

Healthcare:

How would the AHCA affect IL if enacted? If it doesn't pass the House, any idea of new changes Republicans might make to it? How do you think the AHCA should be changed to help Americans?

Harmon: It's still very much a moving target; I can't imagine it passing the Senate in that form; I don't even know if it'll pass the House. They're offering a lot of special deals for this state or that state. The preliminary effect for IL is a drastic hole in our budget, and it's heartless. Obamacare is far from perfect, but we've insured hundreds of thousands in IL; Cook County hospital has seen far more patients. The two failings of Obamacare – didn't focus on containing the cost of medicine (because it was focused on getting people insurance); it focused on working with the private insurers, rather than moving to single-payer.

Follow-up: Are you in favor of the public option?

Harmon: I'm looking more and more at the Nordic countries; it's a hybrid. There's a public option, but you can also go to a private doctor.

Environment:

Illinois is ranked second in the nation for clean domestic energy production (after California). Which new renewable energy policies and initiatives do you support to continue this good trend? Will you be able to do anything to combat Trump's destruction of the Environmental Protection Agency?

Harmon: I have been a champion of renewable energy since I got down to Springfield. Co-sponsor of the renewable energy standard that mandated a certain percentage by 2025. Went into effect; there have been a lot of hiccups along the way, but I've been fighting to fix that. It became, sadly, part of the Exelon bailout bill, and Harmon didn't vote for it because of that, but we did pass this part. Poised for a big investment in wind technology, but because of five words in the Exelon bill ('and industrial-scale wind development'), some big questions are raised. We'd set up a set of qualifications for solar (which is smaller), re: unions, which are getting in the way of passing this bill. We're a great state for solar, but there's a lot of area where we can put big farms of solar panels.

Re: Lake Michigan, between climate change and fresh water, Chicago's going to be new Florida, if we can keep it clean. We're part of an interstate compact, and I suspect that even red states will say, hey, we're part of this. We have to be vigilant, though.

Georgia just passed a new tax for electric cars – we need to figure out the appropriate way to tax that electricity usage, since they're not paying a gas tax (which has historically paid for roads)?

To my knowledge there's been no horizontal fracking going on in the state (because it's not cost-efficient). We did enact the strictest anti-fracking legislation in the country.

He's holding an environmental issue Town Hall, April 11, Dole library, 6:30.

BUDGET:

1. Will you put pressure on your legislative leaders and the governor to pass a responsible budget for FY 2017?
2. Will you vote to raise taxes to bring in adequate revenues for the state?

Harmon: I've voted for all the real tax increases that have come up. Fully prepared to vote for the Grand Bargain tax increase should it get to that point. Lead sponsor on a fair tax (progressive tax)

Could build in an expansion of the property tax credit that would be phased in as your income goes up. (Would give you relief on your income taxes related to your property taxes.)

Town Hall at 19th century club on local taxes with Ali ElSaffar Thursdsay(?) @ 7.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE:

The Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform has issued its final report which contains 27 recommendations. Their first recommendation is: Increase rehabilitative service and treatment capacity in high-need communities. Give the highest priority to behavioral health/trauma services, housing, and work force development with transportation support.

- (a) Establish trauma recovery services in underserved communities that have disproportionate rates of crime and incarceration.
- (b) Relax restrictions in State housing programs that prohibit renting to people with criminal records.
- (c) Ensure that service providers are sufficiently compensated to allow them to expand their capacity.

By making this the first recommendation, the Commission states that "there is a critical need for increased community capacity *before* the recommendations outlined in this Report take full effect."

- _Do you agree that this first recommendation is key to reducing crime, violence, and recidivism?

- _Are you willing to fight for the funding necessary to make this recommendation a reality?

Harmon: [I'm sorry, I missed a lot of this section, and I'm not sure I got it exactly right what he said here?] Mayor wanted mandatory minimums; we pushed back. I pushed for the Smart on Crime initiative to reduce sentencing for drug offenses, but the Republicans are holding firm due to the 'heroin epidemic' in DuPage County. DuPage kids are no different than kids in Oak Park or on the West side.

Harmon is generally in favor of eliminating cash bail for non-violent crimes. People appear aligned on this now, so we should see some movement.

EDUCATION FUNDING:

1. What is your opinion of the Governor's Commission on School Funding Reform's conclusions? Which of their suggested reforms do you feel are viable and would you support? Do you plan to sponsor or co-sponsor a bill to implement any of these changes? If so, which ones? Will you support additional funding as a key recommendation for improving educational outcomes? If not, why not?
2. What do you see as the solution to Illinois' perpetually under- and unequally – funded education system?

Harmon: I'm not sure that the governor's commission told us anything we didn't already know. Senator Minard has taken a lot of flak, but I think he's on the right track. He's pushed for an overhaul; the formula we use is broken. We have to deal with adequacy of funding. We need an adequacy-based model; what does this school district need to educate this kid? Your education and your future in life shouldn't be dictated by the zip code you're bought in, and the current funding model only aggravates that. We have an unfair system, we can't take money away (politically), so we lock in what we have now, and then as we put new money into the system, we use a fairer model.

What is your position on charter schools?

Harmon: I think a pause in charter schools is the right position right now. I've seen good examples of charters schools, but they're going to get good results if they cherry-pick the best students to attend them.

The efforts to unionize the faculty of charter schools will have a big impact on whether charter schools move forward. Note that the governor said, "I can't save all the kids."