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Our endorsements for the Illinois Senate

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The Chicago Sun-Times today begins its endorsements in contested state Senate elections: **1st District:** Democratic Sen. Tony Munoz has represented the district that includes Pilsen and Little Village since 1999, but has garnered our criticism for his ties with the corrupt and powerful Hispanic Democratic Organization. He is a political patron of the convicted Hired Truck kingpin Angelo Torres and has sponsored hundreds of city workers for patronage jobs; his campaign contributors include a city worker in the Water Management Department who organized a heroin ring. Munoz's Republican opponent, Rose Pappas, is a political neophyte with no discernible platform. Green Party candidate, **Dorian Breuer**, who was born in Mexico City and became an American citizen in 1984, is a thoughtful candidate. A fund-raiser for an animal shelter and an environmentalist, Breuer thinks the burden for school funds should be shifted from property taxes to some income tax and sales taxes. He gets our nod.

3rd: Democratic Sen. **Mattie Hunter**, an alcohol and drug counselor, was appointed to her position in 2003 and deserves another shot at the seat for this district that runs from North Avenue to 65th Street. She, with other members of the Illinois Senate Black Caucus, disagrees with Gov. Blagojevich's and state Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka's plans to use gambling funds for schools. Her Republican opponent, Chad Jackson Surles, has few solid ideas.

4th: We endorsed Democrat **Kimberly Lightford** in the primary and we support her now. A former village trustee for Maywood, Lightford has created the Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood to raise awareness about the impact fathers can have on their children's lives. She is also active in the promotion of public health. Antoinette Ruback, the Republican candidate in this district, has run an invisible campaign.

6th: There is no question about our endorsement here. Democratic Sen. **John Cullerton** has been a superb legislator, thoughtful, creditable and in favor of creating an education funding formula that would reduce property taxes. He also supports an online database to make campaign donations more transparent, like the one sponsored in Washington by Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) to shed light on earmark projects. Cullerton's opponent is Republican William S. Hackney.

7th: Sen. **Carol Ronen** supports Gov. Blagojevich's idea to support schools by leasing the Illinois State Lottery. But she says she would prefer a more permanent solution such as tax reform to reduce the reliance on property taxes. She has been in the Legislature since 1992 and has been an active supporter of improved access to health care, particularly for women. More money needs to be invested in medical programs for minority communities, she argues on behalf of the communities she serves, which include Uptown. We endorse her over Republican businessman Frank Thomas.

13th: Democratic incumbent **Kwame Raoul** is a lawyer and community activist who took over the seat vacated by Obama. He is the choice in this district. He favors a tax swap to fund Illinois education, understanding it would equalize investment in schools. His opponent is Republican Charles Kinzer.

16th: Democrat **Jacqueline Collins** is an articulate member of the Senate who has been in office relatively briefly -- since 2003 -- but should be returned. We endorse her over the Republican candidate, Matthew Szydagis.

19th: Smart, analytical and compassionate even if subdued, **Maggie Crotty**, the incumbent Democrat, gets our endorsement for re-election in this district including Oak Forest over her Republican opponent, Eric Wallace, who criticizes state funding for stem cell research.

22nd: This district includes Elgin and Streamwood, the seat formerly held by Republican Sen. Steve Rauschenberger. The race pits the Republican mayor of Streamwood, **Billie Roth**, against Democrat and attorney Michael Noland. While Roth is conservative on state funding for stem cell research and access to abortion, she has more depth as a candidate than Noland. She has been an activist in her community since the early 1980s. Roth has an independent mind and is willing to step out on a limb and depart from Topinka's idea of using casino money for schools. We support her.