

# A Million Illinoisans Without Libraries? Let's Change That!

RSA Day  
April 8, 2026



(75 ILCS 5/1-2)

Sec. 1-2. Public libraries **may** be established under this Act by cities by action of the corporate authorities and by villages, incorporated towns and townships

(75 ILCS 16/1-10)

Sec. 1-10. Establishment of districts and libraries. To provide local public institutions of general education for citizens of Illinois, library districts and libraries **may** be established



# Terminology

**Universal Service:** Ensuring that every resident of Illinois has access to public library services regardless of where they live.

**Non-Resident:** An individual residing in Illinois who does not have his or her principal residence within the public library service area.

**Non-Resident Library Card:** The library card purchased by an individual residing in an area not taxed for public library service from a participating public library. (23 Ill. Adm. Code 3050.10)



1964

*A Plan for Public Library Development in Illinois –  
Library Development Committee(ILA)*

pattern in Illinois. As the population of Illinois has risen, the number of libraries has risen even faster. Yet, despite the increase in the number of libraries, there are more people in Illinois without local library service than there were fifteen years ago—almost one million more in fact. Another dis-



2000

*A Report from the Summit of the Unserved (ISL)*

**Library cards for all children.**

"Cards for Kids" ideas have been considered by the Illinois State Library and library systems.

- Non-resident cards should only be used as an interim answer, for an additional five years maximum.

Mandate universal library service; decrease reliance on property tax; increase state contribution to public library service

Work with real estate associations to require disclosure on whether or not public library service is provided for residential real estate property listings.



## RAILS BOARD STATEMENT ON UNIVERSAL LIBRARY SERVICE OCTOBER 2021

As long as even one Illinois resident does not have access to a public library, our state is not meeting its basic obligations to educate all residents.

Access to public libraries is a crucial part of early childhood literacy, lifelong learning and academic success. Illinois residents are at a disadvantage with other states that have universal service when they compete for college admission or jobs throughout their lives.

Since systems were established in 1967, Illinois librarians and stakeholders have been discussing how to establish universal library service in our state. In the Illinois Library System Act which established the systems and still governs them, responsibility is specifically given to systems to find ways to serve the unserved.



