

WINDY CITY TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Aldermanic races

Return responses by fax (773-871-7609), regular mail (Windy City Times, c/o Andrew Davis, 5315 N. Clark, #192, Chicago, Ill., 60640) or e-mail (Andrew@windycitymediagroup.com). Feel free to call 773-871-7610, ext. 201, if questions arise.

DEADLINE: Friday, Jan. 9, 2015, by 5 p.m. LATE RESPONSES WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

Please feel free to use additional paper as needed.

YOUR NAME: Juanita Irizarry

INCUMBENT? No

OFFICE SOUGHT: Alderman

WARD (if appropriate): 26

Address of Campaign Office: 3304 W. North Avenue, Chicago IL 60647

Campaign Manager: Alex Finke

Campaign Manager Phone: 708-567-3452

Campaign Manager Email: alex@juanita26ward.com

Website:/Social Media: www.juanita26ward.com, www.facebook.com/runjuanitaruncampaign

1) Do you have or would you install a written policy in your office regarding sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination?

I would have such a policy as part of a comprehensive anti-discrimination policy.

2) Have you started or would you start sensitivity training for your staff members regarding LGBT-related issues?

Yes. I would make sure that my staff and I have received training on dealing with all people in a sensitive and respectful manner for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual preference, LGBT-related issues, disability status and other qualities.

3) Have you taken or would you take any steps to further HIV/AIDS treatment and education programs? If so, what are those measures?

With my position at the Chicago Community Trust, I was able to help fund VIDA/SIDA, which is a program that helps to support Latino men that affected by HIV/AIDS.

4) What is your position on abortion as it pertains to the law?

I support a woman's right to make her own decisions regarding her reproductive health, including choosing an abortion. Ideally, we can create a society where a woman can avoid situations where abortion is the least worst option through increasing the ability of all women to make deliberate choices about whether to engage in sex or not, increasing access to a wide range of birth control options, and ensuring an array of supports to offer hope and help to raise a child, including when the pregnancy was unplanned. I am pleased to align myself with Democratic administration policies under which the number of abortions tends to be fewer as a result of more ample funding for appropriate services to help make parenthood more feasible.

5) What is your position regarding funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and education?

I plan to join the Progressive Caucus once elected as Alderman and pledge to work with other caucus members of the caucus to develop solutions to increase primary health care and public health services (including HIV/AIDS treatment and education), particularly in low income, underserved communities.

I would also support efforts to get the City of Chicago-operated primary care clinics to pursue revenue-generating options, such as joining managed care networks focused on care coordination and quality services in order to be able to bill for services to new ACA Medicaid patients (including CountyCare), as well as ensuring City of Chicago clinics have adequate billing procedures to get reimbursed by the federal government.

6) Do you favor marriage equality (marriage between two people of the same gender)?

Yes.

7) Do you favor hate-crimes legislation that increases penalties for crimes committed based on the sexual orientation or gender identity of the person attacked?

I support current Illinois law that that hate crimes are acts of bigotry, and are committed because of the intended victim's actual or perceived ancestry, color, creed, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability (including HIV status), or national origin, as well as that hate can be considered an aggravating factor and "accorded weight in favor of imposing a term of imprisonment or may be considered by the court as reason to impose a more severe sentence." According to The Illinois Department of Human Rights, state law explicitly protects actual or perceived gender identity under the current hate crimes law by including it as a provision of sexual orientation.

8) Do you believe that LGBT individuals should become foster parents if they are qualified?

Yes.

9) Do you believe that LGBT individuals have the right to adopt children if they are qualified?

Yes.

10) Would you keep committees around such as the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations' Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues?

Yes.

11) What are your thoughts on a school that would be designed specifically for LGBT students, much like the Harvey Milk School in New York City?

