

Meeting with Representative LaShawn Ford

Names: Sandra Sokol, Diane Moses, Mary Anne Mohanraj, Fran Sampson, Mary Klonowski (La Grange area office)

1. Thanks to Ford for supporting bill to name a portion of the highway after Obama (Ford is supporting 294; someone else is supporting the tollway).
2. Campaign Finance Reform: After Sandra retired, she was approached by the Director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform – they wanted Oak Park to be a pilot for dealing with campaign reform. After a lot of questions that Sandra did with other parts of the country, New York, Connecticut, etc., she started going to a lot of their meetings. The Village President was supposedly interested in this, as was Trustee Salzman.

The League cares about this, and it's one of their top priorities. What do you think, and where do you see things going with regard to the state and campaign finance reform.

"I met with the Speaker today regarding limiting how much an individual can contribute to their own campaign. I think that's a good idea. He talked to the Speaker about it, and he thinks it may be unconstitutional, and might require a constitutional amendment to change. [Mary Anne notes: We should research and find out if that's accurate, and if not, let Rep. Ford know.] He said that what we probably should is look at free media advertisement, which would at least mean that everyone gets equal time; nobody would be allowed to buy extra airtime. JB is already doing commercials."

"Politically active non-profits have become a major force in elections..."

Lack of transparency regarding sources of funding to SuperPACs.

3. "I didn't like the corporate handout in the environmental bill that ComEd pushed that became a law. Giving them a big paycheck is just ridiculous. They were able to give a little here and a little there, and make people excited about new jobs, etc. But the winner will be ComEd; rates will go up and everyday people will pay for their paycheck. Think the energy companies should pay for it."

Don Harmon sent out a long statement about the bill and the history of it – it seemed to be a compromise bill.

"I would support clean air."

Re: coal tar sealants (Bill 2958). "I'm not sure I'd vote for the bill – it's not clear that they've done their research." In order to fight for non cancer-

causing driveways / playgrounds / etc. (such as in Barrie Park), we'd need to fight against the Southern Illinois interests for coal miners.

4. Ford: "I think the governor has it right there, in terms of bringing equity into school funding. But what we don't have is that we need to have some accountability and some incentives, to make sure that students who have missed out, that their needs will be met. The Commission is saying that we should rely less on property tax."

Will Davis's bill looks at the equity in funding for K-12 – the evidence-based model (it's really expensive). They're talking about introducing and passing it without a funding mechanism.

Ford: "I would sponsor the bill if there's accountability, but not in the present form. I wouldn't want to send more money to CPS; the mayor treats it as his private slush fund." (Should we push for an elected school board? But it was the downfall in New York City; more money in politics, more corruption.)

What do you see as the solution to Illinois's perpetually and unequally funded education system? "1. The will to fix it. 2. We have competing interests; everyone wants to make sure that their districts get as much as they can get."

Ford has been pro school choice in the past, but has backed off on it, because he's gotten a lot of pushback.

The League's position is that if we have charter schools (which we were originally simply and strongly against, because they sucked money out of the public school and funneled it to for-profit corporations), we have to at *least* have transparency.

5. Criminal Justice: (514: Immediate sealing if acquitted of a crime.) First thing he did when he ran for office is 'ban the box.' Ford's website has always been top-notch with things that he's been doing and issues that he cares about. The IL state commission on criminal justice and sentencing reform has issued its final report – 27 recommendations on how to reduce the number of people serving sentences in our state prisons. One of the first recs: need for rehab services and treatment (mental illness / trauma). Also the availability of housing (relax some of the restrictions, esp. in public housing). Also to try to develop a workforce or training program, to have jobs for people when they get out. Also with transportation ability – if you have a job, you need to be able to get there. We need to fairly compensate the folks that are providing the services. At least 50% of the people who are incarcerated are serving for non-violent offenses. Question: Do you agree that this first recommendation is key to reducing crime, violence, and recidivism?

Ford: "The key is to make sure that a person who is arrested for drug-abuse or drug-related crimes should be diverted to a drug-related program, rather than crime. Texas leads the way in diversion; we have to keep people out of the criminal system. Fund it by taking money from the prisons. IL bans private prisons, but we do use for-profit services (for phones, food, etc.)."

6. Last week the IL Senate passed the gun licensing bill, and now it's going to be a tougher fight in the House. Ford: "I'll support it, and am willing to be a co-sponsor."
7. Fiscal Policy: The League supports a host of taxes (service tax, retirement tax, etc.), but especially the tax on financial transactions. Ford doesn't support many of these, but does support the financial transaction tax.
8. House Bill 40: It's in the Senate – what's happening with it? Ford supported it, but it didn't pass with a veto-proof majority. It's in the Senate. If the governor doesn't sign it, we don't have enough votes.