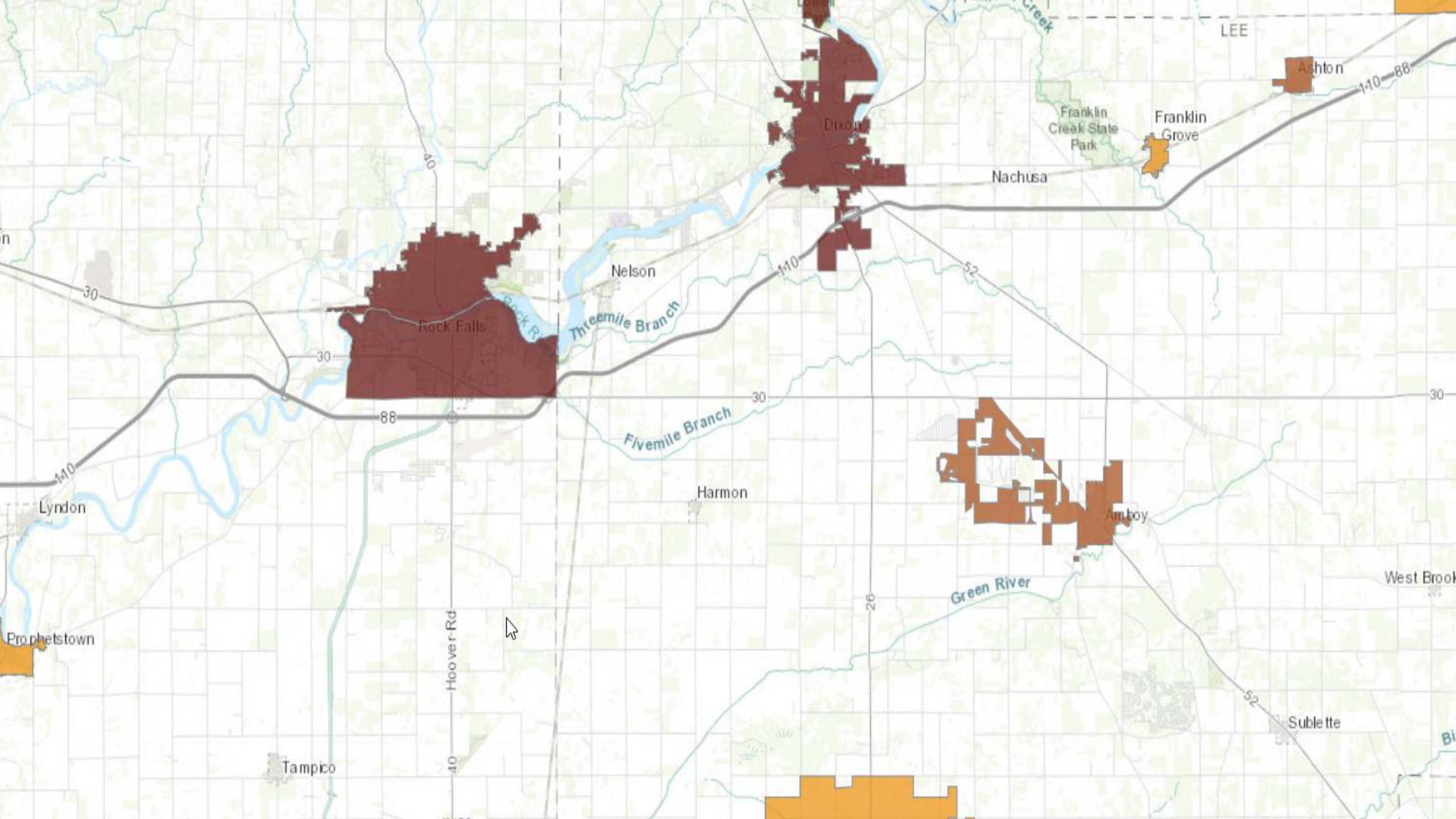
# Universal service plan

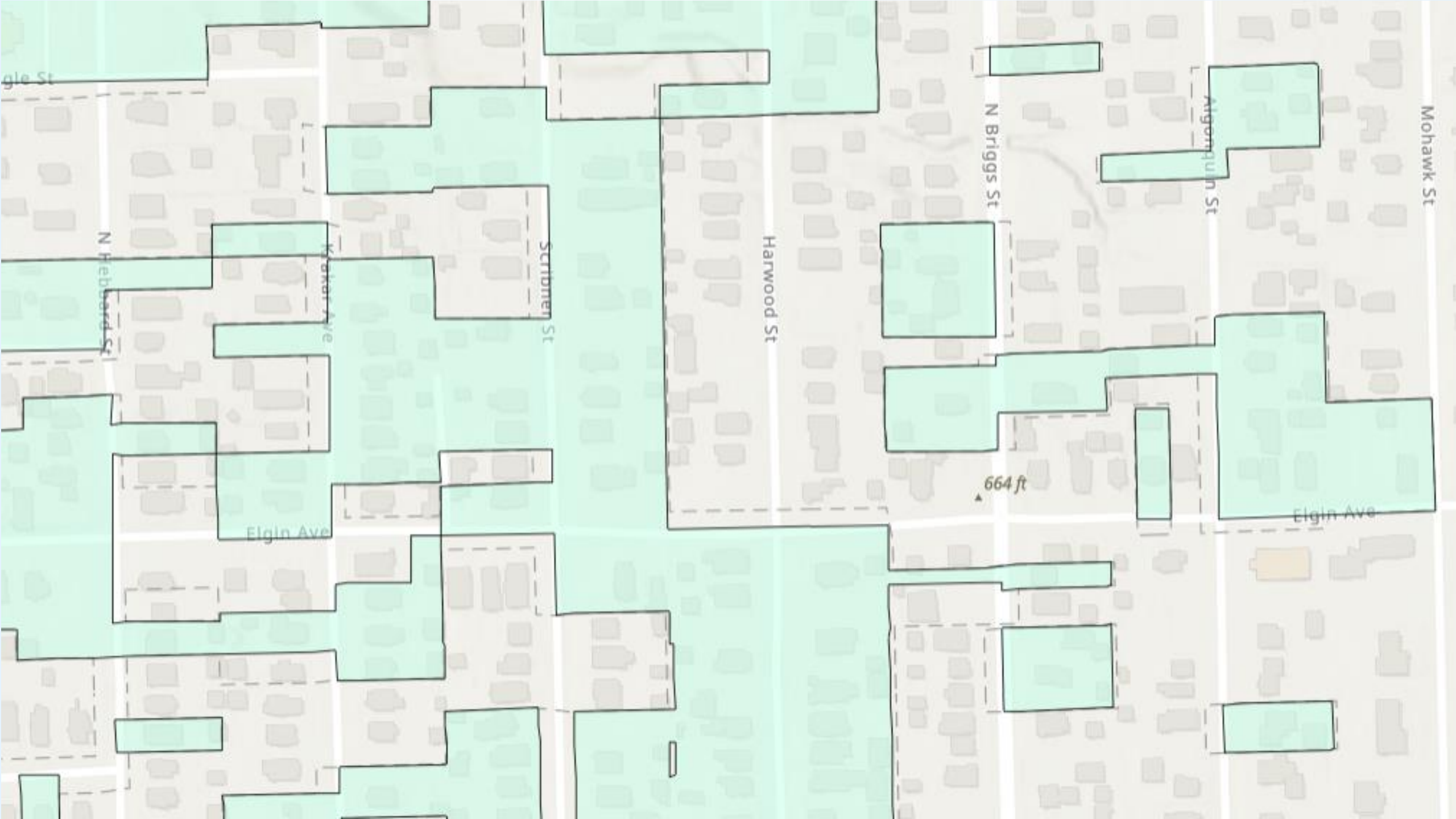
**Goal 1:** Gain an understanding of exactly who is unserved in Illinois and why

