

Governor candidates react

One Illinois: A Community Initiative for Persons with Disabilities presented a questionnaire to the three gubernatorial candidates asking where they stood regarding the group's platform that advocates for money and services for people with disabilities.

To view the rest of the candidates' responses check out www.oneillinois.info.

Do you support working with stakeholders to develop a four-year plan within the first six months of your term with measurable outcomes for improving the community infrastructure so that it may best serve people with disabilities and mental illness? This includes a commitment to updating the plan in each annual State of the State and funding the plan in the annual budget address accordingly.

Republican Judy Barr Topinka: "This makes sense. As you know, I am the first gubernatorial candidate to prepare a four-year budget plan, so I believe in thinking long term. I would direct that a four-year plan be prepared and I would expect my administration to involve Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities and community agencies in that planning process."

Democratic Gov. Rod Blagojevich: "We don't know if it can be done in six months. We support working with the stakeholders in developing a plan and we would like to do it in a

timely manner."

Green Party candidate Rich Whitney: "I don't know that it is the place for the governor to provide a vision for persons with disabilities and/or mental illness. That strikes me as presumptuous. It seems to me that the goals and vision have already been largely developed by persons with disabilities and/or mental illness, their family members and advocacy groups, such as your own, and the Illinois Olmstead Coalition and its constituent organizations."

Do you support increasing funding for community services 10 percent every year for the next four years?

Topinka: "Until the state's backlog of bills is paid and the state has stopped borrowing to pay today's expenses, I cannot commit to a specific 10 percent annual increase for each of the next four years."

Blagojevich: "We would like to work with IARF to figure out a way to look at funding and accountability and figure out in terms of the budget what makes sense."

Whitney: "I am the only candidate in this race who is campaigning on behalf of House Bill 750 — a comprehensive tax reform plan that, among other things, will eliminate the structural deficit as well as allow us to restore some of the devastating cuts in social services that we have suffered over the last several years."

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