

Learning a new district

Tony McCombie running for 89th general assembly district after redistricting

by Brandon Beblke

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GALENA—Less than 3 percent—that's the amount of her current district that State Rep. Tony McCombie, a Republican currently serving in the 71st district, will be representing after the state's General Assembly districts were redrawn last year. Her new district is the redrawn 89th.



Tony McCombie

The 89th district is currently served by Republican Rep. Andrew Chesney, who recently announced his plans to replace state Sen. Brian Stewart, who has decided to retire.

McCombie has served the 71st district since 2017 and has crisscrossed her previous district to learn about the people and meet local leaders. She is now having to do so again for a new district while continuing to serve current constituents.

McCombie is comfortable with many local leaders in the 89th through her experience as mayor of Savanna. In that role, McCombie became a close acquaintance to many Jo Daviess County mayors, many of whom are still serving their communities today.

McCombie served as mayor of Savanna from 2012 until her election as state representative.

"It all started from me opening a business on Main Street in Savanna," said McCombie. "That got me involved with the chamber of commerce and that got me involved in being on the city council."

McCombie decided to run for the state house against Mike Smiddy after realizing that Savanna's voice wasn't being heard in Springfield.

"We were always told to be prepared that after

the census, that my district would be extended more to the south and that it would be more of the Quad Cities," said McCombie. "We always had that in our minds. When the first map came out, we thought about exploring the option of running for state senate because Neil Anderson's district shifted completely south."

After about seven different maps, McCombie decided it was best for her to stay in the General Assembly and continue to reside in Savanna.

"The new district is only 2.7 percent my own, so it is all new, and it is like I am starting all over," said McCombie. "However, I have a lot of relationships with the mayors and community leaders, so I have been meeting with people and it has been fun to do that."

McCombie is currently in the process of getting acclimated to her new district after filing her paperwork to run for the 89th. She also has past experience in the Freeport area as she formerly worked at MetLife.

Along with serving in the General Assembly, McCombie is also a realtor and real estate appraiser, with a lot of her work taking place in Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago counties. McCombie enjoys getting out to the communities and participates in many fundraisers and events.

"Most of the towns in my new district are between 1,800 and 2,600," said McCombie. "These are the type of towns that I know. We all have to be creative on our small town Main streets and have to learn to reinvent ourselves."

McCombie believes small towns have been hit hardest by policies approved in Springfield.

"People leave our communities to go to other states," said McCombie. "We have a real struggle here."

As state representative, McCombie understands part of her job is also to help constituents navigate the state agencies.

"Our agencies in the state are a nightmare," said McCombie.

McCombie is focused on three areas of policy: education, state budgetary reform and public safety.

"I am a strong advocate for public education. I feel it is important to have less mandates," said McCombie. "Teachers need to teach, rather than teach to the test. Our teachers have really become caregivers to kids. I want to work with wraparound services and also have less mandates."

McCombie believes it is important for districts to have more local control.

"People ask why I am a Republican, and it is because I believe in less government, because we don't do it right, whether it is the state or the federal government," said McCombie. "It gets better with local communities, they do it way better than we do, and that is because they are smaller."

Criminal justice reform is also important to McCombie, who serves on the judicial-criminal law committee as well as the minority spokesperson for the restorative justice committee.

"I do believe in criminal justice reform," said McCombie. "However, what they have done in Springfield completely knocked that out of the window. They still aren't looking at the root causes on why things are happening and why teenagers are killing people in Chicago."

McCombie also believes the state needs to balance its budget better.

"I want to know what buckets these expenses are coming from and those are things that we don't know," said McCombie. "The budget process in Springfield is so broken compared to local government where you can see where everything is going. We need to bring more transparency to the budget process."

McCombie is looking forward to crisscrossing the new district and meeting new people.

1972: Apple River gets a new dog pound

10 years ago
Feb. 8, 2012

If the Galena School Board agrees with the Core Planning Group's recommended plan, they will be looking for \$34.4 million to construct a

FROM THE PAGES OF THE GALENA GAZETTE

preschool through 12th grade school all under one roof.

