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ELECTION 2022 • ILLINOIS HOUSE DISTRICT 54

Editor's note: Due to a production error, Michele Hunter's photo was accidentally omitted when this questionnaire ran on Thursday. We are republishing it with her photo.

In the Nov. 8 general election, two candidates are vying to represent the 54th Illinois House District.

They are: Democrat Mary Beth Canty

and Republican Michele Hunter, both residents of Arlington Heights.

The Daily Herald asked candidates to complete an election questionnaire.

Some of their unedited responses follow.

The 54th District includes all or parts of Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Mount Prospect, Palatine and Prospect Heights.

Mary Beth Canty

Bio

Party: Democrat

City: Arlington Heights

Age: 41

Occupation: Lawyer

Previous offices held: Village Trustee — Arlington Heights (elected 2019); Director — RTA Board of Directors (appointed 2020)

Q&A

Q: What needs to be done structurally to make the legislature more effective? What is your position on term limits in general and for legislative leaders specifically?

A: I support calendar reforms to help us make better progress in the early months and not push important policy decisions affecting millions of Illinoisans to the last minute. I would like to see fewer committees, and members of the committees developing greater expertise over time, with the goal of consensus building on policies whenever possible.

There are offices for which term limits are needed, but there are also considerable downsides, particularly at the state and local level. Finding willing individuals for these positions, especially well-qualified ones, can be challenging, and imposing term limits deprives voters of competent, experienced elected officials.

Instead, I believe in letting voters decide who they want representing them. However,

I do support limits on leadership similar to those proposed in the General Assembly.

Q: Federal assistance has enabled the state to make important advances toward improving its budget. What will you do to ensure these advances continue when the federal aid is gone?

A: Illinois balanced the budget the last four years, earning our first credit upgrades in 20 years. Federal funds offset pandemic-related revenue losses and Illinois invested them in much-needed infrastructure to boost our local economies.

Instead of creating new programs that wouldn't be funded in the future, our legislature eased inflation's impact with temporary tax relief and paid down debt for state employee health insurance and pensions.

I support these kinds of efforts leveraging one-time revenues to achieve recurring savings. As Trustee, I voted for budgets with no increase in property taxes every year. Responsible and innovative fiscal decisions allowed us to invest in businesses through initiatives like Arlington Alfresco while maintaining one of the best funded police and fire pensions in the state during the pandemic.

I will bring this discipline to state budget votes, and fight to keep taxes in check while providing safe streets, strong schools, and thriving local



Mary Beth Canty

businesses.

Q: To what extent are you happy or unhappy with the evidence-based model for education funding now in place in Illinois? How would you define "adequate" state funding for Illinois schools and what will you do to promote that?

A: All parents, regardless of income level, share in common a desire to provide our children with the best education to enrich their lives and prepare them for the future. My family chose to move to this district in part due to the high-quality public school system, which had been historically funded by high property taxes.

But we shouldn't be forced to choose between underfunding schools or making homeownership prohibitively expensive. I support reform to improve parity and reduce the taxpayers' burden. The

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Michele Hunter

Bio

Party: Republican

City: Arlington Heights

Age: 53

Occupation: Attorney, PLRB

Previous offices held: None

Q&A

Q: What needs to be done structurally to make the legislature more effective? What is your position on term limits in general and for legislative leaders specifically?

A: I support term limits for Legislators and Leadership. I also support a total ban on former members lobbying the state government. Michael Madigan was a prime example of the need for term limits, and particularly term limits on leadership positions. It is a ticking time bomb of corruption.

I am a supporter of requiring balanced budgets as well as a zero-based budgeting plan that makes sure that all spending is justified. In Illinois the redundancies in government should be addressed with a consolidation study and plan for implementation.

All tax increases should require a super majority in the legislature. Whoever is Governor should also have a line-item veto power.

Q: Federal assistance has enabled the state to make important advances toward improving its budget. What

will you do to ensure these advances continue when the federal aid is gone?

A: The money from the Federal Government has been wasted and not used to properly secure our budget situation. State Government is addicted to spending money, and once again we have squandered an opportunity to really make a difference with our budget. The Governor points to the improved bond ratings, but it will be short lived without real systemic reform.

Q: To what extent are you happy or unhappy with the evidence-based model for education funding now in place in Illinois? How would you define "adequate" state funding for Illinois schools and what will you do to promote that?

A: Funding levels for education have far outpaced inflation, and unfortunately our test scores for our children continue to decline. I support taking a serious look at School Choice reform that is occurring across the country. Parents need to have options for the education of their children and a system of vouchers could be beneficial.

The pandemic has taught us that educational monopolies are a threat to your child's education and parents have begun to move their children to private schools or home schooling. My concern about the



Michele Hunter

reliance on state funding is the mandates that follow.

Local control of schools is a more equitable way of managing schools that represent the interests of the local community.

Q: Do you believe elections in Illinois are free and fair? What changes, if any, are needed regarding election security and voter access?

A: There are no voter access issues, and in fact the state has now given people the option to permanently opt in for a vote by mail. There are many people who are concerned about the details of that program and other areas where ballots are handled. The state should make an effort to assure people about the integrity of our voting system.

Q: How well has Illinois responded to Supreme Court indications that it considers

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Michele Hunter

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abortion, gay marriage and other social issues to be state, not federal, responsibilities? What if anything needs to be done in these areas and what would you do to make your vision come to

pass?

A: The Supreme Court decision had no effect on abortion in Illinois. States have been officially charged with the handling of abortion laws and Illinois has some of the most extreme laws regarding abortion.

In Illinois you can have an abortion at all stages of pregnancy, and if your teenage daughter wants to get an abortion parents are no longer notified. The Land of Lincoln is now a destination for abortions as other states pass laws that restrict abortions.

Mary Beth Canty

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shift from "one-size-fits-all" per-pupil funding to the EBF model, though not perfect, is a step in that direction in that it narrows the achievement gap by investing in districts most in need of adequate funding without placing the burden of cost on their taxpayers.

I support reaching 90% adequacy in school districts within the next decade through the EBF approach — which even my colleagues across the aisle agree is a good compromise — while remaining vigilant to reassess its impact.

Q: Do you believe elections in Illinois are free and fair? What changes, if any, are

needed regarding election security and voter access?

A: Illinois elections are free and fair, not perfect. I applaud the state's cybernavigator program to protect the system from outside interference and support the requirement to provide paper ballots. Efforts to improve and modernize state elections through a professional, official, and nonpartisan audit are positive steps toward protecting election integrity.

Examining the use of electronic signatures and other forms of petition-gathering, as is already being done in cities like Denver, and implementing better state centralization and speedier updates of our voter files could be important steps in improving our

election process overall.

Q: How well has Illinois responded to Supreme Court indications that it considers abortion, gay marriage and other social issues to be state, not federal, responsibilities? What if anything needs to be done in these areas and what would you do to make your vision come to pass?

A: Illinois took action to protect individual liberties long before the Supreme Court removed them constitutionally. I am proud that my support for legislation eliminating barriers to reproductive health care, ensuring access to contraception, and making abortion safe, affordable and legal has earned me the endorsement of Planned Parenthood.