
Working as an Intern for the Committee to Elect Judge Fred Bates to the Cook County Circuit Court

This semester for our Political Science 301 class, my internship was with the Committee to Elect Judge Fred Bates to the Cook County Circuit Court. While this was my first time serving in an internship capacity, it was very interesting and very useful in learning how elections work throughout the city of Chicago. The principal subject for my internship was Judge Fred Bates, who was selected in the fall of 2015, by the Illinois Supreme Court, to fill a vacancy that was left by Judge Richard Walsh, who retired from the bench. The vacancy left by Judge Walsh, had only one year remaining for this position on the bench, where Judge Bates is currently serving. Judge Fred Bates was running in the March 2016 election to permanently replace Judge Walsh. The Committee to elect Judge Bates was officially formed on August 22, 2015, and it was there that I was charged to be the Senior Volunteer Coordinator for Cook County, for the campaign. The committee began many fundraising endeavors around the city, which consisted in three dinners, four meet and greets and two fundraisers by the Cook County Democratic Party. In February, 2016, The Committee to Elect Judge Bates had raised \$156,420.35. The opponent of the Walsh Vacancy was Patrick Joseph Powers, who resided on the Northside of Chicago and as of February, 2016 had raised \$9,745.22. Mr. Powers has been in private practice since 1983 as both was found to be "Qualified for the Circuit Court" by the Council that recommended them to the bench. The Committee to Elect Judge Bates spent \$147,204.29 on the campaign and Mr. Powers spent \$9,500.00 during the same period. Judge Bates, in filling the vacancy of Judge Walsh position ends on December 31, 2016. He would have served for a year and one month exactly in his current position, and he has no chance of continuing, as he lost the last campaign by over 75,000 votes. Judge Bates has had a splendid career in law, especially as an Administrative Judge for the Chicago Board of Education and the Chicago Transit Authority. His position as the Chairman of the Illinois Civil Service Commission also ensured that he would be a great fit for Cook County Circuit Court Judge, but because of the loss, he would not be able to run for this position again until 2022.

While I had to meet Judge Bates in his chambers for meetings, I observed on a few occasions how Judge Bates worked in the capacity of a Municipal Circuit Court Judge. What I witnessed was Judge Bates working and his handling of these cases with ease. He was very compassionate with the defendants and always seemed to be educating on the need to follow the laws and the understanding of the consequences of not following these rules. Judge Bates was very thorough and on a few occasions, I witnessed him manning two courts, side by side. His presence was dutifully keen on the law and seem to be very lenient, sometimes dismissing the cases, or by lowering the fines that was imposed by the court. His presence was needed because other court cases I witnessed, seemed to be the complete opposite of other judges, of Caucasian descent, who imposed huge fines and sometimes jail sentences, for minor infractions. It is necessary for African American judges, like Judge Bates, to be visible on the bench. While the city is attempting to cash in off the backs of African Americans, it has become apparent that African Americans, and those of color are subjected to more tickets, infractions, fines and possible jail time than Caucasians. While African Americans and people of color in Chicago have been deprived of the same economic and social standing of Caucasians, it must be important that judges are represented accordingly, with those who are fulfilling that requirement by his compassion on the bench and being a person in the right position to fairly

hear cases that have for too long, discriminated against people of color.

My paper might seemed biased towards Judge Bates because I have known and witnessed his progress and actions as my neighbor, in church and through other social programs that he has chaired and participated in for over 25 years. Judge Bates is an exceptional lawyer, he has 33 years legal experience including 15 years as an Administrative Law Judge and Hearing Official, and over 15 years as a trial attorney. He has been favorably rated by all of the Bar Associations, and was endorsed by the Cook County Democratic Party. He graduated high school when he was 15, college at 18, and from law school magna cum laude, having served as an editor on his law review. Judge Bates has published numerous articles, and scholarly works. His legal career includes being an equity partner at two major law firms, founding partner & president of his own firm, and General Counsel for Henry Booth House, one of the largest non-profit social service agencies in Chicago. For over a decade he has served as an Administrative Law Judge and Hearing Officer with distinction. His years of service and dedication as an Administrative Law Judge have been quite impressive, and have not gone unrecognized. In fact, the National Judicial College which trains judges has invited Judge Bates to serve as an instructor to actually train others to be judges. Judge Bates has stated that "I have enough life experience to have been on the top, to hit the valleys to understand the human condition that appears before me. Every day I am a judge. I do not judge people. Only God can do that. I judge lawsuits, and I am guided with an imbibing fidelity to the law." That is a great example at how Judge Bates view his role as a judge and how well he does it. It is with all his experience and strong ethical standards which he keeps close to his heart that makes him more than suitable to be on the bench and to have won the election, but from the results of the election, was less favourable.

