

Know Before You Go: IL-12 District Primer

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In the last election, Republican Mike Bost won this district by only 45,730 votes (14.6%).

That's close! With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Brendan Kelly in 2018.

About the Incumbent

Republican Michael Bost is in his second term representing IL-12. Bost previously served 20 years in the Illinois House of Representatives and is a former firefighter.

Issues: Bost's primary issues are creating jobs, controlling floods, and overturning the "Stream Buffer Rule," which he blames for the loss of coal jobs in southern Illinois. He also favors repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act; strengthening enforcement of immigration laws; simplifying the tax code; reducing government spending; privatizing Social Security and Medicare; and protecting the rights of gun owners.

Committees: Bost serves on the Agriculture, Transportation & Infrastructure, and Veterans' Affairs committees and is a member of the House pro-life caucus.

Recent Elections: In the 2014 election, Bost unseated the Democratic incumbent 53% to 42%. He did even better in the 2016 cycle, winning 54% to 40%.

Strengths: Bost's endorsers include the Illinois Education Association, the largest labor union in the state. In the 2014 election, Democrats attempted to weaken Bost by using a video of him ranting in the statehouse, but the move backfired by making Bost a voice for angry voters.

Potential Weaknesses: Bost voted against equal pay for women, denies the effects of climate change, and supports privatizing the immensely popular Social Security and Medicare programs. An effort to create local jobs by bringing the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency's western headquarters to IL-12 flopped. He also is considered the least bipartisan member of the Illinois delegation, the majority of which is Democratic.

About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat Brendan Kelly is the challenger for IL-12's seat in the House. He is currently the State's Attorney for St. Clair County and is a U.S. Navy veteran.

Issues: Kelly's issues are strengthening organized labor to rebuild infrastructure including bringing reliable internet access to everyone in the district, job creation, and protecting Scott Air Force Base. He also supports the Affordable Healthcare Act and has advocated for stronger mental health and addiction services to combat the opioid epidemic, which has been a significant focus of his campaign. Kelly is also outspoken about getting money out of politics.

Strengths: Kelly is well-known and widely respected in IL-12 for his work as the State's Attorney in St. Clair County. He is known for taking on political corruption cases, creating a children's justice division to focus on domestic and child assault cases, and has taken on cases against big pharmaceutical manufacturers, suing them for maximizing profits by deceiving patients about the dangers of certain prescribed opioids. He is from a vote-rich portion of the district, raised more funds than Bost in two of the last three quarters, and received more votes in his primary than Bost (39,904 to 31,506).



IL-12: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Belleville, 43,660
- Granite City, 29,710
- O'Fallon, 28,840
- Alton, 27,640
- East St. Louis, 26,830
- Carbondale, 26,220

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 127K (40%)
- Trump: 174K (55%)

2016 House Results

- Baricevic (D): 124K (40%)
- Bost (R): 170K (54%)
- Other: 19K (6%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 235K
- Eligible, not registered: 104K

2014 House Results

- Enyart (D): 88K (42%)
- Bost (R): 110K (52%)
- Other: 12K (6%)

IL-12: Better Know a District

Geography

IL-12 is one of the largest congressional districts in Illinois, spanning much of the southern portion of the state from the Mississippi River in the west to Carbondale and Mt. Vernon in the east, Alton in the north, and Cairo in the south. Much of "Metro East," the densely populated eastern suburbs of St. Louis, sits in the district. But so do many rural areas. Even suburban towns tend to be separated by farmland.

Citizenry

The district is overwhelmingly white (77%), but socioeconomically diverse. The liberal, racially diverse areas are in the northwest, particularly the commuter suburbs of St. Louis. Other liberal pockets include the college town of Carbondale, where the Green Party does well, and Cairo, a majority African-American city. The district has a high unemployment rate of 10%, and a low college graduation rate of 21%.

Elections

Historically, IL-12 has voted Democratic in presidential elections. The Democratic candidate took the district in every presidential race between 2000 and 2012. The streak ended in 2016, when Trump, who lost Illinois overall, trounced Clinton in the district, 55% to 40%. In the past two cycles, the district's Green Party candidate has done better in IL-12 than the party's candidate in any other House or Senate race in the country.

Higher Education

There are three higher education institutions in the district as well as part of a fourth university town, Edwardsville. Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, is the most prominent campus, with 17,292 students.

Industries

The largest industries in IL-12 are education, healthcare, social assistance, retail, and manufacturing. Although higher education had been a large employer in the past, Illinois' budget impasse, combined with declining university enrollment at Southern Illinois, Carbondale, has hurt the local economy. Scott Air Force Base is also a large employer, both civilian and military. It recently added new cybersecurity squadrons. The steel, oil-refining and coal industries, once significant revenue generators, have declined in recent years.