**Goal 2:** Simplify nonresident card laws and rules to eliminate confusion and to extend service to unserved residents through innovative projects and law and regulation changes

**Goal 3:** Demonstrate the economic and societal value of extending library service to the unserved







Mohawk St

Argonquin St

N Briggs St

Harwood St

Scribner St

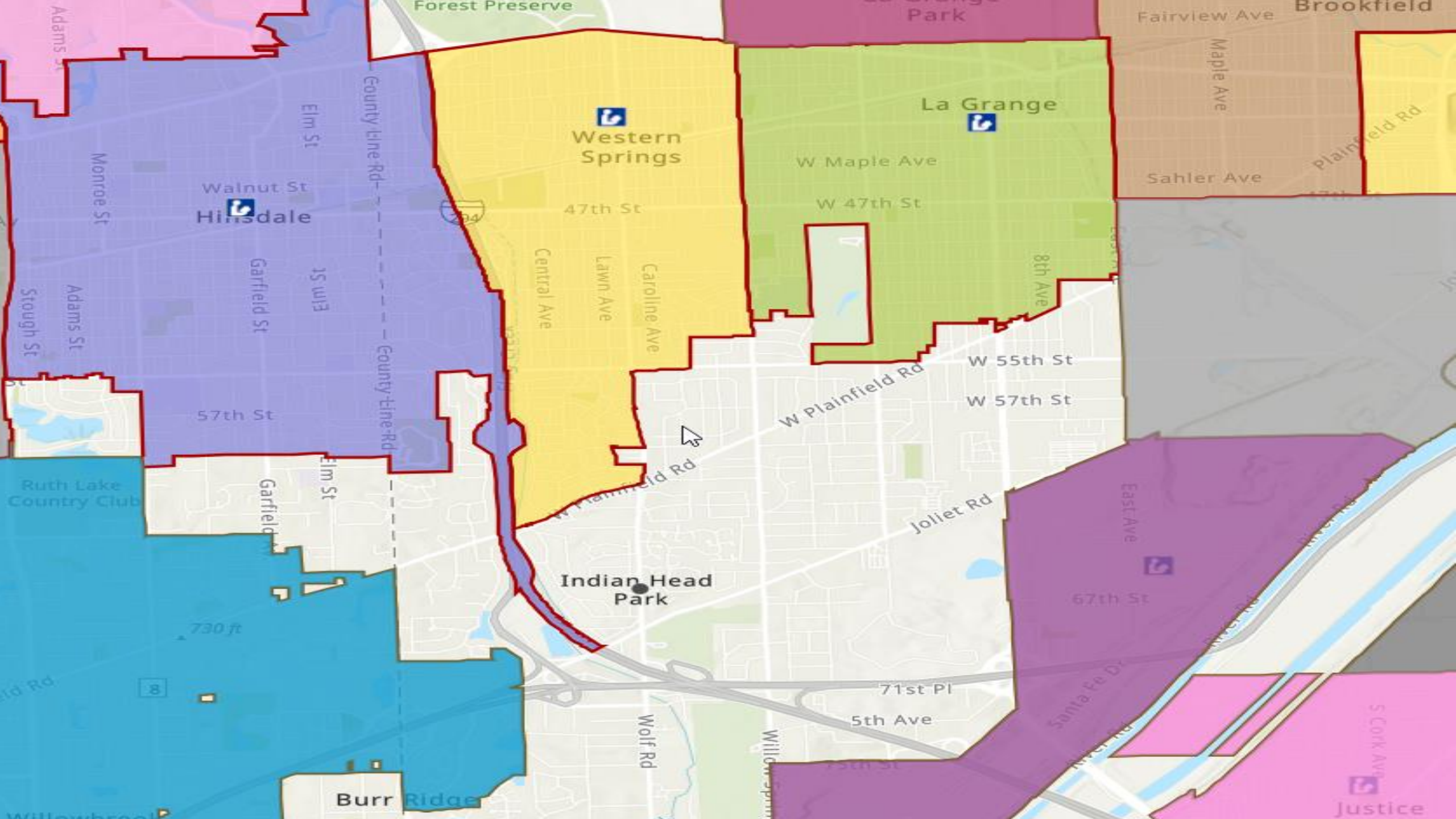
Kaskar Ave

N Febbard St

Elgin Ave

Elgin Ave

664 ft



**Western Springs**

**La Grange**

**Hinsdale**

**Indian Head Park**

**Burr Ridge**

**Justice**



# High school students inspire legislation to waive library card fees for students in unincorporated areas

Category: [Senator Laura Murphy News](#) – 📅 Wednesday, May 27, 2020 01:42 PM

[Slideshow](#)

[Murphy](#)

[School Libraries](#)



## Section 3050.75 Cards for Kids

the non-resident fee shall not be charged to students.... whose household income makes them eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program...



## Public Act 102-0843

*"The board may adopt regulations waiving the nonresident fee for persons under the age of 18"*



## Exemptions

A fee for an unincorporated library card shall not be charged to:

- children aged 18 and younger who do not reside within incorporated Northbrook
- veterans with a service-connected disability of at least 70% who is exempt from paying property taxes on their primary residence or who rents in an unincorporated area.
- the unmarried surviving spouse of a veteran who qualified for this exemption prior to death.
- an unmarried surviving spouse of a service member killed in the line of duty.

Qualifying veterans or surviving spouses must present documentation that indicates their residence is exempt from paying property taxes. The veteran shall present documentation of at least 70% disability from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

# Case Studies from a Few RAILS Libraries

Bridging Geographic Gaps with IGAs:

- **Roselle** with Keeneyville and Medinah
- **Des Plaines** with Rosemont
- **Glenview** with Roselle
- **Joliet** with Rockdale and Joliet Township
- **Downers Grove** with Oak Brook, Westmont, Indian Prairie and Woodridge

Comprehensive School Registration with Student Success Program and Cards for Kids:

