvement:

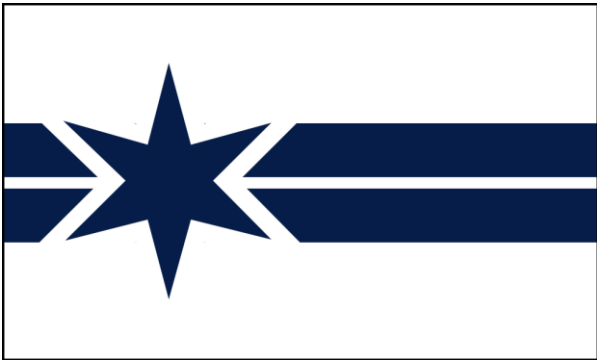
1. The white sections at the edges will bleed into any white background, distorting the appearance of the flag. This can be improved by moving the thinner blue stripes to the edge.
2. The six-pointed star is too reminiscent of the flag of Chicago, which could create resentment from the rest of the state. This can be improved by replacing it with a five-pointed star.
3. The deep gold color is unnecessary and doesn't contrast well against the dark blue. This can be improved by turning it white.

Variants:

Image	Explanation
	<p>3754B replaces the star with a five-pointed star to reduce resemblance to the flag of Chicago and turns it white to increase its contrast against the Old Glory Blue.</p>

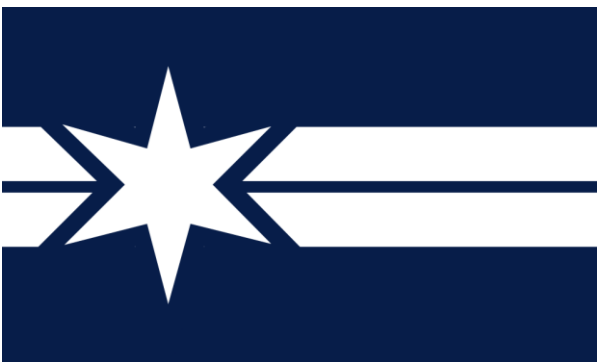


3754C moves the thinner blue stripes to the edge to avoid distorting the design when the flag is shown against a white background. It also replaces the star with a white, five-pointed star to reduce resemblance to the flag of Chicago and increase its contrast against the Old Glory Blue.



3754D makes the star Old Glory Blue and enlarges it to increase its visual impact.

The negative space suggests hidden arrows to represent transitways meeting in Illinois and the phrase “All roads lead to Illinois.”



3754E reverses the color scheme of 3754D to avoid the white bleeding into a white background.

Conclusions and additional contributions

In conclusion, there has been a wealth of commentary around the Illinois state flag finalists which we have collected to aid your discussions. The reception of the designs opens opportunities for further design collaboration, just like our collaboration with the successful flag efforts of Utah and Minnesota.

If the commission is interested in tweaking leading designs for further improvements, we would be happy to continue our collaboration and kindly offer the following possibilities:

- An additional presentation during the commission's meetings to discuss the information and possibilities raised in this report.
- Live design sessions, either during the commission's meetings or NAVA's Flag Design Forum.
- Vector files of flag designs for the manufacturing process, using the standard aspect ratio and Pantone shades used by flag manufacturers ([Appendix 1](#)).
- Formal specifications of the final flag design to include in legislation, including both standardised proportions and Pantone color shades (example from Minnesota in [Appendix 3](#)).

We thank you for your consideration of this report and look forward to future collaboration during this pivotal time for the state's flag.

Sources

The feedback in the report was sourced from internal discussion and polling among the NAVA vexillologists, as well as commentary in the following publications:

- Bauer, Will, and Emily Woodbury. “Experts Say Illinois’ Final Flag Designs Need Work — Here Are Their Changes.” *STLPR*, 23 Jan. 2025, www.stlpr.org/government-politics-issues/2025-01-23/experts-say-illinois-final-flag-designs-need-work-here-are-their-changes. Accessed 14 Feb. 2025.
- Bergdahl, Esther. “Artist’s Advice: Keep it Simple.” *Suntimes.com*, 2020, paper.suntimes.com/infinity/article_popover_share.aspx?guid=15c9f532-bac9-4b07-a828-3acc75381b25&share=true. Accessed 15 Jan. 2025.
- Bergdahl, Esther. “New Illinois State Flag Advice from Designers.” *WBEZ*, 16 Jan. 2025, www.wbez.org/springfield/2025/01/16/new-illinois-state-flag-advice-from-designers. Accessed 15 Jan. 2025.
- Harris, Mark. “Oh, Say, What Will We See on the New Illinois State Flag?” *Chicagotribune.com*, 2020, digitaledition.chicagotribune.com/infinity/article_share.aspx?guid=boa3e589-960d-4c44-bac3-79a8430eec43. Accessed 14 Feb. 2025.
- Johnson, Michael, and Marcus Leshock. “In with the Old: Current State Flag Wins Big in Flag Redesign Contest, Illinois Secretary of State Announces.” *WGN-TV*, 6 Mar. 2025, wgntv.com/news/illinois/current-state-flag-wins-big-in-flag-redesign-contest-illinois-secretary-of-state-announces/, <https://doi.org/10514409.m3u8>. Accessed 6 Mar. 2025.
- Iqbal, Mawa. “The State of Illinois May Soon Get a New Flag - WBEZ Chicago.” *WBEZ*, 14 Jan. 2025, www.wbez.org/wbez-news/2025/01/14/the-state-of-illinois-may-soon-get-a-new-flag. Accessed 15 Jan. 2025.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Standard palette of Pantone color shades used by flag manufacturers



