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Southland no Bore for 2010 election

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With the clock ticking frantically toward a Nov. 2 deadline, dozens of candidates for February's primary election scrambled Wednesday to collect enough signatures to get on the ballot.

One of them was Andrea Raila, a North Side tax consultant running in one of Cook County's most exclusive old boy clubs.

She is seeking the Democratic nomination for Cook County assessor, an office rich in campaign donation potential, powerful by virtue of its scope, yet stealth in its obscurity.

Who pays attention to the assessor's office when voters are weighing candidates for governor and U.S. senator?

"I'm barely standing up," Raila said of her efforts to gather signatures.

When you don't have precinct committeemen or ward workers - and when you're running for a countywide post that requires 8,000 signatures to get on the ballot, more signatures than the governor - the pre-campaign often is more difficult than getting elected.

Not only will Raila have to gather thousands more signatures than required, she'll likely be subjected to a lengthy and expensive ballot challenge from the Democratic Party. The party's slated candidate is Cook County Board of Review Commissioner Joe Berrios, a potent ringleader allied with House Speaker Michael Madigan.

Raila has spent weeks with a kitchen crew of friends and family visiting train stops, churches and bingo games.

"There are five days left - 10 if I don't sleep," the mother of three said.

And if Monday arrives and she lacks a comfortable margin in her signature-gathering effort, she will rethink whether to file at all.

"For now I think I can make it, but it's a herculean effort," she said.

For Cook and Will county voters, more incumbents will see opposition next year compared to four years ago, although many incumbents are running unopposed so far. Monday will reveal the full extent of 2010's prospects.

Southland Cook County Board member Joan Patricia Murphy, of Crestwood, faces a primary challenge from Democrat Nick Valadez, of Oak Forest.

U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush (D-1st), of Chicago, faces Democrat Fred Smith, of Evergreen Park, an Army veteran and social service agency director. No Republican has filed yet.

In the 11th Congressional District, incumbent U.S. Rep. Debbie Halvorson, of Crete, is running unopposed so far in the primary. She will face the winner of the GOP primary: Adam Kinzinger, David McAloon, Henry Meers Jr. or Dave White, all of whom filed petitions this week.

Democrats hoping to unseat Republican Cook County Commissioner Elizabeth Doody Gorman, of Orland Park, include Orland Fire Protection District Board President Patrick Maher and physician Victor Forys, of Park Ridge, who ran in the north suburban 5th Congressional District special election seven months ago.

Green Party candidate Richard Dalka also filed petitions for Gorman's seat.

Freshman state Rep. Mike Zalewski (D-Chicago) faces Democrat Terrence Collins, also of Chicago, while state Rep. David Miller's 29th District House seat piqued the interest of Democrats Kenneth Williams, of South Holland, and Thaddeus Jones, of Calumet City. Miller is running for state comptroller.

An open seat created by the retirement of state Rep. James Brosnahan (D-Evergreen Park) interested Democrats Mike Macellaio, who is Brosnahan's choice to fill the seat, and Kelly Burke, president of the Evergreen Park Library Board. The winner would face Republican Richard Grabowski, of Hometown.

Democrat John Unhoch, of Orland Park, filed petitions to challenge state Rep. Renee Kosel (R-New Lenox) in November.

Maripat Oliver, a Republican from Bolingbrook, filed paperwork to challenge freshman state Rep. Emily McAsey (D-Lockport) in the general election.

Republican Jeffrey Junkas, of Tinley Park, hopes to unseat incumbent Democrat Kevin McCarthy, of Orland Park.

Southland candidates Theodore "Teddy" Aguilar, of Crestwood, and Maureen Kelly, of Chicago's 19th Ward, filed petitions to run for the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District.

Lawmakers unopposed so far include state Sen. Maggie Crotty (D-Oak Forest) and state Reps. Monique Davis (D-Chicago), Robert Rita (D-Blue Island) and Will Davis (D-Homewood). As of Wednesday evening, no one had filed petitions to run against freshman state Rep. Anthony DeLuca (D-Chicago Heights), or Al Riley (D-Olympia Fields).

And finally, another election cycle appears to be approaching with no contest in the 86th House District.

State Rep. Jack McGuire, the 76-year-old Democrat from Joliet and former township supervisor, teacher and coach, faces no opposition in February or November - nor has he, by my account, in at least the past 12 years.

Joliet must love Jack.

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