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## DUPAGE COUNTY BOARD RACE

# Eckhoff faces challenge for 4th District seat

## Insurance broker vies for GOP primary nod

By John Biemer  
Tribune staff reporter

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Just as Grant Eckhoff is taking on greater responsibilities on the DuPage County Board, the Wheaton attorney is facing a challenge in the Republican primary from Jerry "J.R." McBride, a Glen Ellyn insurance broker.

Eckhoff, 46, was elected to the board representing the 4th District--the center of the county including Wheaton, Glen Ellyn and Glendale Heights--in 2002 and has the backing of Chairman Robert Schillerstrom. He chairs the Economic Development Committee and the recently formed joint Intergovernmental Committee, which is trying to improve county cooperation with municipalities.

He spent 13 years on the Wheaton City Council, where he introduced measures that made it easier for restaurants to obtain liquor licenses. That helped spark the revitalization of downtown Wheaton, he said. He first ran for the board partly to help relieve traffic problems.

"The significant, important, distinguishing characteristic in the campaign is experience," said Eckhoff, whose law practice specializes in real estate and family law.

On the board, Eckhoff has been charged with refining the DuPage County Illinois Historical Museum's mission, raising its profile and exploring new funding sources. He is also served as the county liaison monitoring development at O'Hare International Airport.

His challenger, McBride, 38, has not run for office before but sees it as an extension of his community service experience, including serving on the DuPage chapter of the American Cancer Society's board of directors and the Main Street Redevelopment Committee in Forest Park.

"I just feel that I can bring a lot of energy and enthusiasm to the board, and I also feel we need that right now," he said.

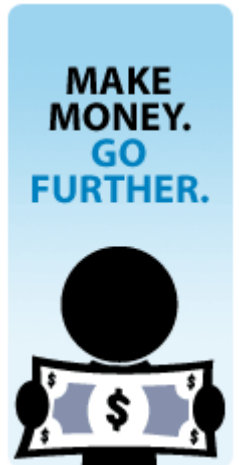
McBride criticized the board for increasing the real estate tax levy for the first time in a decade this fall as it passed the county's \$532 million budget, adding about \$7 to the annual tax bill of a \$290,000 home.

Now the board is exploring new revenue sources, including a retail sales tax or taxes on cigarettes and alcohol.

"I believe we've got to live within the budget," McBride said, although he did not provide any specific proposals for which programs should be cut.

"[Eckhoff] has said in the past, '[The budget] is cut to the bone.' I don't believe that," McBride said. "There's always things we can look at and try to make more efficient."

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"Tell me what you're going to cut?" Eckhoff said. "I think it's no secret that if we stay with the programs that we've got now, we've got to find new revenue streams."

No Democrats have signed up to run for the seat.

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