**White Oak, Downers Grove, Roselle and Des Plaines**

**Glenview:** Collaborative funding model with Friends of Library Endowment Cards



# Community Services at Community Colleges



# Every community college is a library system member.

39

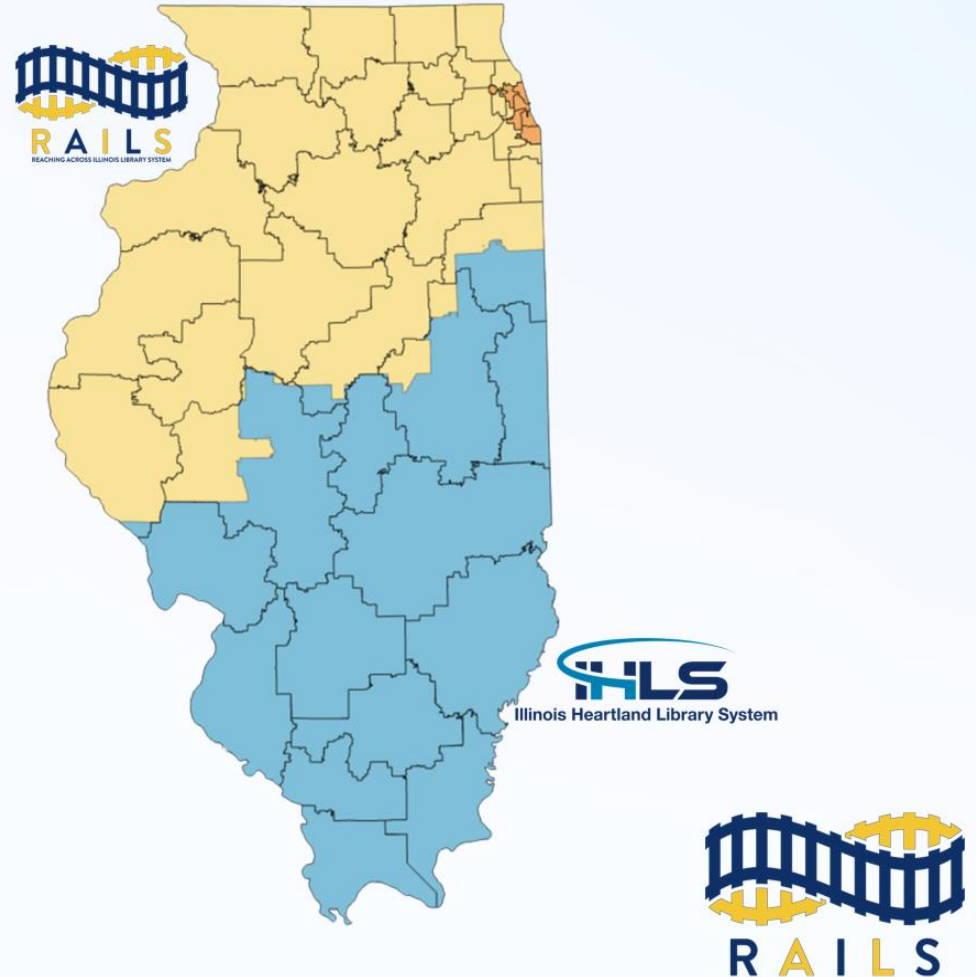
community college districts

48

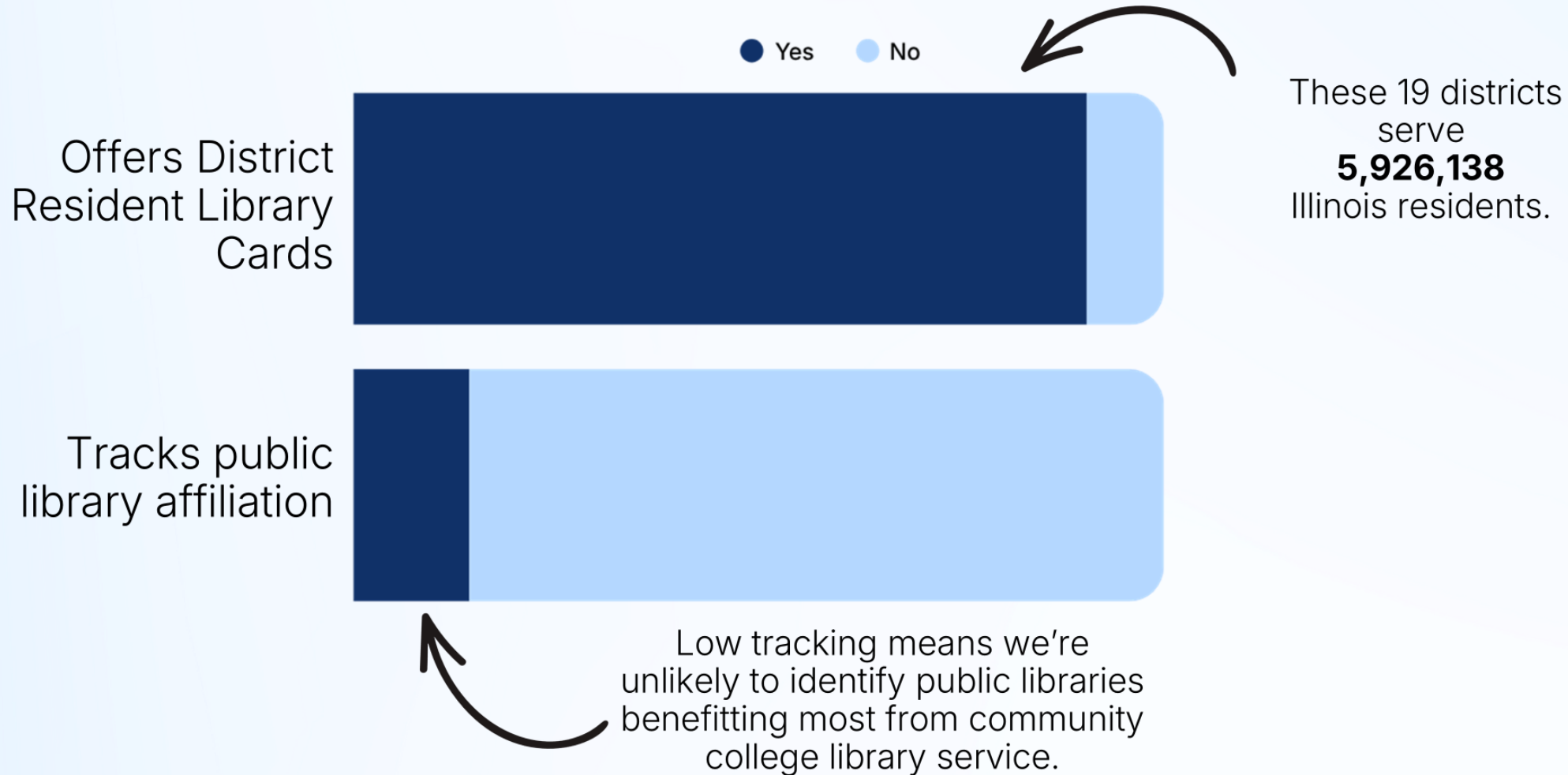
community college institutions

100%

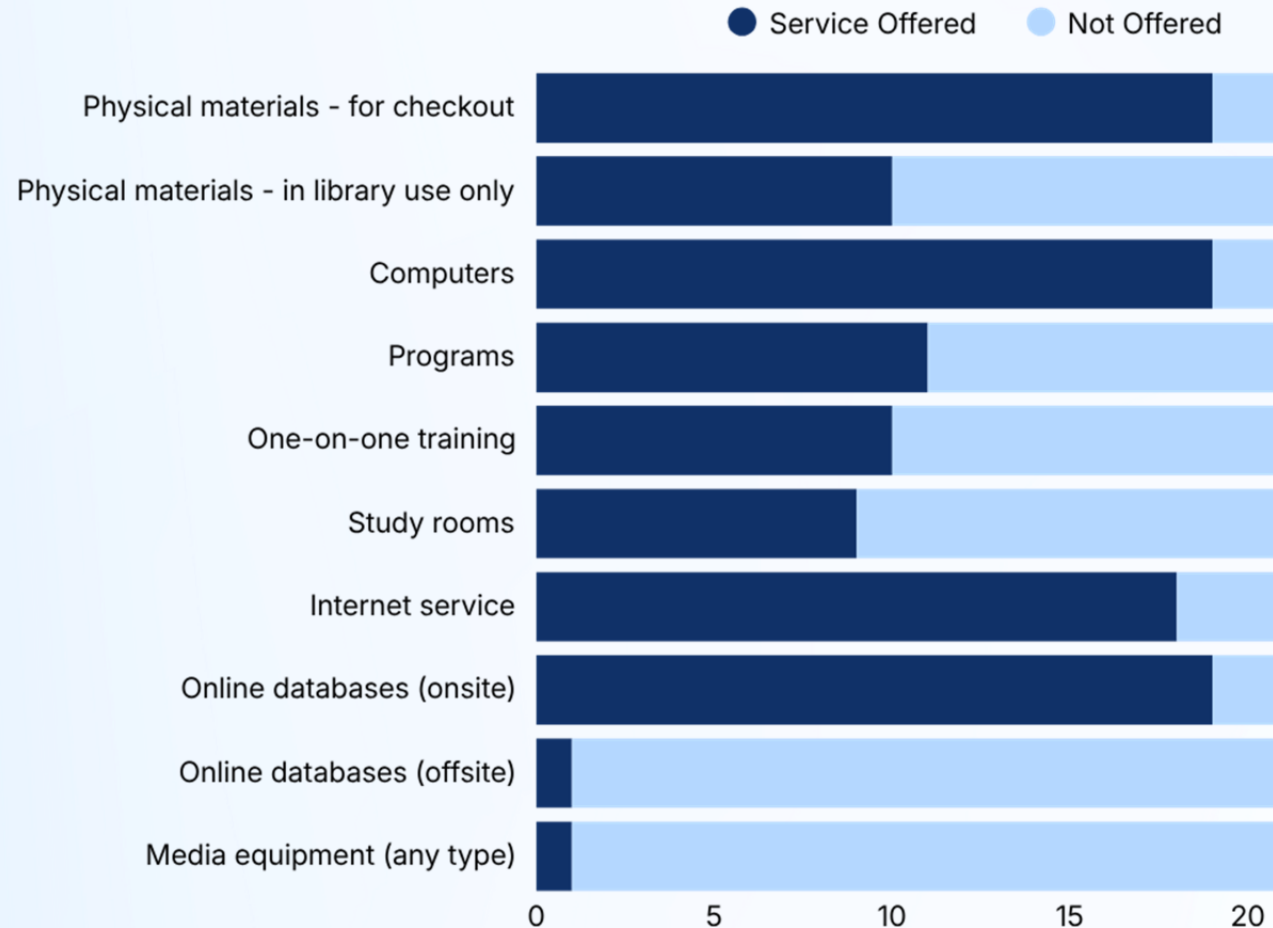
community college system members



# Most institutions offer district resident library cards.



# Nearly all institutions allow residents to use services.



**20** institutions noted they allow district residents to access some type of service either on-site or remotely.



## Services For District Residents

We have recently made *changes to our services for district residents*.

You don't need to be a COD student or employee to take advantage of Library resources. People living and working in *District 502* can also use COD Library collections and services.



### Library Cards

Get a card, renew your card, lost cards



### Ask A Librarian

Get help in-person, by phone, or online



### Loan Periods & Fines

Books, videos, etc.



