

Raila Drops Out of Cook County Assessor's Race

By LORRAINE SWANSON

Editor

After weeks of combing Bears' games, standing in front of supermarkets and theaters collecting signatures to her name on the Democratic primary ballot for Cook County Assessor, property tax consultant [Andrea Raila](#) has dropped out of the race.

In an e-mail to supporters sent late Thursday evening, Raila said the decision "was made for personal reasons, with the understanding of the challenges and expense of pending legal objections to our petitions." Raila, who described herself as an "average citizen" challenged professional pols, including the slated democratic candidate [Joseph Berrios](#) of the Cook County Review Board.

Raila told Lake Effect News in an [interview](#) last month that she would advocate for state legislation to appoint a Cook County Assessor or a supervisor of assessors in counties with populations of one million or more to remove the political pressures intrinsic to an elected assessor. She also advocated for equal treatment of all Cook County taxpayers by allowing them challenge the state multiplier on property tax appeals, and supported triennial reassessment increases to no more than 5 percent on property tax appeals.

Democratic hopefuls for the [Cook County Assessor's](#) office needed to gather 8,147 signatures to place their names on the ballot next February. While Raila hoped to gather twice that amount, she was only able to garner 12,000 signatures in her marathon petition drive, not enough to withstand the inevitable legal challenges.

"I hired the best attorney that always fights to keep people on board and represented other candidates who ran against Joe Berrios," Raila said. "When my attorney said the final numbers were 12,000, he said he couldn't promise me anything."

She saw the writing on the wall when her husband, Michael Rohrbeck, went to the [Chicago Board of Elections](#) last week and learned that Raila's petitions were being reviewed by two men from Chicago's South and West Sides. Raila's political organization Citizens for Andrea Raila had only raised enough money to run a petition drive.

"Can I raise that kind of money from volunteers for that kind of effort? I couldn't have ethically done it," Raila said. "I couldn't pull it out of my own pocket." In her withdrawal announcement, Raila implored supporters to continue their "vigilance to hold elected officials to high standards of conduct. Assessment officials must be accountable for administering our tax and appeal system with greater efficiency."

Although disappointed, Raila said she was proud of the fact that for a relative unknown, she was able to amass 100 volunteers to gather signatures for her petitions. "I'd say for a first-time candidate that's pretty good."

Now that she's had a taste for what she's in for, Raila said she'll be better prepared next time. She's thinking of running for Berrios seat on the Cook County Board of Review, which expires in 2012, or making another attempt for the assessor's office in 2014. In the meantime, Raila said, she'll continue to carry out her property tax reform work.

"I'm in it for the long haul," Raila said.

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