

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Jacob Rayl

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2022-22

Jacob Rayl, Bond County board member and college student during the pandemic, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 3, 2022

Location: Greenville University, Greenville, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, project manager *Tumultuous 2020*

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:28 / 1.47 hrs.

Transcript being
processed.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on August 8, 2022.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Jacob Rayl, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2022-22

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Jacob Rayl was born in 1997 in Abilene, Texas. His family moved to Granite City, Illinois, when he was still a child. Rayl spent most of his early years in Granite City before his family moved to rural Bond County during his sophomore year of high school. While initially apprehensive, Rayl enjoyed his time at Highland High School and appreciated the rural lifestyle. Upon graduation in 2016, Rayl began attending the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS). He changed his major several times, as his interests shifted, but he eventually settled on Political Science. Always interested in politics, Rayl had served as a student senator and started a branch of Young Americans for Liberty at UIS.

In the beginning of 2020, Rayl decided to run for a seat on the Bond County Board. Though Bond County has a high population of Republicans, it is not represented on the county board, according to Rayl. It was during this time that Rayl decided to move back to Bond County and continue his studies at UIS partially online. The primary election was in the middle of March of 2020 and following his success in the primaries, the state went into lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant Rayl had to reevaluate his campaign strategies. The pandemic impacted him in other ways. He lost his dishwashing job at UIS and his coursework was put fully online. Living in rural Bond County, Rayl discussed the difficulty of sharing the already poor Wi-Fi connection with his mother, stepfather, and two younger siblings. Rayl decided to pause his studies until he could commit to in-person classes. Throughout the height of the pandemic Rayl took on a variety of jobs. He worked at a coffeeshop, on an Iowa campaign, and eventually as an online grocery associate at Walmart, where he was still working at the time of the interview. Rayl worked to adapt his campaign to the pandemic. He tried Facebook campaigning without success because of the lack of connectivity in the area. He eventually decided to continue with door-to-door campaigning and made sure to keep the CDC recommended six feet away from people. Throughout the interview, Rayl discusses the rest of the campaign and his eventual victory in November of 2020. He also details his experiences at Walmart and how it was impacted by the pandemic.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Bond County, Illinois; rural Illinois; Bond County Board; COVID-19 pandemic; COVID-19; pandemic; *Tumultuous 2020*; *Tumultuous 2020* oral history; Jacob Rayl; rural connectivity

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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