

Everyone Has A Little Less Choice: Raila Out of Assessor's Race

Longtime progressive activist [Andrea Raila](#) has folded her campaign for Cook County assessor. In a letter to friends and supporters last night, Andrea said, "This decision was made for personal reasons, with the understanding of the challenges and expense of pending legal objections to our petitions." Raila thus joins Oak Park [Ali ElSaffar](#) in the ranks of the fallen aspirants for this quiet but powerful post.

An [article in the Reader](#) a couple weeks ago quoted the slated candidate, tax appeals commissioner and Democratic county chairman Joe Berrios, as saying, with "a little chuckle," "If you look at my career, you know I have a lawyer who looks at petitions." The expense of defending a challenge to countywide petitions is daunting since it involves looking at thousands of facts, i.e., signatures. Berrios's petition challenge to [Jay Paul Deratany](#), while unsuccessful, reportedly threw a major cramp into Deratany's campaign, robbing it of time and a lot of money.

Raila needed over 8,000 signatures to get on the ballot; rule of thumb is that a candidate should have at least 2x the minimum to ward off a challenge, especially if the signatures are gathered in public places as opposed to door-to-door. Raila had thousands more than the minimum but, I understand, less than 2x. The episode highlights the advantage that a slate has over an independent solo candidate. Berrios benefited from being on petitions that also featured, e.g., David Orr and Maria Pappas. Good-government progressives historically "wait to see who's running" and vet their choices through endorsement processes with various degrees of rigor; by the time they do that it's too late to run as a team.

It also shows the importance of seizing electoral opportunities when they arise. I am reminded of the George Harrison lyric: "Everyone has choice / When to and not to raise their voices / It's you that decides." Andrea thanked her "more than 100" circulators and is still planning to fete them on the 13th. But 100 just wasn't enough, and now Democratic voters in Cook County will have a little less choice on the ballot come Feb. 2.

As many here know, I ran against Berrios a number of years ago. I bear him no ill will whatsoever and coincidentally had a nice chat with him last night at a downtown event. But Andrea Raila has been an unsung asset to reform candidates for many years and would have been a breath of fresh air to Cook County government. Her candidacy would have brought a spirited debate and some sunshine to assessment practices in the county. Let's hope we get more government in place that can find a place for people like Andrea.