



Predictions for Week 8 of the 2026 IHSA football season

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Bishop Louis Tylka, right, of the Peoria Diocese, meets with Pope Leo XIV Monday at the Vatican. PROVIDED BY CNS PHOTO/VATICAN MEDIA

‘There is more work to do’

Slow background checks threaten childcare access

Meredith Newman
ILLINOIS ANSWERS PROJECT

Molly Robinson was hours away from opening her childcare center, which was the culmination of decades in the field, yet she feared it was all about to fall apart.

Her childcare center, The Farmhouse, was set to open in late February, becoming one of the few new childcare centers in Bloomington to open in the last 15 years. But the week before opening, as the staff were putting finishing touches in classrooms, Robinson was in a panic. Some of the employees' background checks were still pending.

She had submitted all of the documents in early December, thinking they would be cleared in a matter of weeks. But the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) had yet to fully process them.

Because it was a new center, if the checks were not completed by that afternoon, Robinson would not be able to receive the license she needed to open.

Robinson had already pushed opening three weeks in part because of this delay, losing thousands of dollars. Parents had taken their children out of other childcare centers in order to enroll at The Farmhouse. She gave families a week of free tuition to account for the inconvenience.

Her DCFS licensing representative and a supervisor both told Robinson that their hands were tied, she recalled. Robinson even phoned the town's mayor. Desperate and feeling she had nothing to lose, she wrote a script, gathered her staff around her and pressed record on her phone.

"If we can't open soon," Robinson said in a video she posted to Facebook, "we risk losing the families who have trusted us with their children. We risk losing our staff because we can't pay salaries without opening. And we risk losing something we've spent five years building. ... This childcare crisis cannot

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‘Moving moment’

Peoria bishop presents Fulton Sheen relic to the pope

Zach Roth
Peoria Journal Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Peoria's Catholic bishop visited the Vatican on Monday, presenting Pope Leo XIV with a relic of recently beatified Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

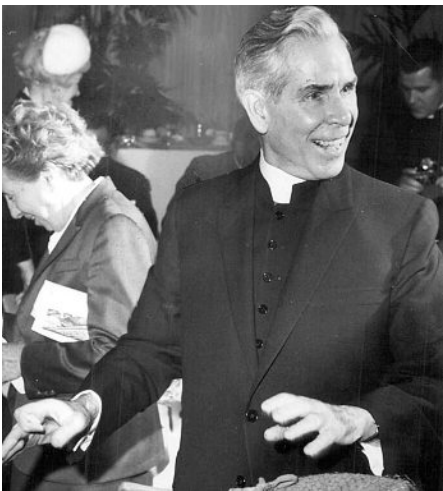
Bishop Louis Tylka of the Diocese of Peoria and the pope met Monday, with Monsignor Jason Gray, executive director of the Fulton J. Sheen Foundation, joining them to present the Sheen relic. Tylka noted that it is tradition in the Catholic Church for a pope to be presented with relics of saints and blessed, with the moment carrying real meaning for him due to the pope's appreciation for Sheen's work.

"Pope Leo XIV has spoken of Archbishop Sheen on several occasions and has expressed his appreciation for Archbishop Sheen's extraordinary witness of

faith, his ability to proclaim the Gospel through the means of communication available in his time, and his missionary heart," Tylka said in a statement. "In the days surrounding the Beatification, the Holy Father again pointed to Archbishop Sheen as an example of finding new ways to spread the Gospel. I am deeply grateful for the Holy Father's interest in Blessed Fulton Sheen and for his support that allowed us to celebrate this long-awaited Beatification."

Sheen, a central Illinois native who began his career at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria, was beatified Sept. 24 in a ceremony in St. Louis, becoming the first American-born bishop to be honored in this way. Sheen was best known for preaching the gospel through the emerging mediums of radio and

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Fulton J. Sheen, who was bishop of the Diocese of Rochester from 1966 to 1969, is shown at his installation. A luncheon and a public reception followed the Mass. ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE STAFF FILE PHOTO

Nolley recognizes uphill battle in congressional race

JJ Bullock
Peoria Journal Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

PEORIA — Democrat Paul Nolley recognizes the odds are stacked against him ahead of November's midterm elections.

Nolley, a self-described "working-class Democrat" from Rockford, is making a bid to unseat longtime U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood, a Republican from Peoria. It is a tall task for a political unknown like Nolley to challenge a politician with the name recognition and resume of LaHood, but it is a challenge Nolley feels he is up to.

The Journal Star sat down with Nolley on Oct. 6 to discuss the race.

LaHood has represented Illinois in Congress since 2015 and has been the 16th Congressional District representative since 2023. He is the son of former Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, who also served in the U.S. House for nearly 15 years, and garners a name recognition in the Peoria area and across the district that is unrivaled.

Nolley, on the other hand, is a political freshman at 37 years old. He's not held a significant political office at the state or local level. He works as the executive director of Project First Rate, an

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Democrat Paul Nolley speaks with the media after a debate with his 16th Congressional District opponent Darin LaHood on Oct. 5 at the WTPV studios in Peoria. MATT DAYHOFF/JOURNAL STAR

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