Erica Bray-Parker Response to Shaw Questionaire September 2026

1. What policies should the Illinois General Assembly pursue to make it less expensive to live, work and raise a family in Illinois?

The soaring costs of groceries, gas, housing, and healthcare are a primary concern for Illinois residents. Affordability is a priority that I pledge to address in Springfield. I believe the State has an obligation to champion economic prosperity for all of its residents.

This includes addressing affordable housing throughout Illinois and DuPage County in a collaborative way that involves local municipalities, county representatives, and state officials as well as developers, taxpayers, and homeowners.

One of the toughest decisions during my two terms on the city council involved an apartment complex in the downtown Wheaton business district. Before I voted for the proposal, I took time to research and consider the facts; ask tough questions; and listen to residents, the builders, and my fellow council members to ensure that the opportunity aligned with the needs of Wheaton.

Additionally, I also believe our state should strengthen and update the Senior Citizens Homestead Exemption, the Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze, and the Senior Citizen Real Estate Tax Deferral Program to allow retired individuals the ability to stay in their homes and continue to contribute to their communities.

Finally, parents in Illinois need to be able to feed their families. Federal cuts to SNAP benefits are putting a strain on our most vulnerable residents, and I support the General Assembly's work to address this issue.

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2. Property taxes remain a major concern for many Illinois homeowners. What changes, if any, should the General Assembly make to Illinois' property-tax

system, and how would you prevent those changes from simply shifting costs elsewhere?

Property taxes are a real concern for the residents of the 47th district. In my seven years of leadership serving on the Wheaton City Council, we kept the tax rate flat for six years. This past year, we unanimously voted for a general obligation bond issue to fund the construction of a much-needed fire station and major work on our police station. In my experience, when community members value a service or improvement, they are willing to pay for it. As a steward of our tax dollars in Springfield, I will gather information, talk to constituents about the value of potential investments, and determine which services and infrastructure are vital for a thriving Illinois economy.

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3. What should the state require of companies developing data centers when it comes to electricity use, water consumption, infrastructure, and the costs imposed on local communities?

I will explore ways in which we can work to enact legislation that balances the economic development and job creation that data centers provide, the need for people to use technology, along with protecting our environment and the people and families within our communities.

As a teacher, contending with the effects of technology usage in the classroom is something I've had to consider and address proactively. The lesson I have learned is that we must be prepared to responsibly integrate technologies into our lives with reasonable safeguards.

AI and the high-level computing abilities it provides for our professional and personal lives are here to stay. The challenge is ensuring that common-sense guidelines for data centers are in place to protect our resources; the environment; the health of those working in and living near data centers; and our ability to raise our families and thrive in our communities.

The framework proposed by the POWER Act streamlines many of the complex and challenging decisions individual municipalities face when data centers are proposed in their communities. While I support the autonomy of local governments to make decisions based on the needs of their constituents, data center development is one such instance where the state needs to step in to provide consistency and transparency for how data centers are built and operated; to assess the impact of electricity and water usage; and to consider ways in which data centers can utilize renewables to provide energy to run their operations.

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4. Should local governments have more authority over where data centers are built and what conditions developers must meet, or should the state establish more uniform rules? Why?

Regulation over data centers needs to be a balance between local control and state-enforced guardrails. Different communities have different needs and interests and, to a certain extent, should be able to negotiate land use as it relates to data centers, but the complexity of this issue requires oversight and uniformity at the state level.

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5. What specific changes to the General Assembly's ethics and transparency processes would you support, and how would you handle a misconduct complaint if you learned of one?

As a matter of principle, I believe that all members of the government should be held accountable for their actions. Misconduct complaints should be taken seriously and investigated by appropriate house committees. It is clear that the Legislative Ethics Commission needs an improved process as well as improved leadership. With the recent departure of the legislative inspector general, the General Assembly has an opportunity to make changes that hold lawmakers and staff accountable, review and revise the process for filing, reviewing, and acting upon complaints filed.

This can only come if the members of the General Assembly prioritize this commission and validate its mission. As a member of the General Assembly, you have my commitment to do just that.

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6. What should the state do to ensure reliable electricity at an affordable price? Do you support the expansion/reactivation of nuclear power plants?

