

ADVOCACY MEETING WITH SENATOR LIGHTFORD

March 6, 2017

We had scheduled a meeting with Senator Lightford for 12:00, and waited in her new office for approximately 20 minutes before she greeted us and invited us in to her conference room. The office was very nice, newly decorated and furnished.

We began the discussion with the Senate “Grand Plan,” the most recent attempt to reach a budget agreement. She said Christine Radogno’s attempt to craft the bill was admirable. She supports the package. The temporary funding is gone. Legislators are not being paid.

Raising Taxes:

Sen. Lightford voted for a 5% increase, and the Republicans made it known that they would not vote for a larger increase. There are four bills pending: Worker’s comp, Property taxes, Minimum Wage, and funding Chicago Public Schools.

Worker’s Comp:

The current bill was passed in 2011, and Governor Rauner would like to eliminate it. Sen. Lightford voted for a compromise bill with no causation. The Governor wouldn’t sign it.

Property Taxes:

Sen. Lightford supports the local school districts and their respective communities voting on their own taxes. (Gov. Rauner wants a permanent property tax freeze).

Term Limits:

She supports this for leadership roles only.

Criminal Justice:

She was not in the forefront on the subject. She was very concerned about violence in the community, and said that Chicago is not the only place where crime is an issue. She is particularly concerned about the shortage of State Police officers. Their numbers are at an all-time low, and more funding is needed. She supports crime prevention programs, and supports alternative sentencing. She said that the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority was shut down.

Campaign Finance:

Sen. Lightfoot is in favor of this. In discussing the candidates for governor, she highlighted that only billionaires can afford to run.

Education Funding:

Sen. Lightford was on the committee for the redesign of school funding and supports the Evidence Based model. She said that although all school districts were promised that there would be no cuts, only increases for the neediest communities, there were still objections from legislators from wealthier ones. Nonetheless, she believes there will be a new bill passed in the near future. With regard to charter schools, she said that she was initially against them, but her thinking has evolved. She believes that they can be useful as long as they are monitored more closely.

Health Care:

With regard to the concerns about the ACA being changed, she said that Illinois is still having challenges with hospitals that have a high number of Medicaid patients because "there is a hole that has to be plugged." She said that Safety Net Hospitals struggle with provider tax as the State is not contributing.

Environment:

Sen. Lightford supports a new bill (SB2814) which creates more opportunities for renewables. She was not well versed on fracking, but took notes as we discussed the problems that result from the practice.

At the end of the meeting, which lasted for nearly two hours, she invited us to a meeting with J.B. Pritzker, gubernatorial candidate. On March 21, '17.