

Pritzker Signs Law Making Black and Gold Bumblebee Illinois' Official State Bee

by Submitted by Gov. Pritzker's Office
July 8 2026 1:21 PM



CHICAGO — Today, Governor JB Pritzker signed HB 4438 into law, designating the black and gold bumblebee as the official Illinois State Bee. The black and gold bumblebee serves as a critical prairieland pollinator – boosting Illinois’ natural ecosystem, supporting agriculture, and even helping to sustain life on earth. This action follows a year of advocacy by students from Naperville's Lincoln Junior High School.

Last year, the students in educator Barbara Bell’s 8th grade science class led an initiative to grant this designation, following a research assignment on bee species native to Illinois. They designed presentations to be distributed to schools across Illinois, organized a statewide student vote, and testified in committee. These efforts led to the passage of HB 4438, a labor of state pride and civic engagement.

“Illinois is home to extraordinary insects and wildlife, each with an essential role to play in keeping our ecosystems thriving, and the hardest working of all is the bee,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “The students at Lincoln Junior High School recognized the impact the black and gold bumblebee has on our state’s natural environment, a source of great pride to all who call Illinois home. They demonstrated the power of young people brought together by curiosity and civic engagement, and in doing so, left their mark on our state.”

On July 2, Gov. Pritzker virtually joined the students, teaching staff, and legislators who pushed for the passage of HB 4438 for a ceremonial bill signing.



Gov. Pritzker celebrates the designation of the official Illinois state bee, virtually joining the students and teaching staff from Naperville's Lincoln Junior High School for a ceremonial bill signing.

The black and gold bumblebee (*Bombus auricomus*) is native to North America, building below-ground nests in the grasslands of Illinois. Buzzing between bee balms, clovers, and other types of wildflowers, this bumblebee uses its distinctive fuzzy exterior to collect nectar and pollen, acting as an effective pollinator and keeping our prairie ecosystems vibrant and healthy.

In recent years, the State of Illinois has been working to raise awareness about the importance of pollinators in our ecosystem by providing [online resources for youth and landowners](#), as well utilizing native pollinator-friendly plantings and strategic mowing

at state parks and roadsides. In addition, Illinois offers specialty monarch butterfly license plates for those who wish to support butterfly habitat efforts in the state.

“We love and appreciate when the young people of Illinois get involved in conservation and help raise awareness about pollinators,” **said Renee Snow, interim director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).** “Proposing the black and gold bumblebee as a representative of the nearly 500 native bee species found in the Prairie State was an excellent choice.”

“These critical pollinators impact our environment, food systems, and local ecosystems,” **said State Sen. Ellman (D-Naperville).** “This law is not only about recognizing an important native species but also celebrating the students who turned their research and civic engagement into action.”

Illinois has named several official state symbols through student-led initiatives – including the state rock, [dolostone](#), and the state fungi, [the giant puffball](#).