



# ADLER UNIVERSITY

Department of Community Engagement

## Down-ballot Voting

Most voters recognize and understand the function of federal offices (such as President of the United States), but few fully understand the role of down-ballot local offices (such as Comptroller). Local offices help to govern our state, counties, and cities. They impact our daily life by setting our taxes, building our local infrastructure, and allocating funds to neighborhood development. Local offices in general elections are known as down-ballot contests because they are listed after federal offices. This guide will help you to understand the responsibilities of local offices labeled as down-ballot contests in the 2016 Presidential election. Offices in the guide are specifically drawn from the Chicago Cook County ballot.

### United States Senate

United States Senators propose and vote for legislation at the federal level. They are responsible for confirming appointments (such as Supreme Court Justices and U.S. ambassadors) and oversee trials for impeachment of federal officials. They are part of the upper chamber of congress and make up one half of the United States bicameral legislature. Illinois is entitled to two United States Senators. United States Senators serve a six-year term; terms are staggered. About 1/3 of United State Senate seats are up for election this year. Only one Senate seat will be up for a vote in Illinois; this seat is held by incumbent Mark Kirk (R). To learn about Senator Kirk and his opponents, please visit [ballotready.org](http://ballotready.org).

### United States House of Representatives

United States House of Representatives propose and vote for legislation at the federal level. They also have the power to impeach federal officials and initiate revenue bills. They are part of the lower chamber of house and complete the bicameral legislature. There are a total of 435 U.S. House Representatives; Illinois is home to 18 representatives. Representatives oversee congressional districts divided by state population. Representatives serve two-year terms. All 18 Illinois United States House of Representative seats will be up for election this year. To learn about your representative and his or her opponents, please visit [ballotready.org](http://ballotready.org).

### Illinois Comptroller

The Comptroller is responsible for monitoring and maintaining Illinois fiscal accounts. This person works closely with the state treasury to write checks to state employees and state creditors. The Comptroller also has the additional duty to regulate and maintain Illinois cemeteries. This is a four-year position.

Illinois' current Comptroller is Leslie Munger (R); she was appointed by Governor Rauner (R) in response to the sudden death of former Illinois Comptroller Judy Bar Topinka (R). For information on the incumbent and her opponents, please visit [ballotready.org](http://ballotready.org).

### Illinois State Senate

State Senators propose and vote for state legislation. They are a part of the upper house of the Illinois General Assembly. The Illinois State Senate consists of 59 senators, representing 59 legislative districts in Illinois. Legislative districts are based on population. State Senators hold two-year terms between censuses and two four-year terms after the census is collected. This is due to the mandatory redistricting reflecting changes in the census. State Senators are grouped into three different rotating cohorts for election cycles; this year only 40 out of the 59 State Senate seats will be up for a vote. For information on your State Senator and whether or not his or her seat is up for election, please visit [ballotready.org](http://ballotready.org).