

102nd General Assembly

Office of the Senate President

The Senate President is the presiding officer of the Illinois Senate, elected by the 59 members of the Senate to serve a two-year term. The Illinois Constitution, statutes and rules define the functions and responsibilities of the office.

The President appoints Senate members to standing committees and to permanent and interim study commissions, designating one member as chair. The President also appoints the Majority Leader and Assistant Majority Leaders, who serve as officers of the Senate.

With the Speaker of the House, the Senate President shares primary responsibility for legislative procedures and operations. By strategically directing the flow of legislation, the President ultimately sets the pace of work in the Senate. The President is required to approve all vouchers for the expenditure of funds appropriated for use by the Senate and to certify that all bills passed by the Senate are in accordance with Senate rules.

As chair of the Senate Operations Commission, the President oversees a seven-member management committee responsible for deciding Senate policy, hiring Senate employees, purchasing supplies, renting equipment, and maintaining the Senate chambers and office, among other duties.

In addition to presiding over the Senate, the President is the leader of the majority party in the Legislature's upper chamber. Likewise, the Senate Minority Leader, selected by the minority party and formally elected by all Senate members, speaks on behalf of the minority party. Responsibilities of the Senate Minority Leader include appointing members to serve on certain boards, commissions and standing committees, and selecting assistant leaders and staff.



Don Harmon
Senate President

Don Harmon (Democrat) built a reputation over nearly two decades in the Illinois State Senate as both a champion of Democratic values and an individual who is willing to work across the aisle to fight for hardworking Illinoisans.

Harmon, an Oak Park native, was first elected to the Illinois Senate in the fall of 2002. During his time in the General Assembly, he supported early childhood education, ethics reform, curbing gun violence, protecting civil rights and expanding voter access.

He also worked to protect Illinois' natural resources, promote renewable energy and enhance economic opportunity for all.

In January 2020, Harmon was elected by his colleagues to serve as the 39th President of the Illinois Senate, vowing to lead a new era of ethical progress as the Senate works to rebuild trust in public service and rationalize state tax policy.

Harmon was almost immediately tasked with leading the Senate through the challenges of COVID-19. He swiftly took steps to keep members, staff and their families safe. He oversaw rule changes to ensure the Senate could convene remotely, allowing vital business to continue.

Harmon has an undergraduate degree from Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., and a law degree and an MBA from the University of Chicago. He was a founding member of the Boat Drink Caucus band, a bipartisan group of lawmakers who set aside politics to perform and entertain at small venues across the state.

He and his wife, Teresa, have three children — Don, Frances and Margaret.

Kimberly A. Lightford (Democrat) began serving as the first Black woman Senate Majority Leader in January 2019. She was sworn in as a Senator representing the 4th Legislative District in November 1998. In 2009, she was appointed Assistant Majority Leader.



Kimberly A. Lightford
Senate Majority Leader

Lightford is known as an education expert, starting the state’s universal preschool program, putting the best teachers in classrooms, and reforming disciplinary practices that were disproportionately affecting at-risk and minority students. She is responsible for raising the minimum wage in Illinois three times, including gradually increasing it to \$15 per hour. As the youngest Black woman elected to the Senate, she led legislation that established the Equal Pay Act. When serving as chair of the Legislative Black Caucus, she led the General Assembly in passing a four-pillar agenda to rid Illinois of systemic racism.

A lifelong resident of her district, Lightford was born in Chicago and raised in Maywood. Lightford holds a bachelor’s in public communications from Western Illinois University and a master’s of public administration from the University of Illinois at Springfield.

Lightford is committed to community pride. She offers free programs in her district, including supplemental services in reading, math and writing for middle school students. Each year, she honors grandparents raising grandchildren in a special ceremony and hosts a back-to-school event that provides school supplies and a fun day to hundreds of children at Brookfield Zoo. She also sponsors events to help inform men about prostate cancer and women about breast cancer.



Dan McConchie
Senate Republican Leader

Dan McConchie (Republican) was elected to serve as the Illinois Senate Republican Leader in January 2021 and has served as state Senator for the 26th District since 2016.

Prior to his election as leader, McConchie served as a caucus budget negotiator, advocating for responsible state spending and lower taxes. He currently serves on the Senate Executive Committee and Redistricting Committee.

Throughout his tenure as a legislator, he has supported policies and legislation that promote job growth, smaller and smarter government, and ethics reforms to root out corruption. He was instrumental in negotiating an overhaul to the state’s school funding system to ensure more equity and state support was allocated to Illinois’ neediest schools. He is a member of the Move Over Task Force that proposes ways to improve and protect law enforcement, other emergency responders and motorists who are stopped on the side of Illinois roads.

McConchie served nine years in the Army National Guard. He spent 20 years working in public affairs for national advocacy groups and two years as an adjunct professor at Trinity International University. He is currently an energy consultant with Verde Solutions.

He has a B.A. in biblical studies from Central Bible College and an M.A. in Christian thought with an emphasis in bioethics from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

McConchie and his wife, Milena, reside in Hawthorn Woods and have two adult daughters.

Office of the Speaker of the House

The Speaker of the House of Representatives derives responsibility and influence over legislative activities through statutes, constitutional mandates and House rules of procedure. Chosen by members of the House, the Speaker invites participation from a wide range of philosophies from members of both parties in determining a legislative agenda.

