



Community leader Bland takes on Turner in 9th House District

By April Galarza

Arthur Turner has served the community for 25 years as 9th District State Representative, but Republican candidate Myra Bland thinks it is time for a fresh approach in Springfield. Turner disagrees, believing that after all of his years serving he has a true understanding of the district and its needs. The Nov. 7 election will decide who will represent the Near West and West Sides.

Democrat **Arthur L. Turner** was born and raised in North Lawndale. He still lives there, a half a block from his childhood home. He holds a B.S. from Illinois State University in business administration. Before being elected State Rep in 1981, Turner served as an investigator in the State Attorney's Office.



Arthur L. Turner

As a State Representative, Turner has promoted fair housing legislation. He spearheaded a trust fund to buy and renovate housing to make affordable units available to low income families. The fund averages about \$18 million per year and helps families statewide.

One of the biggest challenges Turner faced last term was legislation to reclassify ex-felons. Before this issue was brought to light, ex-felons were prevented from working in most professions. For instance, a man or woman who cut hair in prison, once released, was no longer allowed to cut hair. More than 52 occupations have been adjusted under the law to allow hiring of ex-felons so they can earn a living.

Turner also supported tougher restrictions when deciding whether a repeat domestic violence abuser should be let out on bail.

If elected, in his next term Turner would focus on education funding and distribution. He feels it is crucial to "get away from property tax reliance and reanalyze the entire education funding system," he said. Turner suggested obtaining the bulk of funding from income tax revenue instead because a slight tax increase of ½ percent "could offset a large portion of the gap in funding presently caused by the large differences among school districts' property values."

Turner added, "My track record is one that says that I would serve the people well, based on seniority in the evolution of laws and law that are made. I still have energy and commitment, I am forward thinking, and I am adaptable to changes in the economy. I truly represent the wishes of most people in our district."

Turner's opponent, although new to politics, said she is the fresh approach the district needs. **Myra Bland** grew up on Chicago's West Side and received her bachelor's degree from the University of Arkansas.

Bland has a background in education and community service. A former State of Illinois Community Leader of the Year winner who logged more than 20,000 community service hours, along with the Red Cross she partnered with another organization to raise funds for disabled people in her neighborhood. She



Myra Bland

She also served on the Professional Women's Advisory board of Who's Who International, where she formed an international database of strong, educated community leaders that was used for networking to pair human and financial resources.

Bland considers inactivity to be "the bane" of most political offices and vowed to "work harder than any other political leader" if elected. Bland also believes the

education funding system needs to be amended, but she said the problems are internal; her education background gives her an inside perspective on funds distribution.

“Plenty of money is set aside for schools,” said Bland. “However, once administrators get a hold of it, most ends up in their pockets and there isn’t enough left for buying textbooks.” She suggested an honest, independent administrator with an educational background be hired to oversee funds and their distribution.

Bland opposes deportation of immigrants, believing it costs more to deport them than to create a program helping them attain citizenship. If elected, Bland would offer local businesses incentives to sponsor immigrants wishing to become citizens.

About gang-related crime, she feels neighborhoods would be much safer if people could pass information anonymously to police. Often, she said, traditional questioning is fruitless because citizens are afraid to talk to police. If elected, Bland would set up an untraceable way for citizens to communicate crucial crime-solving information to law enforcement officials.

Bland implored voters to consider candidates carefully before voting. “Look at the candidates and look at what they have done,” she said. “In every party there are active and inactive people. You cannot judge the entire party by the candidate. You have to vote based on the candidate.”

