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BERNIE SANDERS ILLINOIS RALLY BRIEF

Candidate Intelligence Brief & Predicted Talking Points

Illinois Primary: March 17, 2026 | Prepared: March 10, 2026

Context: What's at Stake March 17

With one week until the Illinois primary, Senator Sanders is hosting a Get Out The Vote livestream endorsing a slate of progressive candidates across congressional and statewide races. The common thread across all four endorsed candidates is a rejection of corporate money, establishment Democratic politics, and the influence of Corp PAC themes that align directly with Sanders' Fighting Oligarchy Tour,

Candidate Profiles

Delia Ramirez

U.S. Representative (Incumbent) | IL-3 — Running for Re-Election

Background

First and only Latina Congresswoman in the Midwest. Daughter of working-class Guatemalan immigrants. Former nonprofit director and social worker. Member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and Justice Democrats. Takes no corporate contributions.

Key Policy Positions

- **Healthcare:** Supports Medicare for All; expanded Medicaid regardless of immigration status in Illinois
- **Housing:** Secured \$450M+ for affordable housing in Illinois; authored COVID-19 Emergency Housing Act
- **Immigration:** Leading the Dream and Promise Act; only member of Congress in a mixed-status marriage; fights for DREAMer pathway to citizenship

- **Workers & Retirement:** Introduced the 'Pensions for All Act' requiring employers to provide federal-equivalent retirement plans
- **Civil Rights:** Co-Chair of Strengthening Democracy Task Force; fights for LGBTQ+ rights and reproductive access
- **Immigration Enforcement:** Legislation to prohibit DHS from using full-body restraints on detainees

Bernie's Likely Talking Points

- A daughter of immigrants who crossed a border while pregnant — Delia lives the fight for immigration reform
- Pensions for All — workers deserve retirement security, not just the lucky few
- First Latina Congresswoman in the Midwest, building a Congress that looks like America
- No corporate PAC money — accountable only to the people

Robert Peters

Illinois State Senator — Running for U.S. Congress | IL-2 — Democratic Primary (Most Bernie-Aligned)

Background

Born deaf in Chicago. Raised by a civil rights lawyer and social worker. Former community organizer with the Chicago Teachers Union. Senate Majority Whip. Led passage of the SAFE-T Act — making Illinois the first state to eliminate cash bail.

Key Policy Positions

- **Healthcare:** Medicare for All; roll back Trump's Medicaid/ACA attacks; expand Medicare drug pricing power
- **Economic Justice:** Ban corporate 'dynamic pricing' (AI-driven price gouging); wealth tax; tax capital gains as income; close carried interest loophole
- **Food Security:** Protect and expand SNAP benefits; invest in food deserts across South Side and south suburbs
- **Criminal Justice:** Ended cash bail in Illinois; SAFE-T Act co-author; Reimagine Public Safety Act; FAIR Act (statewide public defender's office)
- **Climate:** Offshore wind farms in Lake Michigan; environmental justice for underserved communities
- **Foreign Policy:** Anti-AIPAC; supports the Block the Bombs Act (conditioning U.S. military aid to Israel on human rights)

Bernie's Likely Talking Points

- Robert Peters ended cash bail — true criminal justice reform, not just talk
- Corporations are using AI algorithms to gouge you at the grocery store — Peters will ban it
- Medicare for All — nobody should choose between groceries and a doctor
- Anti-AIPAC: won't be bought by Trump-aligned donors, won't enable unchecked military aid
- 39,000 residents in IL-2 stand to lose health care if Trump's Medicaid cuts pass

Junaid Ahmed

Tech Entrepreneur & Community Organizer | IL-8 — Democratic Primary (Progressive Challenger)

Background

Born in India, raised in Chicago suburbs in a working-class immigrant family. MBA from University of Chicago Booth. Longtime community organizer; delivered over 1 million meals to unhoused neighbors. Challenged incumbent Krishnamoorthi in 2022. Endorsed by Sanders, Warren, Jayapal, Ro Khanna, and Delia Ramirez.