Speaking to a crowd of more than 50 people at the new village hall, in the Highland Community College building, Elizabeth Village President Michael Dittmar held his first "State of the Village" meeting, sharing his thoughts on the village's accomplishments in 2011 and their plans for the future in 2012.

For some it's staggering to realize just over six months have passed since the skies opened up and dumped more than a foot of rain on parts of Jo Daviess County, hitting the city of East Dubuque particularly hard. For others, however, the devastation that resulted from those few short hours of downpour are still very real as they continue to pick up the pieces and move forward with their lives. City officials in East Dubuque say that slowly but surely the city is embracing a sense of normalcy while continuing to focus on how best to move forward and ensure the city is never left in such a position again.

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25 years ago
Feb. 5, 1997

The Galena City Council has advertised for preliminary "ball park" estimates on drawings for a downsized addition to Turner Hall. The request came almost as an afterthought in a discussion of ordering an engineering analysis of the surface deterioration of the terra cotta walls of the flyloft of the building.

Jenny Ertmer, Elizabeth; Staci Edmonds, Stephanie Kaiser and Stefanie Weis, all of Galena; and Amber Glasgow, Scales Mound, have been named to the dean's list at Loras College.

50 years ago
Feb. 10, 1972

Paul Harris, son of M. and Mrs. Charles Harris of Galena, will celebrate his first birthday Feb. 11. Paul has two brothers, Chuckie, 10, and Mike, 9.

Apple River's old jail is about to be used for a dog pound to try to put an end to the nuisance of dogs running loose in the village. The village has an ordinance which states that owners who let dogs run loose will be fined, but many of these dogs have no owners apparently and need to be restricted. LaDon Trost, a part-time policeman, will serve as a dog catcher.

William J. Willis, son of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Willis, Galena, has been commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force.

75 years ago
Feb. 13, 1947

The jingle of sleigh bells took the place of the rattle of automobile chains in the Galena downtown district Thursday and Friday as farmers dug themselves out and came to town to bobsled after being isolated for more than a week.

Pfc. Howard Kern is spending a five-day leave with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. Kern on West Street. He will return to Fort Lewis, Wash.

Eugene Whitmore, editor of American Business, is a man who knows our country well and as businessman and tourist he has visited most of America's cities. In the March issue of Pageant, Whitmore recalls the cities he has found hospitable and ranks Galena way up on top as one of the friendliest.

100 years ago
Feb. 11, 1922

Nick Velis, who conducts a shoe shine shop on Main Street, is ill at his home on South Main Street with an attack of the gripe.

The use of alcohol to keep the radiators from freezing has played a large part in influencing auto owners to drive their cars the year around lately instead of utilizing them one nine-months of the year, according to garage men. Heretofore the principal reason for locking the bus up for the winter was caused largely for the fear that the radiator would freeze, causing much damage to the machine.

Frank McDonald, 63 years, passed away this morning at his home in West Galena after a lingering illness. He was born in West Galena and lived on the same farm all his life.



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East Dubuque art honors



Hailey Heiar, right, is the recipient of the January art award, a monthly award given by East Dubuque art teacher Tai Thew, left. Thew wrote that Heiar is "new" to the art world but her consistent effort and positive attitude are already contagious in the art studio. "Hailey is a bright light," said Thew. "Even when she feels overwhelmed, she takes a deep breath and tries her best anyway. We are only one project into the semester and her artwork is as strong as her work ethic. She is a welcome addition to the room." *Contributed photo*

Meskwaki Food Sovereignty Initiative explained March 8

SINSINAWA, Wis.—Join Christina Blackcloud, coordinator of the Meskwaki Food Sovereignty Initiative (MFSI), as she shares a brief history of the Meskwaki tribe and information about the MFSI. The event, sponsored by Sinsinawa Mound Center, will be held online from 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 8.

The group's mission statement reads, "MFSI emphasizes the impact of local foods, indigenous foods, and medicines in supporting the health and well-being of our community, while strengthening the economy, healing relationships with the land, and celebrating cultural identity."

There is a fee and the registration deadline is March 7 at 4 p.m. Register by calling 608-748-4411 or visiting sinsinawa.org/moundcenter.

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