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Candidates line up to file for city election

Written by Gary Barlow

CHICAGO – Candidates and their aides crowded the halls at the Chicago Board of Elections early Nov. 15, the first day to file nominating petitions to run for mayor, City Council and other city offices in the Feb. 22 election.

Some candidates had volunteers standing in line outside the building overnight to ensure that they got in early, but most arrived after 7 a.m.

“We got here about 8,” said Don Nowotny, who’s running for the open 46th Ward City Council seat being vacated by retiring Ald. Helen Shiller. Nowotny, who is gay, said he feels good about his campaign in that crowded race, which could end up attracting 10 or more candidates before the filing deadline Nov. 22.



Don Nowotny

“I’ll be happy to get the petitions in and start on the next phase of the campaign,” Nowotny said.

Another openly gay candidate in that race, James Cappleman, ran against Shiller last time and made a close race of it, winning 47 percent of the vote.



James Cappleman and partner Richard Thale

“I knew last time when it was so close that there would be a lot of people running this time,” Cappleman said.

Ald. Tom Tunney (44th), the only openly gay member of the City Council, faces an opponent, David Winner, but said he’s optimistic about winning a third term.

“We have a strong record that we’re running on of working with community groups,” Tunney said. “I think in eight years we’ve reached out to every block in the ward. I’m very proud of what we’ve accomplished.”



Tom Tunney

Most eyes were on the candidates running to replace Mayor Richard M. Daley, whose decision to retire after more than two decades in office has sparked a crowded field of mayoral candidates. Former U.S. Sen. Carol Moseley Braun boasted that she was filing more than 90,000 nominating signatures after collecting more than 100,000.

“We’ve gotten support from all quarters of the city,” Braun said. “We’re filing a record number of petitions. I think we’re ahead of the pack.”

Another prominent candidate in that race, former U.S. Rep. and White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, also filed about 90,000 signatures. Emanuel, who formally announced Nov. 13, already has TV ads running and is expected to raise more money than other candidates, but Braun said that wouldn’t be the deciding factor in the election.

"We can't match his money, but I don't think the people of Chicago want someone who's going to come in and try to buy the election," Braun said.



Rahm Emanuel Petitions

City Clerk Miguel del Valle turned in more than 40,000 signatures and said he was proud that all of them were collected by campaign volunteers, not paid workers.



Carol Mosley Braun

"The great thing about that is that they'll be there the next day after we file to keep working for us," he said. "We got them all over the city, on the South Side, the West Side, the North Side, the East Side, every side."

U.S. Rep. Danny Davis, who announced his candidacy for mayor Nov. 14, said he was also working to win support all over the city, including in the LGBT community.

"I've been making outreach to the gay community ever since I've been in public office," Davis said. "There are just fundamental rights I believe in. I believe in human rights. I believe in protections."

Another mayoral candidate, the Rev. Wilfredo DeJesus, has had differences with LGBT activists in the past over stands he's taken on homosexuality in his church, but he said that was behind him.

"I think those differences have been addressed," DeJesus said. "I think there were misunderstandings."

DeJesus said in recent months he's lent his support to the effort by Vida/SIDA to open a shelter for homeless LGBT youths in Humboldt Park.

"I was very happy to help them," he said. "That just tells you how things were taken out of context."

Other major candidates for mayor are former Chicago Public Schools CEO Gery Chico and the Rev. James Meeks, a South Side state senator and mega-church pastor, who's also clashed with LGBT advocates before but has tried to reach out to LGBT leaders since deciding to run for mayor. Some leading aldermen and candidates who were in line to file for the election said they haven't made up their minds who to support for mayor.

"We plan to bring some of the candidates to the ward to talk about the issues facing Chicago," said state Rep. Harry Osterman, who's running for alderman in the 48th Ward, where longtime incumbent Mary Ann Smith is retiring. Osterman said volunteers for his campaign collected more than 4,000 signatures.



Harry Osterman

"The support is phenomenal," Osterman said. "We're working hard every day now talking about the issues in the neighborhoods."

Ald. Joe Moore (49th), who briefly considered a run for mayor but decided to run again for the City Council, said he hasn't made up his mind who to support for mayor either.



Blane Roberts

"Whoever the next mayor is will need the ability to talk truth with the people of Chicago and make decisions in a very open and transparent way," Moore said. "We'll see how the field shapes up and make a decision at the appropriate time, but it needs to be someone who promises to change the way business is done in the city."

Moore is being challenged in the 49th by an openly gay candidate, activist Blane Roberts.

Like Moore, Ald. Roberto Maldonado (26th), also filing for reelection, said he hasn't thrown his support behind a mayoral candidate either.

"I think that most of the political energy and concentration will be dedicated to the race for mayor," Maldonado said. "I want to see who files and who doesn't. ... Obviously, being Latino, I would love to see the first Latino mayor of Chicago, and we have three terrific candidates."



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