Key Policy Positions

- **Healthcare:** Universal healthcare; top priority is affordability — lower costs for working families
- **Immigration:** Abolish ICE; end Operation Midway Blitz raids terrorizing Chicago immigrant communities; pathway to citizenship
- **Economic:** Take on corporate price-gouging and concentration; raise wages; lower housing and education costs
- **Gaza/Foreign Policy:** Immediate and permanent ceasefire; end U.S. involvement in what he calls genocide; Palestinian self-determination; oppose regime-change wars
- **Gun Safety:** Assault weapons ban; expanded background checks; red-flag laws; end for-profit prisons
- **Congressional Oversight:** Investigate Trump admin overreach; War Powers Resolution enforcement; impeach Kristi Noem

Bernie's Likely Talking Points

- Abolish ICE — masked officers terrorizing immigrant families in Illinois is unacceptable
- Universal healthcare — Junaid Ahmed will fight, not capitulate
- People over profits — funded by grassroots donors, not corporate checks
- Ceasefire in Gaza — U.S. must stop enabling collective punishment

Karina Villa

Illinois State Senator | Illinois Comptroller — Democratic Primary

Background

Born and raised in West Chicago. Former school social worker with a Master's in Social Work. State Senator since 2019, representing the 25th district. Only licensed social worker in the Illinois State Senate. Funded by unions and grassroots donors; explicitly rejects corporate PAC and Republican-aligned money. Endorsed by Senate President Don Harmon, Chicago Teachers Union, and Bernie Sanders.

Key Policy Positions

- **Budget Philosophy:** 'Budgets are moral documents' — prioritize human services, public health, and schools first before other payments
- **Revenue:** Wants digital advertising tax on Big Tech; supports revisiting a graduated income tax; opposes corporate tax giveaways
- **Social Services:** Would prioritize healthcare, housing, mental health, and public education in the bill payment queue during budget crises
- **Immigration Accountability:** Implement procurement policies blocking state contracts with vendors linked to ICE
- **Transparency:** Prevailing wage enforcement; public portal showing where every state dollar goes; appoint Prevailing Wage Officer
- **Unions & Workers:** Backed by SEIU, Illinois Federation of Teachers, and major progressive unions

Bernie's Likely Talking Points

- A social worker who controls Illinois' checkbook — budgets should protect people, not pad corporate profits
- Tax Big Tech's digital advertising — make corporations pay their fair share
- No state contracts for ICE-linked vendors — Illinois won't fund the deportation machine
- Unions and working people fund this campaign, not billionaires and super PACs

PREDICTED TOP TALKING POINTS: TONIGHT'S RALLY

What Bernie Will Almost Certainly Say

1. Medicare for All / Healthcare as a Human Right

Every candidate on tonight's slate supports universal healthcare. Peters and Ahmed are explicitly Medicare for All. Ramirez expanded Medicaid in Illinois. Villa would protect healthcare as the first bill Illinois pays in a crisis. Expect Bernie to hammer: 'In the richest country in the world, nobody should go bankrupt because they got sick.'

2. Corporate Greed & Price-Gouging

Peters' legislation banning AI-driven 'dynamic pricing' is a perfect Bernie-ism. Expect a direct attack on corporations using algorithms to charge you more at the grocery store. Villa's call for taxing Big Tech digital advertising, Ahmed's anti-price-gouging stance, and Peters' wealth tax proposals all feed this narrative. Bernie will frame tonight as: workers vs. oligarchs.

3. Anti-Establishment / Grassroots vs. Corporate Money

AIPAC is the sharpest wedge. Peters and Ahmed have both explicitly rejected AIPAC and corporate PAC money. Ramirez refuses corporate contributions. Villa is attacking her opponent Croke for super PAC and Republican donor money. Bernie will almost certainly call out 'billionaires trying to buy Illinois elections' and contrast it with candidates funded by 'working people, not Wall Street.'

4. Immigration Enforcement & ICE

Operation Midway Blitz — the Chicago-area ICE raids — is the most visceral local issue. Ahmed is calling to Abolish ICE entirely. Ramirez has introduced legislation against DHS detainee abuse and is fighting for DREAMers. Villa would block state contracts with ICE-linked vendors. Expect Bernie to invoke the image of 'masked federal agents terrorizing immigrant families in Chicago.'

7. Fighting Oligarchy — The Meta-Message (AI)

Tying it all together: every one of these candidates represents the broader Fighting Oligarchy mission. Billionaires funding super PACs, corporations price-gouging consumers, ICE militarizing neighborhoods, Big Tech avoiding taxes — Bernie will use these four candidates as local proof that the political revolution is alive, and that the March 17 primary is a test of whether Illinoisans will choose people or power.

Bottom Line:

Regardless of which candidate Bernie spends the most time on, the throughline will be identical to every Fighting Oligarchy Tour stop: this isn't Democrat vs. Republican — it's working people vs. billionaires. Ramirez, Peters, Ahmed, and Villa all offer him local, concrete examples of what that fight looks like on the ground in Illinois.