The Cook County Circuit Court was created through a 1964 amendment to the Illinois Constitution which reorganized the courts of Illinois. The amendment merged the confusing and overlapping jurisdictions of Cook County's 161 courts into one uniform and cohesive court of general jurisdiction. More than 2.4 million cases are filed every year. To handle this large caseload, the Circuit Court of Cook County is organized into three functional departments: County, Municipal, and Juvenile Justice and Child Protection. Judge Bates now works in the Municipal Department which is divided into six geographic districts. Each district is supervised by a presiding judge. The First Municipal District encompasses the City of Chicago. Municipal Districts Two through Six encompass the communities in suburban Cook County. The Municipal Department hears civil suits for damages up to \$30,000 in the First Municipal District & up to \$100,000 in Municipal Districts Two through Six. This Department hears the following types of cases: housing, eviction proceedings, small claims, licenses, misdemeanor criminal proceedings and felony preliminary hearings other than domestic violence matters, ordinance and traffic enforcement, contract cases decided by alternative dispute resolution process, and cases subject to mandatory arbitrations among others. Judge Bates ran for a position covering the entire county. My personal opinion is that the Cook County Courts does not represent those that are subjected to the laws in its jurisdiction. While the economic and social disparities exist in the black communities, the Cook County Circuit Court seems to be more geared towards Caucasian judges who control a larger venue and the Sub-Circuits which are left for those who communities it represent. Although the Sub-Circuits was designed to be more of a example or mirror of the communities that it represent, many of the cases continue not to be represented in the Sub-circuit but are being heard in the Cook County Circuit Court and by Caucasian judges. This type of representation is not consistent with fairness, because it is hard to show compassion and sympathy to those who are affected, if the judges are not familiar or have struggled with the issues that plague African American communities. This unfairness have

separated and destroyed families, force people out of their homes, and sent many people to jail for crimes, which otherwise would have required a fine or probation. One way of making it better, is by ensuring that the courts are fairly and equally represented by races that hear these cases. If this system of unfairly putting judges on the bench that does not represent the people that comes before them, it will continue to systematically destroy all people of color and ensure that justice is not served. As I noticed a few months ago, it was an African American judge who released the Laquan McDonald video of him being shot multiple times. I believe that if the judge would have been anything other African American, those videos would not have been released. This is a great example, as we now see, many videos coming to the surface for wrongs that has been done but having no one to question why. This is why more qualified African American judges are needed on the bench in Cook County.

I did not observe any lobbyist at work, as it is unethical and possibly illegal for such relationships to exist, but I had front row seats to see other candidates vying for elected positions. One such forum took place in the States Attorney's debate that Judge Bates and I attended. This forum took place at Chicago State University, where all the candidates attended to seek the votes of the African American community. The candidates in attendance was Kim Fox, Anita Alvarez, and Donna Moore. From what I witnessed, it seemed like no one was being truthful about their position, but only came to discredit the others position. While the focus was on Anita Alvarez current failures in the Cook County States Attorney's Office, I really did not get a sense of the others position because they utilized their time disrespecting each other and not talking about the issues which have plagued our communities. Needless to say, I was very disappointed and could not ascertain anyone's position but saw politics at its best, messy. Another opportunity that was afforded to me, was a debate between the U.S. Senate candidates, Tammy Duckworth, Andrea Zopp, and Napoleon Harris. As I might be biased about Andrea Zopp, who I've entertained at my home, I thought each candidate had a lot to bring to the table concerning issues. They each was very versed in their positions and although each attempted to prove themselves better than the current Senator (Sen. Mark Kirk), they equally showed that they were in the position to do better than what currently serve our constituents. It was really a pleasure to host Andrea Zopp at my home, and to learn so much from her in her many positions and ideology. I came away from that dinner knowing that she really means well in helping others and was not afraid of fighting the NRA, when it came to gun issues. This was a very interesting time, as I found the other candidates to be great household names in their respected former careers in the NFL, and as a military pilot who was shot down and became an American hero, respectively. Many of the goals for all three was to fight crime, bring jobs to the neighborhoods and to bring stability back to the U.S. Senate. Only Tammy Duckworth was effective as she won the election by over 500,000 votes, from her closest opponent. The election was hard fought by all three and while I witnessed democracy going forth, the entire process seemed to be flawed because of the negative advertisement and money spent to win such an election. While I am glad that I did not have to see all of the bad sides of politics concerning lobbyist, I am even more disgusted by the candidate's means of keeping the serious issues out of the election.

