

# **Election 2018: A rematch for Madison County Clerk**

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**EDWARDSVILLE** – 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.

The position of Madison County Clerk is an important one, especially in the realm of elections. The Democratic process is managed from that office and this year is seeing a rematch between current county clerk, Democrat Debra Ming-Mendoza, and Republican Steve Adler, who previously lost to Ming-Mendoza.

Both were sent questionnaires from Riverbender.com, but only Adler replied.

## **STEVE ADLER**

Here are his answers to those questions:

### **1 - Why are you seeking this office?**

To merge the Madison County Clerk and the Recorder of Deeds offices if that referendum passes, and fight vote fraud in Madison County.

Merging the Recorder of Deeds office with the County Clerk's Office is my 1st priority. This is a long overdue measure that could save taxpayers a lot of money in the long run. At present, these offices cost double what they do in neighboring St. Clair County, which is identical to Madison County in population

After spending 12 years on the Madison County Board from 2004-2016, I lost the last County Clerk election to the incumbent Democrat. Although I won the race in precincts that printed out results on Election Day, I was beaten by large margins of mailed-in ballots. The Chairman of the Madison County Board filed a freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the results of the election by category. (Mail-in balloting, Early Voting, Nursing Home voting, etc.)

The Clerk denied the request, and stated that that document did not exist. If we can't track election results by category, we can't evaluate those categories individually for fraud. The Clerk will flatly state that vote fraud doesn't exist, and trot out a Democratic authority figure to agree that no one has been prosecuted for vote fraud in Madison County. But...if the totals aren't tracked by category, rather than all mixed as one? That category cannot be evaluated (mathematically) for fraud.

### **2 - What do you believe the function of this office is, and what would you do to further that if elected?**

The County Clerk has several important duties besides running elections. He or she is the Clerk of the County Board, keeper of vital records. (Birth, death and marriage certificates) and also calculates your tax bill, among other functions. If the proposal to merge is approved, I would integrate the Recorder of Deeds office.

### **3 - What do you think needs changed for this office at a local, state and national level?**

This is a local office and has few responsibilities at the State and National levels. Most importantly, this office has to get a handle on vote fraud, both locally and from outside Madison County. We begin by tracking election results by their various categories. Evaluate each of those categories by the results, and look for holes in those systems to plug.

### **4 - What are some of the most pressing issues in regard to voting in America?**

The most pressing issue regarding voting in America today is election security from foreign intervention. The next largest issue is allowing persons outside citizenship the privilege of voting. While I oppose that personally, the Clerk's role is to conduct elections; politicians decide who has the right to participate.

### **5 - What would you do to increase voter turnout if elected?**

Increasing voter turnout through additional technology should be considered only after making sure that these newer voting systems are secure; technology in and of itself is not a panacea. Some of the most secure methods out there still rely on paper when it leaves the voter's hands.

### **6 – What qualifications do you have for this position, and how do they relate to this office?**

I am a college graduate, but most of what I know was never taught in a classroom. First elected in 2004 as a Republican Madison County Board Member in a predominantly Democratic County, I played an instrumental role in turning Treasurer Fred Bathon in to the FBI in the Madison County Tax Sale scandal with Kurt Prenzler; Bathon went to prison. I spent most of the remaining years chairing the County Personnel Committee, which oversees labor relations. I lost a bid to be Madison County Clerk by less than 1% of the vote in 2014, and left the Madison County Board in 2016.

In 2016 and 2017 Pontoon Beach and Mitchell suffered severe flooding; Horseshoe Lake had become too high, and broken pumping systems at the Metro-East Sanitary District flooded those communities. I was assigned to be Executive Director of the

Metro-East Sanitary District. (MESD) As it turned out, MESD was fiscally insolvent, and the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) had slapped MESD with an “unacceptable” rating for our levees and pumping stations.

With the help of the remaining employees and the MESD Board, MESD is fiscally sound, repaired most pumps, and has preliminarily received a “minimally acceptable” levee and pump stations system rating from the USACE. Those communities are protected again.

The Democratic Party has the former Tax Assessor as my opponent. The status quo has made it their priority to defeat me, and I appreciate that; when that happens, they leave someone else alone. In the meantime, if elected, I will insure that one of the cornerstones of our Democracy, elections, are conducted fairly with a level playing field for all candidates.

## **7 - What threats to the current democratic process can you identify, and what would/could you do in that office to remedy them?**

Threats are internal and external. Externally, we have to include digital penetration testing on our voting systems. That has never been conducted in Madison County, and the Clerk refuses to conduct those tests. Internally, old fashioned fraud still exists in the form of mail-in ballot fraud and chain voting. (Google it) I propose that Madison County take the following actions:

1. Totalize the different voting systems separately: Early, Mail-in, etc. If we can't track the totals of these voting systems separately, they cannot be evaluated for fraudulent patterns!
2. Change the color of the ballots between voting systems; chain voting depends on a ballot outside that system to begin the chain.
3. Conduct 3rd party penetration testing on the electronic election systems we use to prevent foreign intervention.

## **8 - What about hacking? How would your office tackle electronic hacking from foreign and domestic agencies if elected?**

As stated earlier, Madison County needs to include digital penetration testing on our voting systems. Penetration testing has never been conducted in Madison County, and the Clerk refuses to conduct those tests. What responsible public official would refuse to perform such an important test? These systems are expensive, and I admit that I do not believe expensive technology is always better secured than paper-based systems.

## **9 - What about voter fraud? How would your office tackle that if elected?**

I believe that vote fraud does exist in Madison County, and that it's fairly common. I lost the last election narrowly, and I've talked to several Republican County Board Candidates who feel the same way. Many County Board candidates procured precinct tapes on election night, showing him to be the winner, but still lost due to mail-in ballot results, which are not tracked separately, added later, and tallied. This process was not always this way; counting of mail-in ballots was taken out of precincts with real Election Judges (from both Parties) present. Now these ballots are tallied elsewhere. Sunshine is the only effective disinfectant; I would add openness by actually volunteering the process for circumspection. Losing an election in the back room of the County Building is disheartening and wrong for Democracy.

## **10 - How would you improve other functions of your position is elected?**

Consolidate the County Clerk and Recorder of Deeds offices! Then, investigate, evaluate and validate all these functions.

### **DEBBIE MING-MENDOZA**

Ming-Mendoza did not return the questionnaire sent at the same time as the one sent to Adler. On her campaign's Facebook page, she claims to have a "proven record of accountability and independence." She lists Granite City as her hometown and has previously worked as the Madison County Assessment Officer for 40 years, retiring in 2012. She's been the county clerk since 2012.

She also claims to be a moderate Democrat and has been awarded the Friend of Labor Award. She also says she volunteers for charitable organizations and is a part of Holy Family Church and School.

Ming-Mendoza said she is "loyal to friends and family, ambitious, dedicated to public service, active in community affairs and a hard worker."