

LWV-LaGrange Area Legislator Interview

State of Illinois, 7th District
Chris Welch, Representative

Date: April 8, 2019

Attendees from LWV:

LaGrange Area: Ann Lee, Melissa Lieb, Jerry Allers, Krista Grimm, Peggy Ellis
Oak Park/River Forest: Jane Hastings

Fiscal Policy

New sources of revenue

Rep. Welch supports Progressive Income Tax in concept. Legislature working on adjusting rates proposed by Gov. Pritzker. The highest rate currently being proposed would be 7.9% on a million dollar income. Estimated \$3.4B in revenue. He thinks it's unlikely wealthy residents would leave the state if passed.

Financial Services Tax - doubts this would pass because of resistance of powerful financial institutions threatening to move business out of state. Chair of Senate Revenue Committee (Toi Hutchinson) opposes. He was interested in Ann Lee's statement that the financial transaction tax could bring 6 to 12 billion dollars if it focused on automated derivatives trades rather than equities.

Supports taxes on recreational marijuana, sports betting, gaming, plastic bags.
Tax on services: he would need to see exactly what services would be included.
Raise gas tax (hasn't been raised in over 30 years) and raise cost of license stickers.

The governor would never support a tax on retirement income since it was one of his campaign promises. However, Rep. Welch said that some govt retirees have very rich pensions and it probably is something we should consider.

Pension reform: Supreme Court has ruled that state can't change the rules on current pensions. Tier 1 is the real problem and there are many younger govt employees in this tier. Discussed re-amortization of the current pension debt.

Spending priorities

Higher Education: Supports spending on higher education since our students are leaving the state to attend colleges and universities in other states. 92% of kids who attend college in state stay in the state. Because of lowered funding of Illinois education, institutions of high education have had to raise their tuition, resulting in many Illinois students leaving the state for college.

Infrastructure: Capital spending bill needed to address infrastructure problems.

Affordable Housing

Welch was not familiar with the Illinois Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act. Asked how could we add teeth to the 2003 law requiring municipalities to provide at least 10% 'affordable housing'? He would need to look into this further. He did not comment on whether or not the act should be amended to require communities demonstrate to the Illinois Housing Authority their efforts to maintain existing affordable housing and encourage the development of new mixed income housing.

Criminal Justice

Continue more 'restorative justice' measures ala HB 1458 designed to spend more on restorative measures than in housing prisoners. Jane pointed out that our social service system was destroyed during the last few years—how would he build it back up. In order to rebuild social services structure, more revenue is necessary. It will be helpful to have a definite budget each year. But lack of revenue will always be a challenge.

Agreed that if recreational marijuana is legalized criminal records should be expunged so people can get jobs, rent housing, get licenses, etc.

Environmental

Rep. Welch unfamiliar with lead pipe replacement legislation (HB3445) which requires municipalities to replace lead service lines, likely servicing over 80% of homes in the 7th District. When Krista Grimm explained the bill to him, he indicated he would likely co-sponsor the bill.

Coal tar sealant ban. Senate 1184. Senate version is moving and he would support in House.

Clean Energy Workforce Training Act - he supports

When asked about Sterigenics, Rep Welch indicated he is chief sponsor of HB529 which would allow local governments to ban businesses to protect safety of residents. But he also indicated the lack of US EPA testing is an issue.

Immigration

He introduced HB1637 Keep Illinois Families Together Act so supports efforts to provide a path for undocumented immigrants to achieve legal status. He also sponsored the Trust Act, a measure to prevent law enforcement officials across the state from detaining individuals based solely on their immigration status,