

Candidates introduced at annual meeting of city Democrats

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By Jaime Griesgraber

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Five democratic U.S. Senate hopefuls and four current Illinois politicians met in Evanston on Sunday to criticize the Bush administration while urging Evanston residents to mobilize their political clout in the next election.

Evanston Democrats U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky state Sen. Jeff Schoenberg state Rep. Julie Hamos and Cook County Commissioner Larry Suffredin were among those who attended the annual meeting of the Democratic Party of Evanston, at the CG Jung Institute of Chicago, 1567 Maple Ave. About 100 Democratic Party members attended the event.

Schakowsky, who spoke at the event, criticized the Bush administration and its role in the war against Iraq.

She also blamed the administration for the poor economy.

"I have never been afraid before of an administration," Schakowsky said. "But I am now."

She said Evanston residents can play an important role in the 2004 election and must devote their attention to supporting Democrats.

"I am here to sound the alarm," she said. "We must have a strategy and must carry it out."

Though the U.S. Senate primaries are not until March, Illinois candidates showed they already are developing strategies for their campaigns.

The five candidates at the meeting were Blair Hull, a business owner; Barack Obama, a state senator; Dan Hynes, the chief financial officer of Illinois; Joyce Washington, a nurse; and Gery Chico, a Chicago lawyer.

Incumbent Republican Sen. Peter Fitzgerald will not seek another term, leaving a spot open that the Democrats hope to fill.

All five expressed disappointment with Bush administration's domestic and international agendas.

Obama said he is most concerned with the USA Patriot Act, while Hull and Hynes stressed the importance of reviving the economy. Chico named education as a priority and Washington said she supports universal health care.

Whatever the issue, Chico said, Democrats must come together for the 2004 election.

"The most important thing is that we put someone forward who is a good Democrat and who can incorporate all of the different interests of Illinois," he said.

Though most Evanston residents are not ready to cast a vote for a specific candidate, some

said hearing platforms was a good way to look ahead.

Resident Maidel Cason, 74, said, "Every time I heard (a candidate), I think it helped me think through some of the things that will be important to me when it comes to primary time."

Democratic presidential candidate Carol Mosely Braun was supposed to be at the event, but a plane delay kept her away.

In 1992, Mosely Braun was the first black woman elected to the U.S. Senate. She lost re-election to Fitzgerald in 1998 amid allegations of campaign finance fraud.

But organizers said Mosely Braun's absence did not hurt the event.

"This is a forum to inform our members of the issues that are important to us," said Bonnie Wilson, the Evanston party president. "By helping the (party), we will elect a democratic senator and president in 2004."

Attendee Ald. Steven Bernstein (4th) also expressed enthusiasm.

"We've got a great energy right now," he said. "Democrats have a really great nucleus in Evanston."