As the presiding officer of the House, the Speaker determines when the House will meet and what type of business it will conduct. As manager of debate on bills, resolutions and amendments, the Speaker is responsible for recognizing members, formally calling votes, deciding parliamentary issues and maintaining decorum in the House chambers.

The comprehensive duties of the office include managing all House offices, facilities, professional and clerical staff, custodians, and security personnel. Administratively, the Speaker signs and authenticates all acts, proceedings, orders, writs, warrants and subpoenas issued by the House.

In organizing a team to help ensure smooth operation of House proceedings, the Speaker selects the Majority Leader, Deputy Majority Leaders and Assistant Majority Leaders. The Speaker may appoint chairs and majority members of standing committees, which are the public forums of proposed legislation.

Traditionally, the Office of the Speaker of the House has a profound bearing on the effectiveness of Illinois government and citizen representation in the state.



Emanuel “Chris” Welch
Speaker of the House

Emanuel “Chris” Welch (Democrat) has served as a state Representative in the Illinois General Assembly since January 2013. On January 13, 2021, Welch was elected Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives, becoming the first Black lawmaker to hold the position in this state. Prior to becoming Speaker, Welch served as chair of the House Executive Committee and the Higher Education Committee.

As state Representative, Welch focused on improving classroom education, creating jobs, helping the most vulnerable and streamlining government. Welch was the chief sponsor of the historic Illinois Trust Act — the law making Illinois a welcoming state for immigrants — and the Homeless Bill of Rights. Speaker Welch is also a leading voice for adding people of color to the boards of publicly held corporations after sponsoring landmark legislation that requires Illinois corporations to annually disclose their board composition.

Welch has been recognized numerous times for his legislative record, including the prestigious Zeke Giorgi Award from the AFL-CIO and the Friend of Education Award from the Illinois Education Association.

Prior to joining the General Assembly, Welch served 12 years on the Proviso Township High School Board of Education, serving as the board chair for 10 years. Welch led the Proviso School Board in the creation of the Proviso Math and Science Academy, a school that today is recognized for excellence by *Chicago Magazine* and *U.S. News & World Report*. He accomplished this and managed to balance the school’s budget for the first time since the early ’90s.

Welch is of counsel at the law firm Ancel Glink. Prior to that, he served as a partner at Sanchez, Daniels and Hoffman, LLP from 2007 to 2018. Welch has been recognized as a Super Lawyer and one of Chicago’s Leading Lawyers.

Welch received his B.A. from Northwestern University and his J.D. from The John Marshall Law School (JMLS). He is a 2016 inductee into The JMLS Wall of Fame.

Welch and his wife, ShawnTe, have two children — Tyler and Marley.



Greg Harris
Majority Leader

Greg Harris (Democrat) was elected to the Illinois General Assembly in 2006 and became Majority Leader of the House of Representatives in 2019. Harris represents the 13th District, which includes parts of Uptown, Ravenswood, Lincoln Square, North Center, West Ridge and Bowmanville. A gay elected official who is also openly living with HIV, Harris is the first openly gay person in Illinois to become a member of legislative leadership.

Harris has been a major sponsor of health care reform and insurance reform, and he has led House Democrats' efforts to rein in the cost of prescription drugs and to protect lifesaving services like breast cancer screenings, child care and health care for the elderly. In 2013, Harris led a historic effort to make Illinois one of the first states to pass legislation ensuring equal rights for same-sex couples. He continues to focus on the needs of Illinois' homeless and at-risk youth, comprehensive breast cancer services, marriage equality, trans issues, protecting people with disabilities, nursing home quality, and affordable health care.

Harris previously served as House Majority Conference Chair, chaired the Appropriations-Human Services Committee and served as the House Democrats' lead budget negotiator. Harris is a member of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Leadership Council. He also served as chair on the Violence Prevention Task Force and is a member of the Racial and Ethnic Impact Research Task Force, the Quality of Life Board, and the House Task Force on Sexual Discrimination and Harassment.

Jim Durkin (Republican) was first elected House Minority Leader in August 2013. He served in the House from 1995 to 2002, when he became the Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate. He returned to the General Assembly in 2006 when he was elected to represent the 82nd District.

In 2008-09, Representative Durkin served as the ranking Republican on the House Special Investigative Impeachment Committee that recommended impeachment and removal from office for former Gov. Blagojevich. During the 99th General Assembly, Durkin sponsored the Illinois firearm trafficking law to keep illegally acquired guns out of the hands of gang members. He also successfully negotiated property tax freeze legislation and legislation to combat Illinois' heroin crisis. Prior to being elected Republican Leader, Durkin served as an Assistant Republican Leader, was a member of the Illinois Task Force on Gang Violence, fought to protect children from sexual predators and is a founding member of the Illinois Legislative Diabetes Caucus.

Durkin received his bachelor's from Illinois State University and his law degree from The John Marshall Law School. He is a former assistant Cook County state's attorney and assistant Illinois attorney general and currently serves as counsel for the law firm of Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr, LLP.

Durkin and his wife live in Western Springs with their family.



Jim Durkin
Republican Leader