Appendix 2 - Standard color shades used in design variants

Name	Color references			
	Pantone	Hex	RGB	CMYK
White	White	#ffffff	255, 255, 255	0, 0, 0, 0
Old Glory Blue	2768 C	#071d49	7, 29, 73	90, 60, 0, 71
Old Glory Red	186 C	#c8102e	200, 16, 46	0, 92, 77, 22
Harvest Orange	151 C	#ff8200	255, 130, 0	0, 49, 100, 0
River Blue	2975 CP	#c2e2f5	194, 226, 245	21, 8, 0, 4
Centennial Blue	2756 C	#151f6d	21, 31, 109	81, 72, 0, 57

Appendix 3 - Construction sheet of the flag of Minnesota


Fabric:
Legion Blue
or
Legion Blue*



Night Sky Blue

Pantone 648
C: 100 M: 86 Y: 35 K: 31
R: 0 G: 44 B: 90
Hex Code: #002C5A

Fabric:
White



White

Pantone White
C: 0 M: 0 Y: 0 K: 0
R: 255 G: 255 B: 255
Hex Code: #FFFFFF

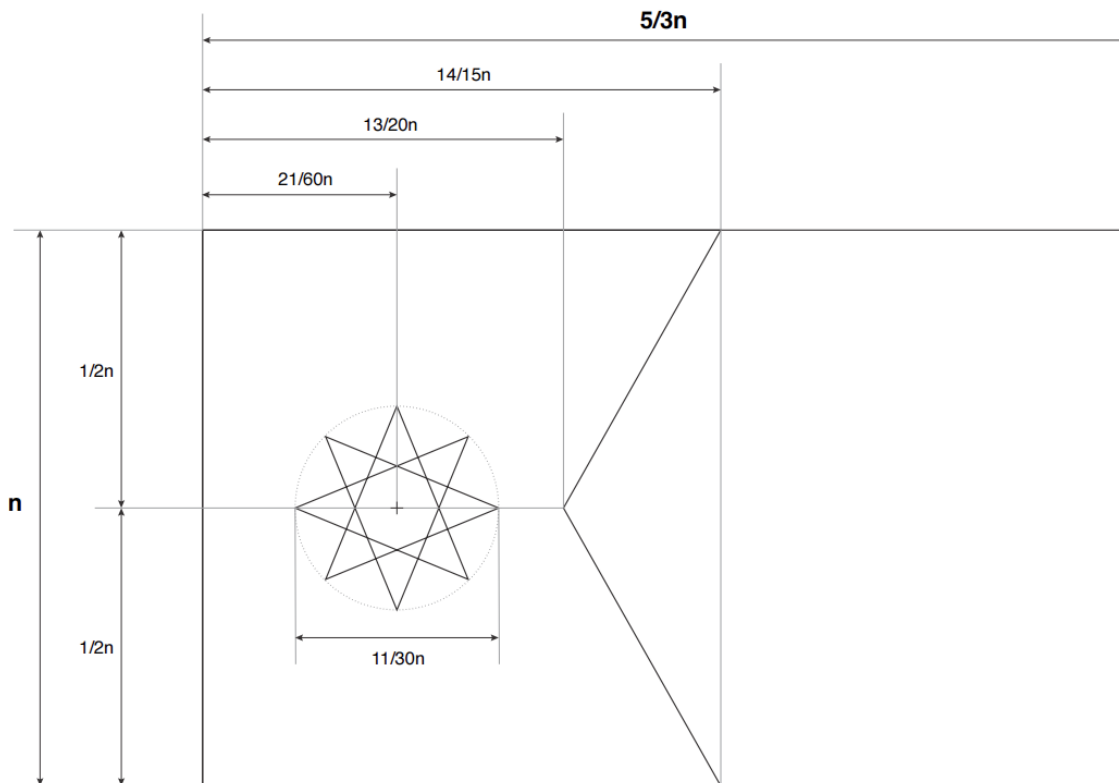
Fabric:
Bluebird
or
Process Blue*



Water Blue

Pantone 305
C: 59 M: 0 Y: 6 K: 0
R: 115 G: 198 B: 229
Hex Code: #73C6E5

**Swatch selection subject to change based on physical samples and fabric variation*



The star is a regular octagram with the Schläfli symbol $\{8/3\}$.
It is constructed from 8 vertices arranged equally around a circle.
Each vertex is connected to the vertex that is 3 turns away.