

## WINDY CITY TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

YOUR NAME: Cornell Wilson INCUMBENT: No  
OFFICE SOUGHT: Alderman WARD: 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward

1. Although the past decade has been a watershed moment in advancement of state legislation on gay marriage rights, legal protections against housing and employment discrimination have lagged behind in many jurisdictions. I would enthusiastically post a written policy in my office regarding sexual orientation and gender discrimination.

2. Sensitivity training is a proactive way of addressing potential workplace discrimination and ensuring a workplace culture that is conducive to all; I would support implementing training not only in my ward office but advocating for it as a de jure City policy.

3. I support expanding comprehensive sexual education in K-12 curricula, and adding a significant classroom module not only on transmission and prevention but also cultural aspects of stigma. Restoring funding levels to public and subsidized primary care, mental health and homelessness are also an integral part of my overall policy agenda. Many living with HIV/AIDS face economic difficulties, from homelessness to skyrocketing co-pay costs for lifesaving drugs. Robust public health programs that expand case management services, insurance enrollment assistance, housing, food assistance and other support are critical to empowering those with HIV/AIDS. As Alderman, I would be a legislative as well as public advocate. The HIV/AIDS community should be part of policy discussions; right now I think there is work that can be done to make this something that is talked about with more frequently, and with more candor and sophistication.

4. I support the Roe v. Wade decision in a statutory and ethical sense. I staunchly uphold the right of a woman's right to choose.

5. Please see question three. I am an advocate for funding expansion for HIV/AIDS programming in a variety of different areas.

6. I am unequivocally supportive of marriage equality.

7. I believe the LGTBQ community is a protected class in a legal definition and support legislation for stiffer penalties for crimes committed based on the sexual orientation or gender identity of the person involved.

8. I believe in the rights of any individuals in a stable, conducive environment to become foster parents regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, creed or race. Not only is discrimination in assigning foster housing ignorant, offensive and wrong, it is furthermore destructive to the lives of foster children who are in need of families and mentoring.

9. I affirm the rights of qualified individuals of any background to adopt children as well , consistent with question eight.

10. The City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations and the Advisory Council on LGBT Issues can provide a meaningful legislative outlet for the LGTB community and input that benefits the city as a whole, as well. I support retaining and empowering them.

11. Chicago has a range of specialized education institutions that address the needs of a diverse student population. Bullying, stigma, social acceptance are all pressures that weight disproportionately on LGBTQ youth. Just last week, we mourned the loss of a transgender teen to suicide. Her parents did not accept her identity—even posthumously. Environments that develop healthy self-esteem and identities are important to all students in these formative years, but especially LGBTQ youth. I support any institution that fosters healthy development of students, including the creation of school designed specifically for LGBT students.

12. I would advocate for mandatory anti-bullying policies/training in Chicago Public Schools. Bullying is a major issue, and one that affects LGTBQ youth with increased frequency.

13. I support a history curriculum that encompasses ethnic and gender studies. Chicago has set a precedent in providing a robust ethnic studies programs and providing a more balanced, inclusive historical narrative, when in many places—most notably Tuscon—ethnic studies remain highly contentious. The same should be true of addressing LGTBQ history which flourishing as a field of study in the historical profession, has not been adopted into what we teach our children with regularity. Historical appropriation and whitewashing are so prevalent, and for many decades the contributions of gays and lesbians—or even their presence— have been marginalized.

Education is critical to producing an informed, tolerant society, and a LGTBQ inclusive history should be a standard part of the history curriculum.

14. Please see question 3. I support comprehensive sexual education.

15. I am an advocate of community policing, and believe that the Chicago Police Department must shift more towards a more holistic approach that includes public/private partnerships and even works in conjunction with and in consideration of public health policy.

Policing should not be punitive but restorative—aimed at developing transformation relationships with residents and community leaders. This means police must spend time with their neighbors and be a positive presence in the communities they serve. Studies have shown that personal familiarity and social networks play a large role in determining political positions on LGBTQ issues; if someone has gay or transgender friends, they tend to be less homo/trans-phobic more receptive to policies that support equal rights and quality of life for the LGTBQ community. Police should be familiar with gay/transgender residents and leaders, and they should actively (as opposed to reactively) work to familiarize themselves with LGBTQ community issues and be an active participant in dialogue. These are not cost-restrictive measures that require increased funding, but philosophical changes.

16. I have always supported a minimum wage that kept pace with inflation and enabled working people to stay out of poverty and dependency. Ultimately we need the stability of both workers with more consumer spending power and job-supplying businesses to maintain the vitality of the ward, keep establishments open and allow working families to have a decent living.

I am hopeful the staggered increased minimum wage in Chicago will broaden the City's tax base and increase revenue for the City while reducing the need for taxpayer funded government programs for certain low-wage workers. Now that the increase has been passed, it is time to work collaboratively to ensure that implementation benefits the economy as a whole.

17. In conjunction with changes in how we approach crime, we need to restore police manpower and funding levels. Overtime is not a sustainable solution and we should look towards operating efficiency and increased hiring. This is not productive, however, if police officers are not sensitive to community needs and some of the underlying social and economic stressors underlying crime.

I also support increasing funding for psychological support and counseling services in the Chicago Public Schools. Violent behaviors, and suspensions in the pre-teen years are a good indicator of future behavior and intervention at these periods in life is critical.

18. In July, we conducted a comprehensive issues poll that identified crime and gun violence as the biggest problem facing the ward. Accordingly, I have composed a policy agenda revolving around addressing both. 'Straw' purchasing and illegal gun trafficking are a unique jurisdictional issue, since legislation in Chicago does not influence laxer gun laws in suburban municipalities. I support a comprehensive background checks and screening for gun purchases and other current ordinances in Chicago.

As I have mentioned, we also need to take a more holistic approach to how we address poverty and crime, a pre-cursor of gun violence.

19. Please see question three. Public/Private partnerships and increased funding for social programming is critical to stemming homelessness and creating a continuum of care for the homeless, displaced, and those who lack food security. There are some great private organizations, like the AIDS Foundation, that provide dedicated case-management services—let us take a look at expanding these.

20. I would support eliminating barriers to changing birth certificates. Administrative barriers should not stand in the way of identity.

21. There are no openly LGBT members of my current campaign staff.

22. As a person of color who grew up in the South, I'm attuned to the ways discrimination can operate, both openly and covertly, in society -- and the intersection of civil rights struggles across race, gender, and sexual orientation. My military and legal careers have given me further insight into how masculinity and power can contribute to physical and verbal abuse and harassment for the LGBTQ community. It took over a decade to remove the foolish Don't Ask Don't Tell Policy—and homophobia is still a very present reality in the culture of the Armed Forces.

The perspective I have gained from life experiences allows me to criticize the cultural origins that underlay much of the pernicious, or openly harmful legislation and dialogue that surround the LGBTQ community. As Alderman, I am committed to parlaying this into a very public stance in support of LGBTQ rights and also taking progressive stances and actively advancing issues like HIV/AIDS that affect the community.

23. I hesitate to answer this as someone who is not a member of the community; I believe voices within the community should be foregrounded in guiding and providing input on the continuing struggle for civil rights and respect. From a legislative vantage point, there are many gains to be made in making sure that employment and housing protections are uniform nationwide. Organizations such as HRC seem to have shifted their focus towards these state-by-state battles in addition to continuing the push for marriage equality.

Understanding of the transgender population and their inclusion in the larger movement seems to be another salient point, both culturally and legislatively.

I look forward to working with the community to advance issues of importance.