At the federal level, the Trump Administration is implementing environmental and energy policies that have weakened the EPA and diluted the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act’s incentives

and investments in clean energy, including the promise of good-paying jobs. As a result of these policies, energy prices in the US have increased by as much as 13%, and this directly impacts businesses and individuals in Illinois. The needs of consumers must be prioritized over the profits of energy producers.

Having diverse energy sources, particularly renewables like solar and wind, is one way we can reduce electricity prices. A reliance on gas and oil makes us vulnerable to global markets, as evidenced by the war in the Middle East.

Illinois continues to offer residential and commercial tax incentives through such programs as Illinois Shines, rebates through energy providers like ComEd/Ameren, as well as rebates for EVs. We can do more, especially as we consider the data centers' additional use of our electric grid.

As long as safe long-term waste management and affordability are prioritized, I am encouraged by Governor Pritzker's executive order aimed at increasing nuclear energy options through the construction of nuclear power plants within the next 7 years. Again, by diversifying and expanding our energy sources and giving people options, we can ensure that our energy demands are met while lowering costs and creating jobs for Illinoisans.

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7. Do you believe the state's current tax structure is sustainable, and what changes would you support?

It is important to emphasize that property taxes are not set or collected by the state; rather, local municipalities are tasked with setting, collecting, and allocating property tax levies.

Income tax revenue is a state levy, and a portion of those revenues go to Illinois communities through the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF). Currently, the rate of that funding is approximately 6.5%, with the original promise of 10% being allocated to local communities. I support phasing in the LGDF rate to get local municipalities to 10%, so that each individual community can fund local services and infrastructure needs.

Additionally, with the dramatic and chaotic cuts at the federal level, state and local governments in Illinois are being squeezed, making it challenging to support our neighbors in need alongside basic infrastructure programs, school funding, transportation, health care, and other services.

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8. What do you believe Illinois should be doing differently to improve public education, and how

should the state balance increased funding with accountability for how schools spend that money?

Measuring the success of a school is a complex task. By adopting standard learning benchmarks and competitive curriculum, and identifying the individual abilities and talents of students, schools are cultivators of contributing, diverse members of our society; they are not manufacturers of uniform widgets. Test scores alone are not enough of a metric to determine the effectiveness of our education system.

Students' paths to success in school shouldn't be determined by their zip codes. The Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) model is intended to strengthen all schools while addressing the needs of particular communities. The problem is that most schools don't have the resources they need. The ultimate goal is to provide students with the skills needed for higher education, including college and trade schools, so that they can secure high-quality jobs that give them the means to support themselves and expand our economy.

It is clear that EBF hasn't gone far enough. In order to adequately support our schools, we must secure alternative funding sources. However, any new funding for schools would need to be directly tied to local property tax relief to assist homeowners and retirees who are being squeezed by their property tax bills. School districts need to demonstrate that these tax dollars are invested wisely by delivering positive student outcomes.

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9. What changes should the General Assembly make to improve the affordability and availability of health care, particularly in rural and underserved communities? How would you prevent rural hospital closures?

The affordability and availability of healthcare is a multi-faceted problem that is impacting our most vulnerable rural and economically disadvantaged communities as well as seniors and those with disabilities. The "One Big Beautiful Bill" includes Medicare and Medicaid cuts set to start in October, which, by some estimates, will result in 700,000 people losing their coverage in Illinois and a $4 billion deficit for Illinois hospitals. This means many will face a lack of accessible and affordable care options, resulting in poorer health outcomes and increased complications.

The Illinois Hospital Association warns that roughly half of Illinois hospitals could be forced to cut services or close unless action is taken. One area hit the hardest is obstetrics departments in rural hospitals. Closures force pregnant women to drive long distances for prenatal care and delivery. Like many issues we face from recent, dramatic cuts at the federal level, as a member of the Illinois General Assembly, I am committed to digging in to find solutions to ensure that individuals, families, and seniors are able to access the basic healthcare services that we all deserve. And I am ready to work to find solutions to offset

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10. What changes, if any, would you make to Illinois' criminal justice and public safety laws, including the SAFE-T Act, and what should the state be doing differently to address violent crime and repeat offenders?

