

WINDY CITY TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Aldermanic races

Return responses by fax ([773-871-7609](tel:773-871-7609)), regular mail (Windy City Times, c/o Andrew Davis, 5315 N. Clark, #192, Chicago, Ill., 60640) or email (Andrew@windycitymediagroup.com). Call [773-871-7610](tel: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: Patrick J. O'Connor INCUMBENT? YES/NO YES
OFFICE SOUGHT: Alderman WARD (if appropriate): 40th

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

Yes. I helped to pass the legislation in the City regarding this type of discrimination. As far as I am concerned that is the law for all City offices already. Among my staff, I implement a zero tolerance policy for any form of discrimination and would implement a written policy if I felt that it was necessary.

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

I support sensitivity training for my staff members regarding LGBTQ issues. My ward office is managed by an openly gay and recently married individual, and I could see the need for staff training on becoming more aware of resources and issues that are present in the LGBTQ community.

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

I supported efforts to develop and implement a National AIDS Strategy with measurable goals, timelines and accountability. I support increased funding for science-based HIV prevention programs and I support funding for research programs, especially for preventive options including a vaccine and microbicides. Age appropriate education programs are also necessary as well as programs to prevent HIV transmission within the incarcerated population and injection drug users. I believe in expanding funding for housing and other necessary social support programs for low income, displaced and disabled populations in order to adequately meet their needs. I have been supportive of and an advocate for increased funding for treatment and educational funding in the City Council.

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

I support current law and fully support a woman's right to choose.

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

I support increased funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and education programs and mandatory Medicaid coverage for those with the disease. Despite advances made with respect to knowledge about HIV, the rate of HIV infections is actually increasing in certain communities. This has to be addressed through education and groundbreaking, accessible treatment. Medicaid coverage is necessary to ensure individuals who are HIV positive receive proper medical treatment regardless of income.

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

Yes. I was proud to attend the bill signing ceremony when Gov. Pat Quinn signed the legislation into law.

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?

Yes

8) Do you believe LGBTs should become foster parents if they are qualified?

Yes

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

Yes

10) Would you keep committees such as the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations' Advisory Council on LGBT Issues?

Yes, and I supported the ordinance that created the 21 member LGBT Advisory Council to the City Commission on Human Rights.

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 believe this is something that CPS should consider and work with the LGBTQ community to accomplish. I know that New York has had success with the Harvey Milk School and that the previous LGBTQ Liaison and Advisory Committee to the City of Chicago supported and promoted the creation of such a school in Chicago.

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

There is evidence that there is a need for this type of training and for anti-bullying policies. Last year, state Senator Heather Steans and State Representative Kelly Cassidy, who both represent the 40th Ward, passed landmark statewide legislation requiring schools to implement strong anti-bullying policies that are inclusive of LGBT-related bullying. CPS will also be required to abide by the new law. No child, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification, should be afraid to go to school. It is important to me that our schools follow the spirit of the law to better protect children at school.

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

I would advocate for and encourage teachers to include LGBTQ-inclusive history education in Chicago Public Schools starting in middle school.

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

I support comprehensive, LGBT-inclusive and age-appropriate sex education in Chicago public schools starting in middle school.

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?

There needs to be more open communication between the police and all of the communities they serve. The use of designated Police Liaisons for LGBTQ concerns and minority concerns who are more visible and trusted in the communities they serve would be helpful and send a more positive

message. In my ward, I maintain an open and strong two-way communication between my office and the local police commander. This should be the case for every aldermanic office and all communities served by the police.

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?

Yes, I voted for it, advocated for it as a sponsor of the Ordinance, and chaired the committee that passed it, the Committee on Workforce Development & Audit. I support the \$13.00 proposal. As to whether it is the optimal level, time will tell, but we did a good deal of research and feel that this takes it almost as far as we dare right now.

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

I support any initiative to help us combat the crime and gun violence that our city is facing. I am fortunate because my Ward, the 40th, includes the lowest crime police district in the City. I have supported programs such as CeaseFire and Safety Net to help address gun violence as well as support for before and after school programs. I have always supported and believe in youth sports and Park District programs being made available and affordable as alternatives for at risk youth.

