

Fritchey eyes County Board seat Legislator going after spot now held by Claypool

September 1, 2009

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State Rep. John Fritchey (D-Chicago) announced this morning that he's running for the Cook County Board seat now held by Forrest Claypool.

Fritchey made his announcement flanked by Claypool and U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, the former county commissioner who defeated Fritchey earlier this year in the election for White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel's former congressional seat.

As a state representative the past 13 years, Fritchey sometimes bucked Democratic Party regulars, styling himself as an independent and an agitator for change. He was an early critic of indicted former Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Fritchey, 45, was the legislator Claypool turned to when he wanted a new state law to stop Cook County officials from goosing their pensions by taking a higher-paid public job for just a month or two at the end of their careers.

"Mike, Forrest and I have been working for years on issues of reforming Cook County government," Fritchey said.

He said he hopes to work on property tax reform and environmental issues on the board.

During this year's congressional election, Fritchey, 45, highlighted his work as a co-sponsor with then-state Sen. Barack Obama of ethics legislation in Springfield. And this year, amid Blagojevich's arrest and ouster from office, he helped get a bill pass aimed at limiting "pay to play" politics.

"The voters deserve elected officials like John Fritchey, who will challenge the status quo and fight for taxpayers," Quigley said.

Claypool shocked the political world earlier this year by declaring he would leave the board and go into the health-care field instead of running for county board president, a race in which he would have been a front-runner.

Fritchey noted he is giving up his a committee chairmanship and his seniority in the state house of representatives to run for the county board because he said Quigley and Claypool have proved it's a body where reform can happen and not just "an elephant graveyard where old politicians go to die."