

Illinois Senator Karina Villa

**1. Political awakening: What event(s) in your life led to a decision to run for office?** I was a school social worker for 15 years. During this time I prided myself in being able to find resources for the most complicated cases I came across. Families who were in distress and need for medical, housing or mental health services could always count on me to help them find what they needed. Under the Rauner administration that came to a screeching halt. The budget impasse shut down critical services and my job became more and more difficult to do. I began wondering what more could be done and this led me to my ultimate decision to run for state representative.

**2. What is the biggest hurdle you faced?** I took all of the challenges in stride. The community lifted me up and was receptive to me when I began knocking on doors. I would say the biggest hurdle was learning to stay calm while being interviewed and accepting that I was never going to know all the answers. I had never experienced such intense anxiety as I did when I first had to start being interviewed and I still am not fully used to it!

**3. Advice you'd give to women planning to run for office?** Build a circle of supporters willing to work to get you elected. You need a trusted group of volunteers that live and work in your community because it takes a village to raise a candidate.

**4. As a woman in male-dominated legislative chambers, what you learned along the way that contributes to your success?** I stay true to my word, and on the most difficult days I remember that my constituents are the reason I am there. They are why I do this work.

**5. What do you consider to be the biggest challenges facing the Democratic Party in the next election?** Democrats need to focus on what we do best and that is making sure our actions and message reach the working families who need it the most. We need to make sure that our voters feel heard and are compelled to go out and vote.

**Karina Villa, MSW**

State Senator  
25th District