Erica Bray-Parker response to The Daily Herald questionnaire, September 2026

What do you consider the three most pressing issues facing the state in the next four years, and how should they be addressed?

Affordability, Education and Collabortive Government

The soaring costs of groceries, gas, housing, and healthcare are a primary concern for residents. I will fight to make the daily cost of living affordable and protect my constituents against the current tide of poor federal policies. I support legislation that addresses the 'missing middle' in DuPage County and makes housing assistance accessible. Strong public schools give our kids an opportunity to thrive. I will prioritize legislation that invests in schools, expands affordable post-secondary education, and creates career opportunities. For 10 years, the state budget has funded the Evidence-Based Funding program for public schools with the additional goal of providing property tax relief. However, the EBF hasn't gone far enough, and alternative funding sources are needed. As a civics teacher, council member, and community volunteer, I have focused on developing collaborative relationships. Governments can solve complex problems through thoughtful & inclusive dialogue where all perspectives are valued. Partnerships between state and local will be even more important as the current federal government continues to cut funding and services, often affecting our most vulnerable populations.

How would you assess the General Assembly's handling, to date, of the various proposals surrounding a Chicago Bears stadium in Arlington Heights? What proposals would you have

been willing to support and in what ways, if any, might you have approached it differently?

As I knock doors and talk with people for my campaign, 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. 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. If elected to serve in the General Assembly, I will research the various proposals, which are constantly being revised, and work to find a collaborative solution that benefits fans and the local economy without hurting taxpayers.

Now roughly three years into the elimination of cash bail in Illinois as part of the SAFE-T Act, how would you assess the success or failure of the criminal justice reform measure? What changes, if any, would you support?

Recent statistics show that homicide and violent crime are trending down. While critics of the SAFE-T Act anticipated an increase in crime with its no cash bail provision, that has not happened. The ability to pay should not be a condition for pretrial release. Of course, that doesn't mean that each individual charged is released; defendants are still detained based on the nature of their crime and past criminal records. Laws aren't created in a vacuum, and reassessment of this act should involve judges, prosecutors, victims and advocacy groups.

Additionally, those who serve and protect should be well-trained and equipped, and mental health services must be part of the equation when officers respond to emergencies. Under my tenure on the Wheaton City Council, we added two social workers in our community, and the DuPage County Crisis Recovery Center opened, giving individuals somewhere to go when faced with a mental health crisis.

We also need to address domestic abuse and violence situations 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 the victims.

Illinois homeowners face one of the highest relative property tax burdens in the country. What specific proposals could you offer to ease the burden on state residents?

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 have an additional source of revenue to 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.

Gov. JB Pritzker recently paused a state initiative granting incentives to data center developers, and residents statewide have concerns about how such developments are affecting their

access to water, utility rates, and the environment. How should the state approach data centers going forward?

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.

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 for 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.

Illinois' "sanctuary" policies concerning immigration have made it a target for the Trump administration and critics who say they encourage criminal behavior. How do you feel about those policies, and how, if at all, would you change them?

I support the TRUST Act, which was signed by Republican Governor Bruce Rauner in 2017. This act preserves the trust between our residents and local police while still allowing cooperation when there is a legitimate federal criminal warrant issued. 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. However, what is happening in our Illinois communities now, in terms of immigration enforcement, is an example of federal overreach.

In 2024, the governor of Texas chose to send busloads of immigrant families through our city of Wheaton in a chaotic and cruel action. The Wheaton City Council, city staff, and my community handled it with grace and respect. The chief of police was informative and transparent and families were welcomed as any other visitor would be to our city. This political stunt was an unnecessary burden on our local resources.

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 also an important component.

Many women in the legislature complain about a culture of sexual harassment in Springfield. Do you see evidence of this and, if so, what should be done about it?

As a woman myself, I am well aware of the prevalence of sexual harassment in our society. While I am not currently a member of the General Assembly, if elected, I will support needed improvements in the Legislative Ethics Commission. 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.

Are you satisfied with the state's existing ethics policies for senators and representatives? If so, what about the policies should reassure Illinoisans that elected leaders abide by high standards? If not, what changes need to be made?

Elected officials have a direct responsibility to the people and their job is to do the work of the people. They should be held to the highest ethical standards not just by voters every two or four years, but by strong policies, practices and procedures that are in place and reviewed annually. I favor strict limits on gifts, clear rules and limits around political activity versus legislative activity, statements of economic interests and limits on direct financial investments and benefits for elected leaders and their immediate families. As a lifetime public servant myself, I uphold the highest ideals of service to the members of my school community and my city. What we're seeing at the federal level with extreme financial benefits is unprecedented; there is no room for this ill-advised practice in Illinois.

What personal qualifications do you bring that would make you an effective legislator?

As a classroom teacher for the past 33 years, my skill set has been to know the students in front of me each class period, know the learning objective, design a strategy with the highest outcome, carry that objective out, assess the results, and reevaluate. This rarely happened in a vacuum and often came with modifications in real time. This skill has allowed me to serve the 54,000 residents of Wheaton, our visitors, and businesses over the past 7 years with a high degree of success.

As an elected official on Wheaton City Council, I have been a leader for balanced budgets and responsible spending. In addition, during the first 6 years of my tenure, we held the property tax

levy flat, with one recent revenue increase for the specific purpose of a much-needed fire station and major repairs to our police station.

This experience makes me the qualified candidate to represent the people of the 47th state district.