

- Lake Effect News - http://www.lakeeffectnews.com -

Edgewater Resident Runs For Cook County Assessor

By LORRAINE SWANSON

Editor



Standing with her back against the eight previous Cook County assessors, all of whom have been male, Raila wants to become the first woman elected to the Cook County Assessor's seat.

Andrea Raila is mad as hell. After receiving a whopping increase on her condominium in the latest triennial property reassessment, the long-time Edgewater resident and property taxpayers advocate decided to do something about it by running in the upcoming Democratic primary in February.

"I'm just an average citizen," Raila said. "A lot of people complain about property tax increases, but I'd rather go out and throw my hat in the ring and do something about it."

A sought after speaker and property management instructor in the city's Far North lakefront neighborhoods, Raila, 48, spent six years as a case analyst for the Cook County Board of Review. Currently, she is a taxpayer's advocate for the U.S. Department of Revenue, educating homeowners and small businesses in appealing their property taxes.

The mother of three children, Christopher, 13, Reah, 10, and Rianna, 7, Raila heads her own property tax appeals and public consultancy firm, [Andrea Raila and Associates](#). Her husband, Michael Rohrbeck, a fellow at Loyola University's Center for Urban Learning and Research, is the firm's administrative manager. Both have lived in Edgewater for 35 years.

Clients, neighbors and local business people encouraged Raila to make a run for county assessor. She says she has the backing of some local elected officials, though they have yet to come out and publicly endorse her candidacy in the upcoming primary. Raila faces a tough challenge going up against three better known candidates, including the slated Democratic candidate, Joseph Berrios.

"I was once an insider, but now I'm an outsider. I worked inside government reducing people's property taxes," Raila said. "I'm a democrat, but frankly, I thought the party could

have done a better job slating candidates. I'm different because I have a long history of fighting for reform. [Berrios] has had his problems running the Board of Review, which is currently under investigation. Taxpayers deserve someone who is a professional and an expert in this field."

The first thing [Raila](#) wants to do is to remove the political pressures intrinsic to an elected assessor, by advocating for state legislation that appoints a Cook County Assessor or a supervisor of assessors in counties with populations of one million or more.

While the Cook County Assessor's office employs many qualified people, it lacks the leadership that a professional assessment administrator following best industry practices can provide. She wants to limit campaign contributions for elected county assessors and assessment appeals officials.

"The assessor's office is filled with qualified people but you need a leader in there who is a professional assessment administrator," Raila said. "By removing an elected assessor you sit a commissioned one that puts a stranglehold on campaign contributions and eliminates conflicts of interest."

Many other counties across the country, she adds, have appointed assessors.

A registered state lobbyist since 1992, Raila was a key contributor to the Illinois State Federation's study, *Taxation Without Representation—The Illinois Property Tax System*. She says her established working relationships with state lawmakers give her an inside track for advocating for equal treatment for all Cook County property taxpayers.

Currently, Cook County taxpayers are stripped of their rights to challenge the state tax multiplier on property tax appeals. She wants to implement the same assessments levels and practices in Cook County that are used in the other 101 counties in the state.

Cook is the only county in the state that gets an almost 2.9786 state multiplier, which triples initial assessments. Such changes to Cook County's "home rule," that allows the state to set an arbitrary multiplier that artificially inflates market values and initial assessments by almost 200 percent.

She wants to return equalization powers to the Cook County Board of Review, something that the county's 38 township assessors have been advocating for years. Such changes, Raila said, can only be brought about by state lawmakers.

"We would allow taxpayers within Cook County to challenge any multiplier that is placed on the county assessor's initial assessment," Raila said. "Township assessors can determine if properties are being assessed correctly by looking at sales ratios and assign more accurate township multipliers by taking away that authority from the state."

With the state's 7-percent cap on reassessments increases set to expire this year, Raila wants to go one step further by capping triennial reassessment increases for all residential and commercial properties to no more than five percent, with the exception of new property sales and construction.

The county has shifted the property tax burden from single family homes to commercial and residential multi-unit buildings during the most recent triennial reassessment.

"Even if I'm not elected, I will advocate capping triennial reassessments at five percent for all property types," Raila said. "Apartment and commercial building owners have experienced increases in the most recent reassessment that are between 30 and 40 percent. That's just wrong."

Raila also supports addressing Cook County tax inequities and over reliance on property

taxes, by using the state income tax for at least 51 percent of educational costs.

In addition to Berrios, other potential candidates include South Side politician Robert Shaw, a Cook County Democratic chairman and a Board of Review commissioner, and former River Forest police officer and real estate broker Eugene Staples.

Provided she is able to double the required 8,100 signatures needed to put her name on Democratic ballot in February, Raila could be poised to become the first woman to be elected as Cook County Assessor.

"I was at the Bears game this weekend gathering signatures," Raila said. "People kept asking me why I was running. When I told them that my condominium received a 37-percent increase on this year's reassessment, they said, 'hand it over, I'll sign it twice.' No one should have received that kind of increase in this economy."



Article printed from Lake Effect News: <http://www.lakeeffectnews.com>

URL to article: <http://www.lakeeffectnews.com/2009/10/06/edgewater-resident-runs-for-cook-county-assessor/>

Posted By [Lorraine Swanson](#) On October 6, 2009 @ 6:00 AM

Copyright © 2009 Lake Effect News. All rights reserved.