

Election 2018: Rural counties have a say in who's sheriff

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON – Outside of Madison County, several other contentious races are happening.

In Jersey County, Sheriff John Wimmersberg, a Democrat, is running against Republican Mike Ringhausen. Wimmersberg was appointed after the retirement of former Jersey County Sheriff Mark Kallal. In previous interviews with Riverbender.com, Wimmersberg said he would treat Jersey County's opioid epidemic, which is indicative of the rest of the nation's greater issue, as a public health crisis.

Ringhausen's campaign Facebook page describes him as a 23-year veteran of the Jersey County Sheriff's Office with 11 years on the South Central Illinois Drug Task Force. If

elected, he promises increased community patrol presence, increased officer training, improved community relations, transparency and accountability, increased department morale, recognition for good officers and increased diversity within the department.

Calhoun County Sheriff, Bill Heffington, also a Democrat, is having his seat challenged by Chase McNeal Prokuski. Heffington's administration has seen Calhoun get a drug dog, Officer Django, deescalate a potentially hazardous situation with a resident firing at the sheriff, the arrest and charges of convicted sex offender Mike Dean and several other arrests relating to drugs in the county.

In a March 18, 2018, post on his campaign's Facebook, Prokuski said the people of Calhoun County would like more patrolling, more interaction and more proactivity. He said people want coverage 24/7, and he said he would like to expand that and add more accountability and oversight to the sheriff's office.

Other offices in Jersey and Calhoun outside of county board races are currently uncontested. The same is true with Macoupin and Greene Counties. With law enforcement issues being paramount in the nation, however, the choice for local sheriffs is an extremely important one.