



Written by [James Murphy](#) on November 8, 2024

Seven More Illinois Counties Vote to Study Separation From Chicago/Cook County

Seven more conservative-leaning Illinois counties have voted to consider a divorce from Chicago and Cook County. Rural Illinois counties, feeling that the Windy City and its county have an outsized influence in the politics and culture of their state, are studying a separation.

Residents of Iroquois County, Calhoun County, Clinton County, Greene County, Jersey County, Madison County, and Perry County [voted in the affirmative](#) when asked:

Shall the board of (the county) correspond with the boards of other counties of Illinois, outside of Cook County, about the possibility of separating from Cook County to form a new state and to seek admission to the Union as such, subject to the approval of the people?



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The referendum was nonbinding; the results mean that 33 Illinois counties have voted to consider forming their own state.

The seven counties voted to study secession in some overwhelming numbers: Calhoun, 77 percent; Jersey, 76 percent; Greene, 74 percent; Iroquois, 73 percent; Clinton, 73 percent; Perry, 72 percent; and Madison, 57 percent.

Madison County, near St. Louis, is the first suburban county to join the movement, and the largest thus far, with a population of more than 260,000.

The organization New Illinois has been pushing the secession-type movement for several years. “All power in Illinois government is concentrated in Cook County and Chicago. This leaves the rest of the [state’s] residents with no real representation,” said New Illinois.

“Downstate Illinois [feels that] their needs are not being addressed, they’re not being represented in the legislature,” [said](#) political science expert Kent Redfield.

No Vote Allowed

Politicians in Springfield have been cool to the idea that some citizens might wish to form their own state.

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul blasted the idea:

It is my opinion that non-home-rule counties ... do not have the authority to secede from the



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state of Illinois and join another state. Accordingly, any referendum on the issue of county secession would have no binding legal effect.... The admissions clause [of the U.S. Constitution] grants Congress the power to admit new states and prevents a subdivision of an existing state from breaking away without the state's consent.

Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker suggested that the state government shouldn't even allow the counties to vote on the issue.

"The idea that someplace in Illinois wants to kick out another place in Illinois should not be on the ballot, shouldn't be something that's part of the lexicon and discussion of politicians. We're one state, supporting each other," Pritzker said in May.

Potential Hurdles

Redfield pointed out some drawbacks to creating a new state. "The majority of economic activity, and the majority of tax revenue that is generated by the state of Illinois comes from northeastern Illinois."

"You need the approval of the federal government," Redfield added. "You need an act of Congress, signed by the president. That would have a requirement that the Illinois legislature approves of splitting the state of Illinois in two."

But if the counties can't create a new state, perhaps they can join one more aligned with their values. This would mimic how many Oregon counties are hoping to join neighboring Idaho. The Red-State Secession blog has proposed moving dissatisfied Illinoisans to Indiana, Missouri, or Kentucky. There are fiscal incentives for these states, the blog pointed out.

The [Greater Idaho movement](#) and the Illinois separatists show one thing. Rural Americans don't like leftist cities controlling their lives, and they're looking for a way out.



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