Recent statistics show that homicide and violent crime are trending down. While some critics of the SAFE-T Act anticipated an increase in crime with its no cash bail provision, that has not happened. Prior to the passage of the law, the fact that poorer individuals couldn't post the bail required for release while awaiting litigation and wealthier defendants could easily pay their bail and return to their families and jobs was unjust. It doesn't mean that each individual charged is released; defendants are still being detained based on the nature of their crime and past criminal records.

We must also focus on ensuring that those who serve and protect are well-trained and equipped and that mental health services are part of the equation when officers respond to emergency situations. I am proud of the fact that under my tenure on the Wheaton City Council, we've added two social workers in our community and the DuPage County Crisis Recovery Center opened, giving individuals in our county somewhere to go when they are facing a mental health crisis. More than 2,200 on-site assessments have taken place in the first year since the center opened.

Domestic abuse and violence continue to be an area in need of action throughout our state. About 42% of women and 26% of men in Illinois experience intimate partner physical harm, emotional abuse, or sexual violence in their lifetimes. I am committed to removing weapons from domestic abusers and protecting those people who are being targeted.

Laws aren't created in a vacuum, and reassessment of this act should involve judges, prosecutors, victims and advocacy groups.

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11. What areas of state spending would you prioritize, and where do you believe the state could spend less?

With costs increasing for families due predominantly to the federal tariffs and the war with Iran, Illinois needs to do all it can to protect its people, including the most vulnerable populations. I am in favor of a full assessment of spending priorities from the General Assembly. Each year we should be committed to finding waste in our government spending, tax loopholes that decrease revenue, and tightening up our budget. I am proud of the fact that Illinois has had 12 credit upgrades, due in part to eight balanced budgets and clearing our state's multi-billion-dollar unpaid bill backlog, which allows us to redirect our government funds towards underfunded services and projects.

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12. What should Illinois do to attract and retain businesses and jobs, particularly outside the Chicago metropolitan area?

For three consecutive years, the population of Illinois has increased according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This growth contradicts messaging that suggests that people are leaving the state in droves. In fact, the population grew by 16,100 people between 2024 and 2025. We need to ensure that this trend continues by playing the long game to attract young people to go to college, trade school, and participate in job training programs in our state. I support legislation and programs aimed at stimulating our economy by attracting professionals and skilled workers to our state, such as the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA). Since 2021, CEJA has continued to do just that through job training, apprenticeships, and grant funding.

Locally, communities and schools within the 47th District have strong incubator programs, community-based job-training programs, and ties with labor organizations with apprenticeship programs, such as the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program. I will work towards greater state support of these programs that serve to train and retain our young people for a thriving Illinois economy.

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13. What decisions should be left to municipalities, counties and school districts rather than being dictated by state government? Are there areas where

you believe the state currently gives local governments too much or too little authority?

In my experience, the state government should only step in to assist municipalities when there is a need. Several recent examples of where the state has been needed to provide guidance and create uniform standards include data centers; e-bikes and e-motos; and Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs). Overall, the relationship should be collaborative as we represent the interests of our common constituents. As an elected local leader, I have always appreciated the collaborative support we have received from our county, state and federal officials.

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14. Illinois has laws limiting how state and local law enforcement agencies cooperate with federal immigration authorities. Do you believe those laws strike the right balance, and what changes, if any, would you support?

I support the TRUST Act, which was signed by Republican Governor Bruce Rauner in 2017. Our local police, fire, and emergency workers need to focus on the day-to-day needs of our residents and not get caught up in federal politics. Both the TRUST Act and a 2023 amendment to the Illinois Vehicle Code prohibit data sharing for both immigration and reproductive health investigations. This is an important component.

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14. How far should the state go to keep the Bears in Illinois?

As I campaign, talk with people, and knock doors, the clear and consistent message I hear from residents of DuPage County is that our state and our people have pressing economic issues to address, and now is not the time for large tax breaks to multi-million-dollar corporations. With that said, people would still like to see the Bears stay in Illinois and find a collaborative solution that benefits fans and the local economy without hurting taxpayers.

What are your top 3 priorities? (Check 3 boxes)

**Affordability*

Health Care

Immigration

**Education*

Artificial Intelligence

Energy

Data Centers

Corruption

**Ethics and Transparency*

Transportation

Taxpayer-Bears Stadium

LGBTQ Rights

Climate Change