

# LAKEFRONT **OUTLOOK**

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## Mitchell draws support in 26th

by Sam Cholke

Christian Mitchell wants a seat in the Illinois General Assembly and hopes his public policy experience and support from popular local politicians will convince voters to back this relative newcomer to South Side electoral politics.

Mitchell is campaigning to be the state representative for the 26th District. The district winds along the lakefront, including portions of Streeterville, the Loop, Oakland and Grand Boulevard; it also includes portions of Kenwood west of Woodlawn Avenue, Hyde Park west of South Ellis Avenue and segments of South Shore and South Chicago.

Mitchell has already secured support from the last elected state representative from the district, Will Burns, and Kimberly De Buclet, who was appointed to the



Christian Mitchell speaks on a recent Saturday morning to the 4th Ward Democratic Organization at Monumental Baptist Church, 729 E. Oakwood Blvd., as he stumps to become the 26th District representative in Springfield.

Marc Monaghan

position when Burns was elected 4th Ward alderman.

Mitchell is running against Kenny Johnson Jr., who is also attracting support from popular

politicians and has the experience of running for office in the district before, narrowly losing to Burns

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## MITCHELL

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in the 2007 Democratic primary election.

At 25, Mitchell is one of the youngest candidates to seek the office, but boasts a resume with considerable policy experience working for well-connected South Side politicians and organizations.

After finishing an undergraduate degree in public policy studies at the University of Chicago, Mitchell worked as a community organizer with Southsiders Organized for Unity and Liberation on green jobs and public transportation initiatives. The progressively minded organization put him in close proximity to then-state Rep. Will Burns.

Burns guided through the House a home weatherization bill that Mitchell worked with SOUL to draft. When Burns ran to succeed Toni Preckwinkle as 4th Ward alderman, Mitchell left SOUL to run his campaign. Burns won the race with the support of Preckwinkle's 4th Ward Democratic Organization, and Mitchell took a job in Preckwinkle's Cook County Board president office after the election.

Mitchell cites Burns and Preckwinkle as political "mentors" interested in the "less sexy things about politics," he said in a Feb. 3 interview.

"I saw what an elected official could mean to a community if they were committed to the community and were willing to do the legwork," Mitchell said of Preckwinkle and Burns.

Mitchell hopes to take some of Preckwinkle's policy tactics to the state. He said he wants a performance review of current state initiatives to root out ineffective programs. He said he expects the analysis to prove programs like early-childhood education, workforce development and infrastructure investment to be clear winners. Mitchell supports a progressive tax structure and said he is committed to reducing the state's deficit, but said it's important to understand the true costs of state programs before looking for new revenue.

Mitchell grew up in the western suburb of Westchester with his mother. He said watching his mother struggle to put him through college and help ailing family members catalyzed his devotion to public service, which metastasized during his work with SOUL when he realized his mother's troubles were common.

Mitchell is endorsed by Burns, Preckwinkle and Secretary of State Jesse White, among others. On Jan. 31, the women's rights group Personal PAC also endorsed Mitchell.

The Democratic primary election is March 20.

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