### Computers, Printing & Copiers

Use our computers, software, printers and more



### My Library Account

Renewing books, late fees, lost books



### Assistive Services

Accessibility software and hardware

**So What Do We  
Do Next?**



# Make Sure you Check Out:

- RAILS Pulse Page: Universal Service
  - List of RAILS Libraries Nonresident Program Participation and Fees
  - RAILS Board Statement
  - Intergovernmental Agreements for Public Library Service
- HB42/Public Act 104-0036 (effective August 1, 2025)
  - Authorizes costs paid by persons residing outside of the relevant library jurisdiction to be paid quarterly or biannually if permitted by board regulations



# 2024 Updated Universal Service Plan

- Gain an understanding of exactly who is unserved in Illinois and why
  - Analyze data from the Illinois Department of Revenue and the Illinois State Library service area map to understand demographic characteristics of unserved areas
  - Further define nonresidents with the understanding of how IRIS (statewide database program) impacts that status



# 2024 Updated Universal Service Plan

- Simplify nonresident card laws and rules to eliminate confusion and to extend service through innovative projects and law and regulation changes
  - Provide and expand information about forming IGAs to provide service to the unserved
  - More assistance on how to annex unserved areas
  - Work with community colleges to help them extend services
  - Work with real estate agents on requiring disclosure



# 2024 Updated Universal Service Plan

- Demonstrate the economic and societal value of extending library service to the unserved
  - Work with statewide partners on efforts to issue a statewide library card
  - Develop strategies and talking points for promoting the value of universal library services to legislators
  - Promote the value of extending library services to the unserved through public awareness campaigns
  - Support IRIS, the statewide database program, especially for the otherwise unserved
  - Continue support for digital equity and broadband for libraries



# Legislative Solutions

- Amendment to Public Library District Act designed to remove barriers to libraries merging
- Pursue legislative solutions for financial support for libraries offering services to non-residents
- Other innovative solutions proposed by lawmakers



**And what  
about you?**



# Questions?

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