I think the highest priority should be for the Chicago Public Schools to work with LGBT advocates, such as the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, and students to establish policies and procedures to make sure that LGBT students feel supported, safe and welcome in their current schools. I would support specific programs or initiatives to serve the needs of LGBT students struggling in their current school or not currently attending school. Additionally, if the LGBT community felt that they needed a school designed for their community, I would most certainly support it.

12) Would you advocate for mandatory anti-bullying policies/training in Chicago public schools?

I will advocate that the Chicago Public Schools robustly implement the provisions in House Bill 5707, sponsored by State Senator Heather Steans and State Representative Kelly Cassidy and signed into law in June 2014, requiring that school districts adopt anti-bullying policies, designate one or more staff members to receive anonymous reports of bullying, make an effort to investigate reports within 10 days, protect student privacy, prohibit retaliation and false accusations, establish the types of interventions used to address

bullying and inform students and parents of these procedures. The law does not require specific trainings or curriculums, but I would support efforts that the implementation plan is developed in conjunction with LGBT advocates, students and other interested parties.

13) Would you advocate for mandatory LGBT-inclusive education in Chicago public schools starting in middle school?

Personally, I support educational environments that value and promote embracing diversity and that challenge unfairness and discrimination. However, at this time I don't have a position on whether this should be a mandatory part of the Chicago Public School curriculum and need to better understand what, if any, current requirements there are in this realm of embracing diversity.

14) Would you advocate for mandatory comprehensive, LGBT-inclusive and age-appropriate sex education in Chicago public schools starting in middle school?

My understanding is that the Chicago Public Schools plans to have fully implemented a new sex education policy by 2016 mandating that a set amount of time be spent on sex education in every grade, beginning in kindergarten. For older children in grades 5-12, instruction will include information appropriate for each grade level on human reproduction, transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections (STIs), healthy decision-making, and contraception, including abstinence. This new policy will be the first to cover sexual orientation and gender identity in an effort to bring awareness, promote tolerance and prevent bullying. I support these policies and will advocate for any necessary improvements as implementation goes forward.

15) What would you recommend to have a better relationship between police and the citizens they serve, including people of color and the transgender community?

Community policing needs to be revamped and relaunched. Serious engagement between police and the community, especially youth, is necessary. My experience as associate director of a local community development corporation that develops and manages affordable housing leads me to believe that the police often bring negative stereotypes about residents of affordable housing that they can only come to change if the police themselves work closely with the residents who are working hard to rid their own neighborhoods of gang and drug crime.

16) If you are an incumbent, did you vote for the recent increase in the city's minimum wage and, if a challenger, would you have? Also, what do you think is the ideal minimum wage for the city of Chicago?

As I testified during the City of Chicago's public hearing process for a minimum wage increase, I support increasing the minimum wage to \$15 in the City of Chicago. Businesses need customers who can afford to patronize local businesses. With the high housing prices in our community, families can barely afford their housing, let alone have disposable income available to support local businesses.

17) How do you propose to handle the crime rate in Chicago, especially in minority neighborhoods?

I am a former board member of the Community Renewal Society and strongly support the Reclaim Campaign to reduce violence by moving limited financial resources away from overly punitive criminal justice systems into community-based restorative justice, mental health, and substance abuse alternatives that rehabilitate lives and make our communities safer.

However, I also believe the Chicago Police Department needs more front line officers. We have too few police and they are overworked and tired. In the era of Ferguson and other such challenges, we need our police to be at their best in order to appropriately address, without overreaching, perceived or real threats on the streets that we need them to patrol.

In my community, the closure of the 13th District police station has negatively impacted police service in the part of the 26th Ward that is now served by the 12th district, located all the way in Pilsen.

18) What do you feel is the biggest financial problem facing your ward? How do you propose to tackle that problem?

I believe that one of the biggest financial problems facing my ward is access to affordable housing. I believe in healthy, mixed-income communities and balanced development. I will work hard to ensure that development in the ward does not promote displacement of long-time residents and provides living wage job opportunities that local residents have the opportunity to access.

