

# CONVENTION AGENDA

Illinois Press Foundation/Association

## 2026 CONVENTION

June 4, 2026

PAR-A-DICE HOTEL & CASINO  
in East Peoria, IL

*Gathering together for over 161 years*



### Wednesday, June 3, 2026

3:00 – 5:00 P.M. EXHIBITOR SET-UP – Pre-Function Area

### Thursday, June 4, 2026

7:30 A.M. – 7:00 P.M. REGISTRATION DESK OPEN – Pre-Function Area  
*Sponsored by Daily Herald Media Group*

7:30 – 7:45 A.M. IPA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – Boardroom

7:15 – 10:15 A.M. CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST – Pre-Function Area  
*Sponsored by Shaw Media*

8:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M. EXHIBITOR BOOTHS OPEN – Pre-Function Area  
Come meet and mingle with other members and visit several vendor's booths.

9:00 – 10:00 A.M. AUDIENCE-FIRST: ADVERTISING GROWTH AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES  
- Salon CDE



Bob Smolik

#### Presenter: Bob Smolik of Chicago Tribune/Tribune Publishing

This session will focus on successful tactics and strategies in identifying and deploying media centered around specific audiences and data sets, which will include:

- The Importance of Research and Insights in Audience Identification: By using an example of research and personas within the Luxury consumer space, we will outline how to identify, segment, and target consumer groups

and think about audience segments.

- Leveraging First Party Data in Building Digital Traffic and Audience: Outlining how Tribune Publishing newsrooms are leveraging existing first-party data, particularly through newsletter opt-ins, to grow website traffic and engagement and create additional advertising opportunities.
- Integrated Audience Monetization by Leveraging Location-Based Strategies: Through the use of third-party partnerships, we'll highlight recent success in location-based marketing campaigns across consumer devices, with case studies in the grocery and financial sectors.

10:00 – 10:15 A.M. BREAK – Pre-Function Area  
*Sponsored by NuMark Credit Union*

10:15 – 11:30 A.M.

**UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES AND HOW TO SELL THEM TO YOUR LOCAL BUSINESSES – Salon CDE**

*Sponsored by CherryRoad Media*



Rob Cravaritis

**Presenter: Rob Cravaritis of Lee Enterprises**

D&D = Data & Digital. How Data is helping sell larger digital campaigns for local sellers.

11:30 - 1:30 P.M.

**IPA CONTEST AWARDS LUNCHEON WITH GUEST SPEAKER SENATOR DAVID KOEHLER AND DESSERT AUCTION – Salon A**



Senator David Koehler

Senator David Koehler will be the guest speaker during this luncheon. We will also hand out advertising awards and have a dessert auction. Randy Hoyland will be our auctioneer. All proceeds from the auction will go to the Illinois Press Foundation.

1:30 – 1:45 P.M.

**PHOTO OF WINNERS – Salon CDE**

1:45 – 2:45 P.M.

**REVENUE IDEA EXCHANGE – Salon CDE**

*Sponsored by Law Bulletin Media*



Adam Hrejsa

**Presenter: Adam Hrejsa with Law Bulletin Media**

Adam will share some great revenue generating ideas you can take home and use at your newspaper. Come prepared and bring your revenue generating ideas and win prizes!

2:45 – 3:00 A.M.

**BREAK – Pre-Function Area**

3:00 – 4:00 P.M.

**USING AI IN YOUR NEWSROOM TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND TELL BETTER STORIES – Salon CDE**



Chris Coates



Allison Petty

**Presenter: Chris Coates and Allison Petty with Lee Enterprises**

“AI MythBusters: Newsroom Edition” is a practical, real-world look at how artificial intelligence is being used in newsrooms today. Based on hands-on experience, this session cuts through the hype to focus on what works, what doesn’t and what journalists need to know right now. The session will include real examples of how journalists can use AI to identify story angles, analyze complex records and surface trends more quickly, while maintaining accuracy and trust. The program also addresses common misconceptions, outlines clear guardrails for responsible use, and provides practical ways newsrooms of any size can start using these tools immediately.

4:00 – 5:30 P.M. **IPA EDITORIAL AWARDS WITH VIDEO MESSAGES FROM GOVERNOR PRITZKER AND SENATOR DICK DURBIN –Salon B**  
Editorial Awards, General Excellence, Sweepstakes, Reporter, and Editor of the Year Awards will be announced and handed out.

5:30 – 5:45 P.M. **PHOTO OF WINNERS – Salon CDE**

5:30 - 6:30 P.M. **MINGLE WITH OUR EXHIBITORS & CHAIRMAN’S RECEPTION – Pre-Function Area**  
*Sponsored by Illinois Farm Bureau*  
A fun reception with hors d’ oeuvres and cocktails. Meet and reconnect with other members and vendors.

6:30 – 7:30 P.M. **CELEBRATION DINNER WITH GUEST SPEAKER REPUBLICAN GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE DARREN BAILEY – Salon A**  
*Sponsored by Allwyn*



The Republican candidate for governor in the 2026 General Election will be the guest speaker for the evening. We will also celebrate excellence by awarding the James C. Craven Freedom of the Press Award, Distinguished Service Award, and Friend of Journalism Award.

7:30 P.M. **MORE COCKTAILS – Hotel bar**

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