

Candidates debate: Should teachers ever strike?

Candidates for state Senate debate

By Sara Faiwell

Daily Herald Staff Writer

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Here's an issue most people in the Illinois 27th Senate District have heard about in the past month: Teachers going on strike.

State Senate candidate Matt Murphy thinks public school teachers shouldn't have such an option. His opponent, Peter Gutzmer, disagrees and says collective bargaining is a system that works.

Right now, Illinois is only one of nine states that specifically allows teachers to strike in public schools.

Residents in the Northwest suburbs have been inundated by strike news about Harper College faculty in Palatine and teachers in Palatine Township Elementary District 15. Both unions have recently announced that a strike was averted because contract agreements were reached.

"I do not believe there is a necessary change," said Gutzmer, a Democrat from Hoffman Estates. He added that the success in the two Palatine districts shows there are no changes needed.

But Murphy, a Palatine Republican, said the threat of teachers striking becomes a safety issue for where kids will go if there's a strike and how parents will get out of work.

"Teachers are too central for them to be able to walk out on kids," he said. "We should join other states on this."

These viewpoints were expressed Wednesday night during a candidate forum at Hunting Ridge Elementary School in Palatine, attended mostly by parents.

The event was put on by three parent-teacher organizations in the district. House District 54 candidates Suzie Bassi and Jeffrey Ketelsen were also part of the forum.

Murphy and Gutzmer clashed over the fundamental idea behind Gov. Rod Blagojevich's All Kids plan signed into law last year to provide health care to uninsured children.

"Great idea, terrible execution," said Gutzmer. He said the state's budget can't handle the program and that the income levels were set too high.

Murphy, on the other hand, thinks the idea is no good.

"This one-size-fits-all government doesn't work," he said. "It's a loser."

Instead, he said the state needs to rev up its economic engine to make more money to pay for these things.

Earlier in the day, Murphy and Gutzmer also attended a senior forum put on by AARP at the Palatine Township Senior Center.

The two agreed on most issues, such as the state needing to provide more services for seniors who would rather live at home instead of a nursing home and the need for more public transportation options in the suburbs.

The 27th state Senate district stretches from Palwaukee Municipal Airport on the east to the Cook-Kane county line on the west. It includes most of Palatine, northern Arlington Heights and parts of Barrington, Barrington Hills, Buffalo Grove, Hoffman Estates, South Barrington, Rolling Meadows, Wheeling and Prospect Heights.

Murphy and Gutzmer are running to replace retiring Sen. Wendell Jones, a Palatine Republican.