

Illinois Senator Cristina Castro

**1. Political awakening: What event(s) in your life led to a decision to run for office?**

I have been involved in my community since high school and I've always enjoyed helping others and giving back. When I was in college I had to scale back my involvement to focus on my education but vowed once I started my professional career that I would get involved again, which I did. I volunteered to help organize various community events and even served on several City of Elgin Commissions. In 2007, there was an individual who was appointed to the Kane County Board, a Democrat, who wasn't doing a good job representing the district or its constituents on the Board. I knew I could do a better job so with no experience in politics I ran for the Kane County Board. It was during that journey, I met a lot of good folks who showed me the ropes and supported me, people such as Mark Guethle, Michael Noland, Ben Bernal, Hal Cattron to name a few. I eventually would win that primary in 2008 and would go on to win the general election later that year. I would go on to serve two terms on the Kane County Board before running in 2016 for the state legislature. The support I have received from everyone from my first election to now has been amazing which is something I will never forget.

**2. What is the biggest hurdle you faced?**

The biggest hurdle is raising the funds to run for office. It shouldn't be a deterrent though for running, if someone really wants to run and is willing to work hard people recognize that and you can sometimes overcome that barrier.

**3. Advice you'd give to women planning to run for office?**

When you are running for office, you will hear a lot of gossip and rumors. Don't get sucked into that discussion because its a distraction and if you're distracted you won't be able to focus on what is important, knocking on doors and talking to voters.

**4. As a woman in male-dominated legislative chambers, what you learned along the way that contributes to your success?**

When I entered the Senate in 2017, I utilized my experience from my time on the Kane County Board (2008-2016) to navigate the legislative process in the General Assembly. Getting to know your colleagues on both sides of the aisle is helpful when you are trying to earn their vote on your piece of legislation.

**5. What do you consider to be the biggest challenges facing the Democratic Party in the next election?**

The biggest challenge will be making sure our Democrats are motivated to come out and vote in a mid-term election. There is a lot at stake with all the statewide office holders and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth up for re-election in addition all the

General Assembly (59 State Senators, 118 State Representatives), 3 Supreme Court seats and all the Kane County Commissioners are also up in 2022. We all have to work together and hard in order to get Democrats elected.