

Name: Zerlina Smith
Incumbent?: No
Office Sought: Alderwoman
Ward: 29th

Answers to questions

1. I would install a written policy in my office regarding sexual orientation and gender identity and feature it prominently.
2. I would include LGBT issues as part of my staff orientation.
3. I am not currently in office but many people in my ward are struggling with HIV/AIDS. I would like to see more counseling, better medical treatment and more public education.
4. A woman's reproductive choices are hers to make and that includes the right to safe and accessible abortion facilities.
5. We need more public funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and education.
6. I support marriage equality for all people.
7. I would support carefully written hate crimes legislation that increases penalties if the motive is related to a person's gender identity or sexual orientation.
8. LGBT's should be able to apply to become foster parents on the same basis as anyone else.
9. LGBT's should be able to apply to adopt children on the same basis as anyone else.
10. I would definitely want to keep city committees and commissions related to LGBT issues. I would also like to know how effective these groups have been and how their work might be improved.
11. There are a variety of speciality schools already part of CPS. I think a school similar to the Harvey Milk School in NYC would be a good idea.
12. Anti-bullying training should be mandatory for all school personnel.
13. Yes, I believe that understanding LGBT history would be helpful for middle school students and above.

14. Yes. Comprehensive sex education for middle school and above is very important. Young people are not as knowledgeable about the complexity of sexuality as they need to be.

15. Chicago needs a civilian-police review board plus better training and oversight of the police. The policy of mass incarceration for drugs and minor offenses needs to end. Police need to understand that LBGT and transgender people are subject to discrimination and that they may be reluctant to report crimes against them. Police who handle rape and domestic violence need to have training and experience in dealing with LBGT and transgender people.

16. I was out on the picketline with Fight for \$15 and will continue to work for a timely transition to \$15 an hour rather than waiting for \$13 an hour in 2019.

17. More and more I am hearing the phrase, "Nothing stops a bullet more than a job." There is much truth in that statement which is why I fight for investment in job creation, job training and better educational opportunities. We have many ex-offenders in my community who want to get back on the right track and these programs would help them. We also need more social services and recreational programs, especially for our youth.

It's far better to prevent a violent crime than to have to investigate one. The money that Chicago would spend to put more police on the street would be better spent on preventing crime in the first place.

The Chicago Police Department (CPD) which deals with the issue of crime everyday, has some fine police officers who work with the community and are conscientious in their efforts to treat people with respect. However their work is seriously undermined by the Department's long history of institutional racism, violence and political corruption.

The city has paid out millions to settle lawsuits resulting from police brutality. The CPD has even been cited by the UN Committee Against Torture. There are residents of my community who fear both the police and the criminals. There are crime victims who feel that even calling the police is useless as they may not show up, or if they do, no effective action will be taken.

For this reason I support the idea of a democratically chosen police-civilian review board to replace the ineffective Independent Police Review Authority. That would be a first step in the right direction.

However reforming the CPD will not be easy and must be seen in the context of democratizing the authoritarian political culture of the city power structure as a whole.

18. I think the biggest problem in our community has been disinvestment. But I do not want just any business to come into our community. Corporations like Walmart with their

exploitative and unethical business practices would not be an asset to the 29th Ward as they displace local businesses and pay poverty wages.

We need businesses who provide quality goods and services, treat their employees well, make local hiring a priority and are willing to work with our community and business organizations on solving the many problems the 29th Ward faces.

We need a good mix of economic types including family owned businesses, locally owned private businesses, worker co-ops, consumer co-ops, b-corp social enterprises and non-profit organizations. I would like to see more businesses that are environmentally sustainable and do not contribute to pollution and climate change.

One reason that I supported the \$15 an hour minimum wage was to get more money circulating within our community to stimulate economic development. That's why I am a strong union supporter and why I fight to defend pensions and retirement benefits.

I will offer assistance to my constituents as we lobby for public investment and tax incentives from city, state and federal sources. We will talk to nonprofit groups about grants and to banks who are willing to offer low interest loans with favorable terms.

Community participation in economic planning is the key to success.

19. We need more public investment in affordable housing and more social services for homeless young people. We also need to reverse the corporatization and privatization of public education. Instead we need to invest in a rich diverse curriculum with full wraparound services so young people are less likely to drop out. We need public investment in youth jobs programs that provide not just a paycheck, but a future. Clearly the political climate is not favorable to this agenda, but we must support social movements as well as legislative initiatives to make this as much of a reality as possible.

20. Transgender people should have the right to change their birth certificates if they so choose. I would support this reform in Chicago.

21. I am not aware of any LGBT among my campaign volunteers. I haven't asked so there might be.

22. My main political work has been in the areas of public education and economic justice. I do advocate for AIDS/HIV patients in my ward which include some LGBT people. As an African American woman I am opposed to discrimination in any form and will support any initiatives which would help LGBT people achieve the same human rights we all deserve.

23. I think the biggest problem in the LGBT community is the one that faces all of us: the divisions of class, racial and gender which impede our ability to organize social movements toward human liberation.

