



# **Meeting the candidates: Gary Grasso - Republican candidate for Illinois Attorney General**

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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ALTON – A Republican candidate for the office of Illinois Attorney General has been touring Downstate Illinois, including Bloomington, Champaign, Effingham, Belleville, Edwardsville and Alton.

Gary Grasso stopped into the offices of Riverbender.com Tuesday afternoon and described Alton as having a “San Francisco” feel, because of all the brick streets and hills. He sat with a reporter and spoke about how Illinois needed a Republican to fill its attorney general's office based on the amount of corruption he perceived to be coming from Cook County. That corruption, he said, includes tax lobbyists and lawyers undervaluing what he described as “some of the most valuable real estate on the planet” in Chicago, which ultimately costs taxpayers across the state revenue they otherwise would have received from properly assessed values.

“Our current attorney general ran on anti-corruption in 2002, and nothing has been done about things happening probably 1,000 feet from her office,” Grasso said.

While Grasso said he is running as a Republican, he said he also understood the history of corruption in Illinois politics from both sides of the partisan isle, including both Democratic and Republican governors finding their ways to prison due to some form of corruption. He said he would run his office independently – as Illinois's attorney general's office is protected by the state constitution and is not under the direct control of the governor.

He is taking his campaign through Downstate Illinois, because he said the majority of Illinois voters come from outside of Chicago. Grasso himself lives on the border of Cook and DuPage Counties, and is currently the head of the DuPage 911 Board, which operates the largest consolidated 911 call center in the state.

Consolidation of 911 call centers has many departments in the Riverbend area concerned. In off-the-record conversations with area officers and first responders, many have voiced their concerns consolidated call centers may harm 911 response times.

Grasso said he has experienced the opposite in DuPage County, being the head of the largest 911 call center in the state with a new, even-larger center to open by July.

“911 service is to protect life and property, which is the very reason we have government at all,” he said. “Some places are territorial with their services and believe they can respond more effectively than a neighboring department. What we did is get all the stakeholders - fire chiefs, police chiefs and mayors - in a room for meetings. First off, we had to get everything standardized. We got them on the same radios with the same equipment. It has saved the taxpayers of Illinois between \$8-\$9 million, which we can reinvest into more technology to improve these call centers.”

Prior to that, Grasso has been an Illinois resident for 40 years after meeting “a nice Chicago girl.” Together, they now have five sons, a daughter and three grandkids they are raising on the border of Cook and DuPage County.

Outside of being the head of the 911 board, Grasso said he is also on the DuPage County Board for his second term. He said he is leaving that term to run for this office, and will not be seeking a third term. He also served for two terms as the mayor of Burr Ridge, which he said saw growth during his administration.

If chosen by the people of Illinois to be the highest law enforcement body in the state, Grasso said one of his first priorities would be to address the opioid epidemic ravaging the nation. He said Illinois as a state has not moved toward litigation of “Big Pharma” and the distributors of these pills, which many blame as the gateway into opioid addiction. He added many states attorneys throughout the state are backing litigation against these companies, and they would have his full support if in office. He said he would contribute any money gained from that litigation to stopping the epidemic through treatment, education and job creation.

The greater issue of the ongoing War on Drugs, which many have deemed a failure, was brought to Grasso's attention while in Alton as well. He said he would be interested in continuing the medical marijuana program in the state, and would be interested to see how it could affect or help the opioid epidemic. As far as complete legalization of cannabis was concerned, Grasso was against it.

“I am against recreational marijuana because I do not want to add another level of bureaucracy to Illinois,” he said. “I am for decriminalization, because someone's life should not be ruined over an insignificant incident. I would be interested and open to see how medical marijuana could help with the opioid epidemic from a medical and scientific perspective, however.”

If elected, Grasso said he would work with the federal government to detain “illegal aliens,” especially those undocumented immigrants who have committed (in some cases) multiple felonies. He said the current law signed by Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner designating Illinois as a sanctuary state is unfair to Illinois citizens.

“Some of these illegal aliens have more rights than Illinois citizens,” he said. “If someone is charged with a felony, their legal status as a citizen or non-citizen should be put on the table. That's all I'm saying.”

Following with Republican mainstays, Grasso said he was also against House Bill (HB) 40, which allowed state employees to have abortions covered under insurance. He said people who are pro-choice can even understand why the state should not have to pay for what he called “destruction of life.” He said as attorney general, he would instill pro-life values into Illinois highest law office.

Grasso also spoke of his experience in comparison to his opponent Erika Harold. He said Harold has yet to be the lead in any finished litigation case, whereas he has been the lead attorney on scores of such cases.

In a release, Grasso also accused Harold of placing children under the care of abusers.

“When Erika Harold was asked in 2000 during the Miss Illinois Beauty Pageant if she was responsible to place a child in foster care and had to 'choose between loving gay couple or a heterosexual couple who were known child abusers, which would she chose?’” The release stated. “According to at least four sources confirmed to NBC 5 Chicago, Erika Harold chose the child abusers.”

In response to that, Grasso issued the following statement:

*“As a father to six children, I am sickened by the idea of placing any child in danger, especially in the home of known child abusers,” said Grasso. “Above all else, we must protect our children, so they have the opportunity to thrive without the fear of an abusive parent or guardian. Child abuse is a disgusting and heinous crime and her comments are appalling. She should do what is right and withdraw from the race due to these repulsive comments.”*