

Election 2018: Longtime Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White of Alton faces two challengers

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SPRINGFIELD – With election day coming next Tuesday for the mid-terms, many people across the country are pushing for high voter turnouts.

Social media is full of political ads, voter education, and people displaying their early voting stickers for what is forming into an extremely important election cycle for Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike. Many state and local positions are currently up for grabs, and Riverbender.com's voting guide aims to inform those still on the fence about the candidates from whom they are given choices.

Much of this information is public record, but some of the candidates were able to complete questionnaires sent by reporters. Not everyone responded to those, so research into campaign promises, funding and voting records was conducted in order to properly display the candidates and what each represents.

This election's Illinois Secretary of State race threatens to unseat Jesse White, who has been in that role for nearly 20 years. The secretary of state keeps state records, laws, library and archives and is the ultimate authority in Illinois for vehicle registration and driver licensing.

JASON HELLAND

Jason Helland has served as assistant state's attorney in the Kankakee County State's Attorney's Office. In 2012, he was elected at the Grundy County State's Attorney. He has a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of St. Francis, and a juris doctor from the John Marshall Law School. He also worked as a professor at the University of St. Francis. He is currently running as a Republican against longtime Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White.

On his website, Helland said he wants to “retire Michael Madigan's Chief Patronage Officer, Jesse White,” accusing White of being committed to what he described at the “Michael Madigan Political Machine.”

Other issues include imposing term limits, modernizing the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in Illinois, updating it with technology. On his site he said, “there is no reason we should not be using email, text and even apps to both streamline services and reduce costs.”

If elected, Helland also promises to remove politics from the office of the Illinois Secretary of State.

The Illinois Republican Party is Helland's largest donor with a contribution of \$47,700.

JESSE WHITE

Alton's own Jesse White has been Illinois's Secretary of State since 1999. He graduated Alabama State University and served in the United State Army's 101st Airborne Division from 1957-1959. He was also inducted into the Southwestern Athletic Conference Hall of Fame in May 1995 and was placed in the Chicago Public League Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in June 1995. He is running for reelection as a Democrat.

As Secretary of State, White claims he has worked to keep teens and roads safe through several initiatives through the DMV's graduated drivers license program. He said teen deaths have dropped 50 percent in the state since it was launched. White was inducted into the Illinois High School and College Driver Education Association Hall of Fame in 2014.

He was also given the Legislative Champion Award by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) for his efforts to fight DUIs through the breath alcohol ignition interlock device program. He was given the Martha Irwin Award for Lifetime Achievement in Highway Safety by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

White also claims to have already reformed and streamlined the DMV with technology, saying internet transactions accounted for more than \$240 million at the DMV in 2016, which is an increase of sixfold in a decade.

Illinois drivers licenses also feature a slot for veterans to insure they are able to get benefits to which they are entitled, and said security features on licenses were updated under his administration to fight identity theft. As of now, Illinois has not reached REAL ID compliance with the Department of Homeland Security, but White says it will soon under his administration if reelected.

White's largest campaign contributor is Cambridge Bank, which donated nearly \$620,000, followed by Broadway Bank, which contributed just over \$550,000. Private citizen Robert Lozins, who is a noted car collector, donated more than \$520,000 to the campaign and the Democratic Party of Illinois donated just above \$275,000 to his campaign.

STEVE DUTNER

Libertarian Steve Dutner wants to take Illinois out of the DMV completely. He is running on a platform of privatizing it within four years of being elected and leasing the space formerly holding the offices. He said step one will be to outsource DMV services to private businesses in much the same fashion notaries perform acts in legal affairs. The second step would be to allow auto insurance companies to provide similar services.

Dutner was the Activism Director for the Libertarian Party of Illinois from 2014-2017. He received a Volunteer Outreach Award from the DuPage Libertarians and received Activist of the Year from the Illinois Libertarian Party in 2016. He is currently the Vice Chair and SOC Representative for the DuPage Libertarians and a Township Committee Person for the Hanover Township.