Education and job creation are at the root of solving the rising crime issue. Crime is not just a police issue, but also a broader societal issue. I support gun control legislation that prevents any weapon from getting in the hands of a criminal or potentially dangerous individual. I believe that equally important as gun control and policing efforts are investments in education and preventive programs and violence prevention programs based on public health strategies and approaches.

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

If re-elected, my priorities will continue to be economic development and jobs; budget and finance; and education funding and reform. I believe all of these are inter-related and without economic development to generate the necessary fiscal resources the other key issues and challenges are not able to be met. Without quality education we are not able to meet the requirements to generate the necessary economic development.

No community in Chicago is immune to the struggles of economic development and underemployment. While the 40th Ward is in a much better position than most other areas of the city, our residents too struggle to find good-paying jobs in a new 21st Century economy. Job growth and economic development continue to be the most pressing issue in our area.

I will continue my work in municipal government fashioning budgets and policies that incorporate the use of federal funds for local use and maximize every dollar spent for the public good. I pride myself on my record of bringing tangible evidence of our tax dollars back to the community I serve.

At City Hall, I continue to work on workforce issues through the committee I chair, the Committee on Workforce Development & Audit, and also on projects like the Wrigley Field expansion project which is scheduled to provide over one-half billion dollars in union jobs over the next five years with no public money subsidies.

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?

The city has reallocated funds to address this issue in recent years. As a result of a meeting between the HELLO organization and Mayor Daley, Chicago formed the Homeless Youth Task Force and this led to the opening of The Crib in January 2011. The city increased funding to expand the seasonal pilot program to offer year-round services and operate four additional programs providing homeless youth with access to a network of comprehensive services.

We have far too few beds in the city designated for LGBT youth. As we identify new revenue streams and allocate our limited resources, funding for programs similar to the Crib need to be a priority. Overnight services and long-term housing is critical. The answer is for the city to work with all levels of government units and find partnerships with the private sector and non-for-profit organizations for a holistic and comprehensive approach to find a long-term solution to this issue. I am also keenly

interested in the 750 Club, which offers a unique and viable alternative to keeping homeless youth safe. Although the program is new, I am hopeful that this will be successful.

In the past few years, HUD worked with housing advocates to modify its policies to address the housing needs of grandparents raising grandchildren in situations where there is no legal custody and in the area of emancipated youth out of the foster care system. A next step is for HUD programs targeting homeless youth in partnership with the CHA Senior buildings and the kinship caregiver buildings as a possible starting point. We need to maximize every available dollar.

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?

Yes

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

I authored the preamble for the original human rights ordinance, which passed in the City Council, in an effort to neutralize the position of the Catholic Church against its passage. I voted for increased funding for HIV/AIDS education and treatment. I urged State Rep. Greg Harris to put his name up for appointment to Larry McKeon's seat to ensure the seat went to a member of the LGBT community at a time when some of the other Committeemen making the appointment wanted it to go to someone who was not. I have supported the annual benefit for the Human Rights Campaign and have been on the committee. I advocated for the Marriage Equality Bill.

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

Poverty and homelessness remain unfortunate realities for many members of the LGBT community. Whether this is in the case of a youth who is kicked out of their home or an older person who, perhaps because they were never afforded the added financial security of legal marriage, is struggling to make ends meet on a limited income after the death of a partner. A lack of affordable housing combined with sufficient wraparound services is one of the biggest issues facing the community as a whole. Shelter is important, but without comprehensive social services, the individual will never be able to live a healthy and stable life. The long-term implications are profound. While LGBT organizations and shelters are doing good work in providing services to the most vulnerable members of the community, there is simply not enough to keep up with the demand.

Another equally big problem is funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services, and this is not just a problem in the LGBT community but especially in minority communities and for LGBT people of color. Education always has been and always will be our greatest tool in achieving a world without AIDS.