

Legislative Interview with Illinois Senator Chapin Rose, 51st District

League of Women Voters of Champaign County

Date of Interview: April 6, 2021

Interviewers: Theresa Michelson, Sara Kelley, Carol Bosley

Synopsis

Senator Rose spent an hour with us discussing these three priority questions provided by LWVIL. In addition, we were able to engage in discussion about a couple of other items as well.

“Will you work to increase education funding every year (as mandated by law in 2017) for evidence-based distribution to schools to improve extreme funding inequities that severely impact students in low-income neighborhoods? Why or why not?”

Senator Rose said he voted for the bill in 2017 – so yes, he does support it. Right now, his concern is how the federal money from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) will be allocated and managed in the State related to education, saying the rules have not yet been written. So much related to education funding in the State unfortunately is Chicago and Downstate fighting against the Suburbs. One thing for sure, Senator Rose feels virtual learning is not working for students at all levels – that he has many examples of how that is so and how students have fallen behind this past year.

“What measures do you support to make the redistricting process more open to input about district maps from individuals and communities.”

Senator Rose said until you change the Constitution, he believes there cannot be change in redistricting. As well, until a Justice is replaced, there will not be a change. An added dimension to the approaching redistricting deadline/decision is that it will be based on outdated district demographic information since due to COVID the census data will not be available until August. Ten years ago, there was a much more amplified voice related to redistricting – that is not present this time around. Senator Rose provided this link to the April 9th redistricting hearing (<https://www.ilga.gov/senate/committees/hearing.asp?CommitteeID=2806>).

“Illinois has the potential to lead the nation in cutting greenhouse gas emissions and developing new green jobs in the next few years. What do you see as the next steps for the Illinois General Assembly to make this a reality? Do you support the Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA)? Why or why not?”

Asked if he would support the Clean Energy Jobs Act, he doesn't know yet as the Act is not in final form. Bottom line is that at the last minute, many pages are often added to bills. Senator Rose said he does have a more parochial view related to clean energy jobs as he represents a district that includes the Clinton power plant – which has a huge impact in his district. The Clinton power plant employees ~2,500 people who average \$80,000 a year. Many of these jobs do not require a college degree. The result is that citizens are making excellent wages which they feed back into their communities, e.g., in what they purchase, in restaurants where they dine, in the houses they buy which results in increased property taxes for schools, etc. If CEJA negatively impacts the Clinton power plant, this will directly harm many of his constituents and indirectly harm his district in far-reaching ways.

One question constituents always have is ‘how much will the price of power go up?’ Rates are a huge concern to many people.

Related to windmill farms, there are lots of issues – e.g., people say windmills are great, but no one wants them in their back yard or adjacent to their back yard – when their neighbor is making money off the windmill, but they are not. As far as the companies that build and run the windmill farms, they are not good, reliable companies. Out of seven windmill projects that he is familiar with, he knows only one that went well. Yes, they create jobs, but the jobs are short-term and not long-term jobs.

Additional questions

After our discussion on the three above LWVIL priority questions, we were able to spend some time talking to Senator Rose about how to address funding in lieu of the Fair Tax failing in last fall's election. Senator Rose said with all the CARES federal money coming our way, Illinois will have what he calls a two-year 'unhealthy pause' as far as our budget worries. However, in 2023 we will wake back up to our mess. He believes we must stabilize spending first before we can ask for more money from taxpayers. And eventually we must pay the piper (pension).

When asked his thoughts on how the League of Women Voters might improve its mission of educating Illinois voters, Senator Rose said educating voters on the redistricting map is important and the three important components involved in redistricting – that new districts should be compact, contiguous, and community-based. We should work to inform citizens what they should be fighting for - legislators drawing the map is not a good thing.