

## SPEAKER BIOS

### REPUBLICAN GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE DARREN BAILEY



Darren Bailey is a third-generation farmer, devoted husband, and lifelong conservative from rural Southern Illinois. He and his sons operate Bailey Family Farm, where he learned the values of hard work, integrity, and faith that continue to guide his life.

Darren and his wife Cindy, married 39 years, live by the motto *faith, family, and farming*. Together they founded a private Christian school, offering families a Christ-centered education. Darren also served 17 years on the North Clay Board of

Education, including 12 as President.

Elected to the Illinois House in 2018 and later the State Senate, Darren fought reckless spending, higher taxes, and sanctuary state policies. He refused a taxpayer-funded pension and championed tax relief and agriculture as lead Republican on the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Darren and Cindy live on their family farm near Louisville, where they enjoy time with their four married children and thirteen grandchildren. They worship at Freedom Church in Salem.

### CHRIS COATES



Chris Coates is a senior director - local news for Lee Enterprises, providing strategic leadership across more than 70 newsrooms in 25 states with a focus on audience strategy, newsroom leadership and emerging technologies. He is the former executive editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch in Virginia and is a 2026 Kiplinger Fellow at Ohio University.

### ROB CRAVARITIS



Rob Cravaritis is a high-impact media executive with over 20 years of experience driving digital transformation, revenue growth, and operational excellence across the advertising, media, and events industries. He currently serves as President of the Iowa Business Unit at Lee Enterprises, where he leads strategic initiatives to accelerate digital revenue, expand multi-platform marketing solutions, and optimize performance in both local and national markets.

Rob has held a number of senior leadership roles throughout his career, including Executive Vice President of Sales at Houston Chronicle Media Group, Vice President of Advertising and Publisher at the South Florida Sun Sentinel, Vice President of Sales at the Houston Business Journal, and Chief Revenue Officer at Hart Energy. In each of these positions, Rob has delivered strong, measurable

results in fast-paced, competitive environments. He is recognized for building and leading high-performing teams, developing scalable revenue models, identifying growth opportunities, and implementing data-driven strategies. His leadership style is anchored in accountability, transparency, and team alignment which has earned him a reputation for cultivating talent and driving peak performance.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Rob is a dedicated family man. He and his wife, Trish, enjoy supporting their children, Nicholas, a college football player, and Alexis, a competitive dancer, by traveling to games and dance competitions across the country. In his personal time, Rob enjoys golfing, traveling, and spending time with friends and family.

Rob holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from Frostburg State University.

## **ADAM HREJSA**



Adam Hrejsa leads the Sales Team at Law Bulletin Media. He joined the Law Bulletin 18.5 years ago and was recently named sales team leader for the advertising department, overseeing all aspects of the sales process - advertising, classifieds, sponsorship and events and team members.

## **SENATOR DAVID KOEHLER**



David Koehler was born and raised in South Dakota. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Yankton College, in Yankton, South Dakota in 1971. Three years later, he received a Masters of Divinity from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. From 1972 to 1978, was a staff member of the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM), working on behalf of migrant farm workers. Upon moving to Peoria in 1978, became a community organizer, and later, the program manager for Peoria Friendship House.

In 1985 was hired as the first Executive Director of PALM, the Peoria Area Labor Management Council, a not-for-profit organization founded to foster cooperation and participation between labor unions and management for both public and private sector groups. In 1992, also became the President for Labor Management Cooperative Health Programs, Inc, a wholly owned subsidiary of the PALM. LMC Health Programs is a purchasing cooperative organization dedicated to improving the quality and value of health care for its members and the community.

From 1982 to 1988, served on the Peoria County Board as a Democrat from District 5, and from 1989 to 1997, served on the Peoria City Council (non-partisan) from District 3, serving as Mayor Pro Tem from 1993 to 94. He also served on many boards and commissions with subjects ranging from labor-management relations to health care. He was elected to the Illinois Senate in 2006 and promoted to Majority Caucus Whip in 2018 and Assistant Majority Leader in 2019. He is married with three daughters, two sons-in-law, and one daughter-in-law. He is also the happy grandfather of three granddaughters and one grandson.

## ALLISON PETTY



Allison Petty leads the Lee Enterprises Local News Division's AI initiatives. A Salem, Illinois, native, she worked in markets across the state as a reporter and editor before serving as a director - local news for the company.

## BOB SMOLIK



**Director, Research & Category Insights, Tribune Publishing**

***Marketing Professional | Research Partner | B2B Brand Storyteller | Presentation Specialist***

With nearly 20 years in the digital media, sponsored content, broadcast, print, custom research and direct mail industries, Bob has worked to create unique audience and advertising strategies across all categories of business—from digital classified verticals to clients of all sizes within the home, healthcare, grocery, education and financial sectors.

Bob has partnered with editorial newsrooms at the Chicago Tribune and other Tribune Publishing properties to develop innovative advertising and audience programs, including client-sponsored initiatives around key anniversaries, topics of interest, and growth segments.

Through the management of Tribune Publishing's conversion-based marketing group, Bob has built campaigns that combine direct mail, email, social media and display messaging on a 1:1 integrated audience level—delivering exacting ROI and customer matchback analytics. Through a blend of research, marketing and sales knowledge, Bob focuses on crafting compelling audience-based narratives and integrated marketing strategies backed by audience metrics, analytics and insights.