I previously served on the Steering Committee of Humboldt Park Empowerment Partnership (HPEP), which promoted economic development and workforce development through collaborative action teams working across various local non-profits and local businesses. Although HPEP no longer exists, I think it still provides a good model for neighborhood development.

Through HPEP, I was part of efforts in the 26th Ward under the previous alderman, Billy Ocasio, to ensure that local residents receive training and prioritization for new jobs created by commercial and residential development in the ward. At HPEP I also helped guide the development of the Carreras en Salud program to create a pipeline between Spanish-speaking workers in health care industry receiving job training and local hospitals.

While employed at The Chicago Community Trust, I also worked with several workforce development organizations, including Greater West Town Community Development. As Alderman, I would work hard to strengthen connections between workforce development programs and local employers, like those in the Kinzie Industrial Corridor, which is across the street from the 26th ward on Grand Avenue. I would also work collaboratively with the 27th Ward alderman to attract more businesses there.

Another priority would be to better promote Paseo Boricua (on Division Street, west of Western Avenue) as a thriving cultural and commercial strip, building on the Puerto Rican culture that has long been a centerpiece of the neighborhood. To do this requires a strong Division Street Business Development Association to provide more effective technical assistance to existing and potential businesses. I would work to attract appropriate developments and businesses to this strip.

19) Some studies show that 40 percent of homeless youth are LGBTQ. What would you do to provide more resources for prevention, education and services for the entire homeless youth population?

I know there are many committed organizations and individuals working to address the needs of homelessness about LGBT youth, including groups that participated in the May 2-5, 2014 LGBTQ Homeless Youth Summit that addressed issues such as housing, legal issues, education and job training, health care and youth in institutional systems.

To ensure more public resources to address all these issues I support public policy to improve the budget situations for both the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois. There

needs to be a balance between increasing revenue and reducing spending in areas that doesn't sacrifice the City of Chicago's ability to assist residents to meet their basic human needs. However, in the midst of very complex and deep municipal budget challenges that will not serve up easy solutions, I want to help use this election to send the message that it is not okay simply to balance the budget on the backs of the poor and the middle-class through budget cuts and fee increases.

I would support responsibly increasing revenue on those individuals and corporations who can afford to pay more in taxes, reducing spending on non-basic human needs and other strategies before supporting cuts to effective social programs. Two revenue increases I support are modernizing the sales tax to include certain services and instituting a sales tax on large-scale financial transactions. According to the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, Illinois taxes just 17 of 173 service categories, the narrowest base of all but four other states. At the state level, I support maintaining a 5% income tax and I support changing the Illinois Constitution to allow for a graduated income tax.

20) New York City eliminated barriers to transgender people changing their birth certificates. They just need a letter from a doctor to do so. Would you support this for Chicago?

Yes.

21) Are any members of your current staff—either campaign or general office personnel—openly LGBT?

As of right now, none of my paid staff happen to be openly LGBT, but we have many core volunteers and supporters who are.

22) Please list any and all experience you have on LGBT-related issues.

With my position at the Chicago Community Trust, I was able to direct funding to Chicago House, which works with homeless men that are affected by HIV/AIDS. Specifically, it was funding for Chicago House to building housing for men affected with HIV/AIDS. I also helped fund Children's place, which works with homeless youth. And, the highest percentage of homeless youth, come from the LGBT community.

23) What do you feel is the biggest problem facing the LGBT community today?

I see the LGBT civil rights movement in the United States as one of the most important and impressive social movements of our time. The advancements across the nation in securing marriage equality rights is just one example of the impact. However, just as the civil rights movement in the 1960's make great strides to bring racial equality to our country in terms of legal rights, it was less successful in promoting economic equality among people regardless of their race. While many people are rightly benefitting from legal protections and changes in societal attitude as a result of the LGBT civil rights movement, there are still far too many people who struggle with the economic implications arising out of a history of discrimination against people who are LGBT. I hope to support policies that will bridge this gap.