

Candidate Biography

Name: Mike Fortner

Date of Birth: 6/6/58

Office Sought and Affiliation: State Representative, 95th District, Republican

Address: 212 Fulton St, West Chicago, IL 60185

E-mail: mikefortner@earthlink.net

Phone: 630-231-0562

Marital Status: Married; Spouse's name: Becky Hall , two children aged 13 and 11.

Occupation and Title: Physics Professor (rank of Associate Professor with tenure)

Employer and Address: Northern Illinois University, Physics Dept. NIU, DeKalb, IL 60115

Business Phone: 815-753-6478

Campaign Address: 212 Fulton St, West Chicago

Campaign Homepage: www.mikefortner.org

Education:

BA. Math and Physics, Carleton College Northfield MN, 1979

MA Physics, Brandeis University Waltham MA, 1983

PhD Physics, Brandeis University, 1989

Civic activities:

Treasurer, West Chicago Lions Club, 1998 to 2005

Moderator, First Congregational Church of West Chicago, 1997 to 2001

AYSO Soccer Referee, 1999 to 2005

Trustee, District 33 Foundation for Educational Excellence, 1995 to present

Co Chair State Physics Panel, Illinois Articulation Initiative, 2002 to present

Previous political experience:

Mayor, City of West Chicago, 2001 to present

Co-Chair, STAR Line Commuter Rail Task Force, 2001 to present

Director of Transportation Policy, DuPage Mayors and Managers, 2002 to 2006

Member of the Education Reform Task Force, Metro Mayors Caucus, 2002 to present

Charter Member, Metro West Council of Government, 2005 to present

Delegate, Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), 2005 to present

Alderman, Ward 1 West Chicago, 1994 to 2001

Board Member, Elementary School District 33, 1994

Trustee, District 33 Foundation for Educational Excellence, 1995 to present

Member, District 33 Citizens Advisory Committee, 1993 to 1994

Member, District 33 Long Range Planning Committee, 1996 to 2000

Precinct Committeeman, Winfield 1, Republican, 1996 to present

Secretary, Winfield Township Republican Central Committee, 1998 to 2002

Plan Commissioner, City of West Chicago, 1991 to 1994

Historic Preservation Commissioner, City of West Chicago, 1990 to 1993

Questionnaire

I work as a state employee and part of my work includes research on the weekend. It would be a violation of state ethics to work on my campaign while engaged in that work. Since I scheduled my Sunday interview on Friday, I could not complete the lengthy on-line questionnaire while working. I have copied the questions and my answers sent to the major Chicago

newspapers on those topics covered in your on-line questionnaire. I will be happy to go into detail on other subjects during our telephone interview.

On Ethics and Elections

Q (Chicago Tribune). Does Illinois need new rules governing how candidates raise and spend money on campaigns? Does the state need new rules governing how elected officials conduct themselves in office? How can the state address its longstanding culture of corruption?

Illinois has suffered from a series of scandals that has created a great deal of distrust among the people of the state. The legislature will have to take direct action to regain that trust. The ethics rules in place need to be enforced, and if they are unable to be enforced, they need to be changed to make them enforceable. This state should look at and adopt some of the fundraising reforms instituted in other states that limit the role of contributions that encourage a culture of corruption.

Q (Chicago Sun Times): Gov. Blagojevich has come under criticism for his acceptance of campaign donations from companies that contract with the state. Do you favor a prohibition on companies under contract with the state or seeking state business from contributing to state office holders?

I favor restricting donations from all companies that do business or seek to do business with the state. Illinois has suffered from a series of scandals that has created a great deal of distrust among the people of the state. The legislature must take direct action to regain that trust. It should start with state contractors.

Q (Chicago Sun Times): In that vein, do you favor limiting the size of political contributions and prohibiting contributions from labor unions and corporations?

Many other states have addressed this and Illinois should, too. This state should look at and adopt some of the fundraising reforms instituted in other states that limit the role of contributions that encourage a culture of corruption. I support the elimination of contributions from labor unions and corporations.

Q (Chicago Tribune). Few races for Congress or the state legislature in Illinois are truly competitive. That's largely because district boundaries are drawn to give one major party or the other a decisive advantage. Should the legislature have the power to draw legislative maps, or should this be turned over to an independent process that would remove partisan considerations? If you support a change, how would you do it?

The current process to draw districts is a result of the Illinois Constitution. The intent was to encourage compromise between the parties, since the alternative would give the process entirely to one side or another. The intent was clearly not met, and the result has been a series of partisan maps. The process is set by the constitution, so any substantial change would probably require a constitutional amendment.

One disadvantage of the current districts is that communities are too often split between districts for no reason other than partisan advantage. I would support a legislative effort to create rules for creating districts that respect existing county, township, and municipal boundaries. With a basic set of statutory rules, the most extremely gerrymandered districts can be avoided.

On Gambling

Q (Chicago Tribune). Should Illinois be in the business of state-sanctioned gambling?

