Erica Bray-Parker response to Ballotpedia Questionnaire, August 2026

Erica Bray-Parker

Erica Bray-Parker was born in Wisconsin and moved to Illinois in high school, graduating from Palatine High School. She earned her Master's Degree from Northern Illinois University in Political Science through the James Madison Memorial Foundation Fellowship Award and her bachelor's degree from Illinois State University in Social Science Education.

At the end of the 2025-2026 school year, Bray-Parker retired after 33 years of teaching high school history, civics, American law, and psychology classes. As a public high school civics teacher, she emphasized the importance of active democracy; offered resources and identified numerous opportunities for her students to become involved in their communities; and challenged them to embrace the meaning behind "We the People."

In 2019, Bray-Parker was elected to the Wheaton City Council as Councilwoman At-Large. She credits her service to the City of Wheaton with giving her a solid foundation upon which she built relationships and fostered collective dialog between local residents and their government. During her tenure, the City of Wheaton has consistently earned an AAA bond rating from S & P Global and has not increased the property tax levy for 7 consecutive years.

Bray-Parker has voted for ordinances and proposals that have increased downtown housing by over 500 units, including a project for homeless veterans and their families; a comprehensive sidewalk project; and improvements in the downtown business district, including new streetscape, better access to parking, and the addition of the French Market pavilion, while also encouraging developments in the north and south business districts. She cites her record of collaborating with residents, city boards and commissions, businesses, nonprofits, as well as working to amend city practices in ways that support all stakeholders, as the foundation of her leadership philosophy.

Since 2017, she has served as an elected member of the board of directors for the Illinois Education Association (IEA). She also served as a member of Congressman Sean Casten and former State Representative Terra Costa Howard's Educational Advisory committees. Currently, she is a member of the League of Women Voters of Wheaton, and volunteers at her church and with a variety of local non-profit organizations. A 30-year resident of Wheaton, Bray-Parker and her husband, Jeremy, have two adult sons who graduated from the Wheaton public schools.

Cost of Living and Affordability Solutions

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.

What does that look like?

Our teens have access to summer jobs that teach them work ethic and put spending money in their pockets. Our young adults can enroll in college and access affordable technical programs without incurring massive debt. Early career individuals can find affordable rental options without the fear of never being able to purchase their own home. Families can secure affordable child care, health care, and the ability to give their children a well-rounded upbringing. Established adults can look forward to a healthy and happy retirement experience without the fear of running out of money. Small businesses thrive in a supportive environment that encourages ownership and growth. All of us in Illinois can make ends meet when buying groceries and paying our bills. And while it's up to each of us to do our best and help our families and neighbors, the state government plays an important role in the economic prosperity of its people.

I am versed in addressing economic issues. During my tenure on the Wheaton City Council, the city consistently earned a AAA bond rating, operated with a balanced budget, and did not increase the property tax levy, all while providing the community with affordable services. In Springfield, I will fight for legislation that makes the daily cost of living affordable and protects constituents against the current tide of poor policies implemented at the federal level.

I support new state legislation that addresses the 'missing middle' in DuPage County and makes housing assistance accessible to more residents in our communities. 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.

Public Safety and Community Resilience

First responders and law enforcement serve an essential role in keeping our communities safe. I advocate for strong public safety policies that address crime prevention, serve to educate residents, address mental health care, and protect individuals from identity theft and other scams.

During my 7 years on the Wheaton City Council, I've gained a deeper understanding of our police, fire, and emergency care workers, and with that comes an even greater commitment to ensure that those who serve and protect are well-trained and equipped. Wheaton has a strong neighborhood outreach program that encourages residents to personally get to know our firefighters and police officers. I am also a vocal advocate for our city's social work team, and I am proud Wheaton is home to the recently opened DuPage County Crisis Recovery Center.

I support gun safety legislation passed in Illinois, including the Protect Illinois Communities Act that bans assault weapons. However, more can be done and I am committed to expanding legislation that protects citizens from gun violence. Governments can find a balance between passing common-sense gun safety measures while also respecting the rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment. I take pride in being named a Moms Demand Action Gun Sense Candidate.

Investing in Education and Strong Public Schools

As a 33-year veteran public school teacher, I firmly believe that communities flourish with strong public schools and affordable higher education. Future generations depend on the knowledge and opportunities provided by local schools. I stand behind legislation that invests in public schools and affordable post-secondary education and creates career opportunities. Young people should have financial and educational access to a wide range of pathways, including colleges, universities, and trade schools. Investing in a multitude of opportunities for the younger generation is critical to strengthening our community, the Illinois economy, and ensuring a prosperous financial path for future generations.

For a tenth year in a row, the state budget has committed to fully fund the Evidenced-Based Funding program for public schools with the additional goal of providing property tax relief. I'm encouraged that the state is meeting its financial commitment to public schools. However, there is room for improvement concerning property tax relief for families, and that will be a major area of focus for me in Springfield. I am strongly committed to fighting voucher programs at both the state and the federal level that take money and resources away from our public schools, while providing little to no oversight. Strong public schools are the great opportunity maker!

What areas of public policy are you personally passionate about?

From my experience as a teacher and elected official, I have come to realize that my family's priorities are the same priorities shared by most families. I was raised to value justice, mercy, and humility. As a mom, wife, teacher, and neighbor, I put those values into practice in my daily life. We all share the same ideals of being in a safe community with high-quality services and an affordable cost of living. It is important that the people of the 47th district have an active representative. I am committed to public service that fosters collective dialogue and creates opportunities to work with all stakeholders.

Personally, I am passionate about social justice, strong programs that provide post-secondary opportunities for our young people as well as serving as a voice for our local communities/y. The phrase ***"Democracy is a Verb!"*** *is just not a message that I have shared in my classroom for three decades; it is what guides my work and decision-making. I always encourage others to embrace this message while providing spaces and opportunities for my students, constituents, neighbors, and family to be involved as informed voters and active citizens.*

It is important that we all understand what active representation looks like - it is walking through residents' backyards to see their flooding issues; walking in people's neighborhoods to address concerns about sidewalks and traffic safety for their kids; and meeting/engaging with people to get a firsthand perspective of both their concerns and ideas. As a two-term Wheaton City Councilwoman, I have a proven record of working to amend city practices in ways that support, uplift, and include residents and visitors with the goal of fostering a community where we all have the ability to thrive.

This is what I have strived to do for Wheaton, and I commit to upholding this practice for the residents of the 47th House District of Illinois.