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## Springfield Dispatch

### Burke's energy keeps her involved

By Bethany Krajelis  
Law Bulletin staff writer

Whether it's in Springfield or her hometown of Evergreen Park, Rep. Kelly McGuire Burke always finds time to get involved.

In the midst of last year's election, which was the first time she campaigned for state office, the former lawyer-turned lawmaker volunteered to help with a 5K race put on by fellow members of the Most Holy Redeemer Parish in Evergreen Park.

"Despite her crazy schedule, she helped out organizing it and even ran it," said Patrick J. Enright, an attorney at O'Rourke, Hogan, Fowler & Dwyer in Chicago who has known Burke for nearly a decade. "She's very dependable."

Burke and Enright go to the same church, their children attend the same school and they are both lawyers, though Burke has not practiced law since 2006, when she left the legal profession to work at St. Xavier University and eventually, in the Illinois General Assembly, where she has represented the 36th District as a Democrat in the House since January.

Several years ago, Enright said, Burke reached out to him and other lawyers in the Evergreen Park area to help her achieve her mission to create a mock trial program at her children's school.

Enright said Burke, 44, has done a great job with the mock trial program, which has been going strong for more than five years now. He said the program allows Burke to be involved and share her passion for the law in a way that introduces the legal profession to a younger audience.

"The kids that I know who have done it, love it and the parents get a kick out of it, too," he said.

"She's always been very involved in her community," Enright said, pointing to the time Burke spent on the Evergreen Park Library Board prior to getting elected to the House. "She's just one of those people who is very proactive and always involved."

And while her new job as a lawmaker has started to hurt her attendance in a pair of book clubs she belongs to, it hasn't completely curbed her desire to be involved and help others.

Rep. Elaine Hodges Nekritz, D-Northbrook, said Burke was integral in planning this year's Capitol Capers, a every-other-year musical put on by the Conference of Women Legislators. This year's event spoofed the "Wizard of Oz" and



**Kelly McGuire Burke**  
Illinois Representative  
36th District (Evergreen Park)

**Age:** 44.

**Years Served:** January 2011-present.

**Party:** Democratic.

**Committees:** Agriculture & Conservation; Appropriations-General Service; Cities & Villages; Telecommunications; Health Care Licenses; and Tollway Oversight.

**Law school:** The John Marshall Law School, 1992.

**Interests:** Spending time with her husband, Terry, and their three children; being involved in two book clubs, her children's school activities and the Most Holy Redeemer Parish.

included a song with the chorus, "Ding, dong, the bill is dead."

"We haven't had a lot of new members step up and take an active role and she did," Nekritz said. "Whatever she said she was going to do, whether

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it was fundraising or getting her song group together, she did and did well.”

Besides Burke’s involvement in the program as a rookie lawmaker, Nekritz said she has a lot of respect for her colleague’s style.

“I’m very impressed with how she carries herself,” she said. “It’s very difficult to step in as a new member, especially with this session where we are making a lot of people angry, but she handles it with grace.”

“She doesn’t seem to get flustered or put off when things don’t go her way,” Nekritz said, adding that she believes those traits will take Burke a long way in state government.

Burke’s style may have something to do with her previous job at St. Xavier University, where she helped raise funds for various projects and programs, as well

as the time she spent knocking on doors while campaigning for office.

“I learned that when people say ‘no,’ it’s not personal,” Burke said. “It made me realize not to be afraid to ask.”

Linda J. Schneider, an attorney at Merlo, Kanofsky & Gregg, Ltd. in Chicago, said the word “fearless” describes Burke well. Burke, who clerked for Justice Mary Jane Theis after graduating from The John Marshall Law School in 1992, handled insurance defense work for Schneider’s firm for two years before taking a job practicing family law with Grotta & Associates P.C.

“What I admired about her was that she was sort of fearless in whatever task she tackled,” Schneider said. “You could give her any assignment and she’d say ‘OK’ and do a great job.”

Schneider said she also appreciated

Burke’s genuine desire to learn new things.

In fact, that’s one of the goals Burke set for herself as a lawmaker. For instance, when it came time for her to tell leadership which committees she wanted to serve on this session, Burke did not put either of the House Judiciary committees on her wish list.

“I am familiar with the law and I really wanted to expand beyond what I already know,” Burke said, explaining she finds the legislature “intellectually stimulating.”

Burke’s colleagues say the mother of three’s enthusiasm, involvement, warm personality and work ethic are going to serve her well in the General Assembly.

“She’s always involved in her work, her family, a big group of friends and is always coordinating something,” Schneider said. “Where she gets all that energy is beyond me.”