Gambling is not a cure-all to the state's financial problems, but it does provide some income. There is an expectation that the state will run some gambling, and an abrupt end would

cause unnecessary problems. The lottery is well-established in the state, and should stay the way it is. Casino gambling provides benefits to those communities that host them, but should not be expanded.

On Education

Q (Chicago Tribune). There is a significant gap in spending between the wealthiest and poorest districts in Illinois. Is that a matter for the state or for local taxpayers to address? Should the state legislature change the way it raises and distributes revenue for local schools? Should the state provide more money for the poorest districts and, if so, how?

This is one of the most important questions facing the state. The Illinois Constitution clearly identifies the state's important role in education, but the state has not lived up to that role, ranking near the bottom of the fifty states in its support for education. The state needs comprehensive reform that decreases reliance on property taxes, improves equity, and improves the public's understanding of how their schools are spending funds and meeting educational standards.

The Metro Mayors Caucus recognized the importance of education in their communities and formed a task force three years ago to look at this. I serve as a member of that task force and I helped draft a set of principles that have been approved by the Caucus and its regional councils of government. Those principles include recognition that the state should pay for any mandates it creates for local schools, and should strive to fund at least 51% of the core cost cost of education. The state should work with local boards of education to improve the methods by which they demonstrate to the public how well they are succeeding fiscally and academically. It's important for the state to create measures that are not themselves a new costly mandate, but instead seek to remove mandates that reduce efficiency in the schools. Any procedures used by the schools should be kept in place for a long enough period of time so that districts are not distracted from educating children by changing standards.

On Energy and the Environment

Q (Chicago Sun Times): Do you think the funding formula for the Regional Transportation Authority should be changed? Are there other ways to deal with the funding issues of public transportation?

The funding formula for the RTA has been in place for over 20 years and represents a compromise of the interests of the city and the suburbs. However, the demographics of Chicagoland have changed over the last two decades. Any changes should be made to improve the coordination of transportation and land use, continue local input on transit planning, and increase operational efficiency. The state should complete an audit of the transit agencies to identify critical funding needs as part of any funding change. The state also must play a role to insure that federal dollars for transportation are maximized.

Changing the region's transit funding structure is an enormous task that will require careful analysis and public participation. I have been actively involved in the process as the chair of implementation for the DuPage Transit plan and co-chair of METRA's STAR line commuter rail initiative. These are suburban-based projects with regional impact, and any new funding formula needs to be able to support projects like these. As I have worked on these projects I've seen opportunities for partnerships between the state, communities, and businesses to plan and implement a solid public transportation system.

From the Illinois Sierra Club primary endorsement:

Michael Fortner began as a citizen activist fighting to hold Kerr McKee Corporation responsible for contaminating the rivers and groundwater of West Chicago and surrounding communities with thorium. He provided crucial leadership as he progressed from citizen to West Chicago alderman

to West Chicago mayor in getting the multi-group thorium cleanup agreement with Kerr McGee. This clean up will be one of the most extensive river cleanups in the nation.

A Northern Illinois University faculty member and PhD. in physics, Fortner is aware of the need to address environmental concerns. As West Chicago mayor, worked to get a modern filtration plant built. He pushed to make the West Chicago Prairie an Illinois Nature Preserve. He has been a leader in creating the DuPage Transit Plan and continues as Chair of the task force implementing that plan. The plan is a forward looking document that provides a blueprint for transit initiatives that will increase mobility and reduce congestion. The first new services start in June 2006 - from Wheaton to Naperville via College of DuPage.

Michael Fortner will be a consistent vote for a good quality of life for the citizens of Illinois. He sees a clean, safe, healthy environment with lots of open space as a big part of quality of life. He can be relied on to preserve wetlands and fight sprawl. He has a reputation for honesty, is incredibly bright and well informed on environmental issues. He seems to want to represent the 95th district for all the right reasons.

On Criminal Justice

Q (Chicago Tribune). Illinois has a surplus of prison beds and a number of new prisons that have not been opened. Should the state close older prisons and open the new facilities? Should it continue to operate the older facilities because of their economic importance to the surrounding communities? In Illinois, 55 percent of the inmates who are released eventually wind up back in prison. How can the state reduce this high rate of recidivism?

Inmates convicted of drug-related crimes make up a large fraction of the offenders held in state prison, and a large fraction of those are released and eventually wind up in prison again. Many of these individuals have non-violent records, and need greater support in our criminal justice system to reduce their likelihood of a return to prison. Both DuPage and Kane counties have made successful use of drug courts to address this group of offenders. Mandatory drug counseling and drug testing should be part of the process to follow these offenders from their arrest through their return into society.

Violent criminals need to be separated from society, and we need a strong correctional system to accommodate these individuals. Older facilities that meet the state's standards should continue to be operated. If an older facility is no longer cost-effective the state should look to other uses for the facility to help the communities that are dependent on those facilities.