

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ILLINOIS 2017 LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Would you support legislation to require politically active 501(c)4 and 501(c)6 nonprofit organizations to register as political action committees and to segregate a political fund and disclose their “political” donors? What other campaign finance or ethics legislation you would promote to reduce the influence of big money in Illinois politics?

Background: Politically active nonprofits –Principally 501(c)(4)s and 501(c)(6)s have become a major force in elections. The term “dark money” is often applied to this category of political spender because these groups do not have to disclose the sources of their funding. Although Illinois instated contribution limits in 2011 these limits have been increasingly been lifted over the last couple of election cycles as Illinois has a legal provision allowing limits to be lifted by candidate self-funding or spending from Super PACs. In Illinois 34% of contested November 2016 State House and Senate races had contribution limits removed due to candidate self-funding or Super PAC spending. The source of contributions to Super PACs was not required to be disclosed.

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?

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?

Background: Illinois is struggling with billions of dollars of unpaid bills. In addition, many of the wrap-around services that are key to the low income and struggling students' success have been casualties of the budget crisis.

Schools received a funding boost in the General State Aid dollars in FY 17 of about \$380 M, if the state pays all appropriated dollars due districts by fiscal year end. However, this is far from the \$5 B it would take to adequately fund schools if one uses the EFAB recommendations as a guideline. It is predicted this would be the amount needed to help close the funding gap and the achievement gap, caused in part by how Illinois funds education for its children.

ENVIRONMENT

The January 2017 Corporate Clean Energy Procurement Index ranks Illinois second in the nation for investment in clean domestic energy production that attracts retail and technology companies - and jobs - to the state. Which new renewable energy policies and initiatives do you support to continue this trend?

Background: Retailers and technology companies use an enormous amount of energy and actively seek to locate operations in states with clean energy production due to fossil fuel volatility and pollution concerns. The Retail Industry Leaders Association and the Information Technology Industry Council ranks all 50 US states based on the ease with which companies can procure domestic renewable energy such as wind and solar for their operations. In the 2017 report, Illinois was second only to Iowa - and ahead of California and Texas. The full report is available here:

<https://www.rila.org/sustainability/RetailEnergyManagementProgram/Documents/RILAITEIndex.pdf>

FISCAL

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?

Background:

The State of Illinois does not have a budget for Fiscal Year 2017, except for General State Aid for education. It does not have enough money to pay its bills and currently has \$11 billion in unpaid bills. Damaging consequences will result from this situation including:

- * Many public school districts, Kindergarten through Grade 12, do not have enough money to provide adequate and equitable education for their students. School districts may not receive all of the money that was appropriated for this school year. Categorical spending must wait in line with all of the other requests for payment that the state receives. Where will school districts find revenues to replace the missing state appropriations?
- * The lack of a state budget results in suffering for the neediest Illinois citizens because service providers are forced to shrink services, lay off employees, or shut down.
- * State schools of higher education will not receive state payments. Students who need financial aid from the state will not receive MAP grants.

Proposed Remedies:

The League of Women Voters recommends that you vote to pass a budget for FY 2017 and also fully fund the schools and social service providers which did not receive appropriations in FY 2016. To raise money to fund these budgets, please vote to:

- * Raise the income tax rates
- * Expand the sales tax base to include services
- * Refinance the state's debt and pension obligations
- * Tax retirement income
- * Impose a tax on financial transactions

Also, please oppose a property tax freeze for local governments and school districts. Public schools and other local governments rely on the property tax for an adequate and dependable source of revenue. Unless the state provides adequate and sufficient replacement monies, these taxing bodies will suffer great harm.