My experience as an intern differed from the readings this semester in various forms. The first experience I would like to discuss, was the disorganization of the campaign. In our reading from Judge Grey in How to win in a Local Campaign, he stated that the first thing which was needed was an "old hand" to help guide the campaign through the process. This was an important aspect because it showed how the "old hand" came with much experience and could assist in ensuring that the campaign ran smoothly and efficiently. During my internship, the "old hand" did not exist. The evidence of this existed in how the campaign had many chiefs but not enough

Indians to carry out a successful agenda for positive results. The campaign seemed to be guided by the candidate himself and the Cook County Democratic Party which focused in the African American community, on the South Side of Chicago, and did not focus on the entire county. As Judge Grey stated in *How to win in a Local Campaign*, from the planning stage, one has to know where the people are that you will be serving. If the entire county will be voting for a candidate in the election, it is imperative that you focus on the entire county because these are votes that will be needed to win the election. While the focus for this campaign was on the Southside of Chicago, one did not take into consideration that African Americans have a tendency to not vote in these elections, therefore a plan was needed to reach out to the entire county for the votes needed to win the election. As this simple notion was also mentioned by our "old hand", Dr. Dick Simpson, this was imperative that one follow it, in order to have a chance in winning any type of election. While my internship showed that no "old hand" was involved with the campaign, it proves with this loss, an "old hand" can make or break a campaign, which made the difference in this campaign.

Another difference from our readings and the campaign that I interned, was also in Judge Grey, *How to win in a Local Campaign*, where my position as a Senior Volunteer Coordinator, came into play. I took the initiative in trying to recruit volunteers, as the readings stated, but found it hard because the campaign was not visible in the media, did not provide signup sheets for volunteers during fundraisers or other campaign events. This was very frustrating because I reached out to all of my family and friends, but it was not enough to go around and I found myself doing a lot of the work myself. As I requested to have signup sheets at these events, I was met with a push back, as if volunteers were not needed for the campaign. The push back came back from the candidates family members who thought that it did not look right to be asking others to volunteer as the family members was also requesting donations for the campaign. I did not argue my position but explained that these type of needs are consistent with campaign events and that these volunteers would be needed at a later date. Needless to say, I was correct in my theory and the lack of volunteers came back to haunt us later in the campaign. After reading about the position that I was charged to handle, I knew that I had my work cut out for me. My plan and the plan that I submitted to the candidate consisted of recruiting enough volunteers to be able to pass out the literature county wide, as well as having the campaign events manned to assist the candidate at other events. This oversight by the campaign and the candidate was dangerous because the candidate was relying on the Cook County Democratic Party to distribute his literature and that failed tremendously throughout the entire campaign. As I attempted to attend all the events around the county, I also had my own personal responsibilities and could not attend each event, each day. I felt frustrated because I knew what needed to be done, per our readings, and even after expressing this same concern to the candidate, it fell on deaf ears and nothing was done to accommodate these missed opportunities to reach as many voters as possible. I felt that the candidate relied too heavily on his own credentials and ability to attend events, and did not take advantage of other resources, especially through volunteers, although limited, to ease the burden of getting his name out in public.

I learned a lot during my internship with the Committee to Elect Judge Bates. One of the most lasting experiences is how relying on endorsements from the party elite is overrated. I mention this because too much energy and focus was geared in getting their endorsement and then hoping, praying and wishing that the elite would assist in promoting your candidacy. As I was told of the monetary funds that the party solicited from the candidate to receive such an endorsement, after receiving such of an endorsement, nothing is being done by the party to

assist those candidates that they endorse. Judge Bates relied heavily on the African American vote and the Cook County Democratic Party to deliver those votes for a win. This is overrated because a candidate who rely on this failed support is taking a huge risk by being endorsed by a bunch of elected officials who themselves are failing their constituents they are elected to provide goods and services. What I learned is that the rules have changed. When elected officials are vying for their constituents to follow their lead in endorsing who they believe should be in office, it is undermining the ideology of the voters who may be unhappy with how the elected official is currently serving their constituents. I have witnessed many voters going to the polls state that they were not following the endorsements of their elected officials, because these same officials have failed them and let them down in the current positions that they serve. This type of behavior is consistent with how the local, state and national voters are looking at the current system that have failed the city, state and national constituency of America. Voters are not interested in retaining those who have not stood up to the economic, social and criminal aspects that have plagued our communities across America. It is apparent that even qualified members like Judge Bates are caught up in a process that solicit your money for membership, and in return gives you nothing that will be successful in getting you elected to office or the bench. This type of pay to play politics has turned off the average voter, which now demand more from those who are currently serving in capacities that are meant to be for the people. After my internship, I realize that politics is not something that interest me. I also realize that I will continue to support those like Judge Bates, who have given a life of service to the community and should be in positions to help the people that they serve. I realize from my internship that it doesn't matter how much money you raise over your opponent, you can still lose. I learned that politics is not pretty and some would say or do anything to get elected. I learned that an "old hand" is necessary for a successful campaign and the plan to reach the voters must include each voter inside of your jurisdiction. There is so much to take away from my internship, but the most important thing that I take away, is that there are still good, qualified and compassionate candidates available, but it's the established party that is in the way of pushing integrity to the forefront, but continues to poison the system with play to pay politics that is losing its power to govern and endorse properly.