

Windy City Times Candidate Questionnaire

Alderman Michele Smith, 43rd Ward

Your Name: Michele Smith

Incumbent?: Yes

Office Sought: Alderman

Ward: 43

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

While I am not a subject matter expert regarding HIV/AIDS public health programs, I support measures to fight HIV/AIDS and assist those suffering from it.

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

I am 100% pro-choice

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

I believe that HIV/AIDS treatment and education is vitally important for our community.

6. Do you favor marriage equality?

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?

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

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?

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

I believe in community-oriented policing. More officers walking a beat rather than driving or sitting behind a desk will create safer neighborhoods and foster a better relationship with police officers.

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

I did not vote in favor of the recent minimum wage ordinance. I believe that \$13 per hour per employee will force businesses out of the City and put more people out of work. The wage gap between the City and the suburbs will be nearly \$5 per hour. The temptation for business owners to move a few miles to substantially lower their costs will be significant and our local economy will suffer.

However, I have been a vocal advocate for an \$11 per hour minimum wage.

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

Neighborhood involvement and community-oriented policy is vital. In my ward, we have established a block-by-block crime consulting program between my office, local police, and ward residents that crafts specific strategies for fighting crime. I have held public safety seminars and identified crime hotspots to give 43rd ward residents the information they need to stay safe.

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

An alderman's job is to provide excellent constituent service, make informed legislative decisions and guide good development. Our greatest concerns from residents include the drive for continued school excellence, by focusing on making Lincoln Park High School an excellent choice for all of our residents.

We also want to continue our efforts in public safety, which have helped reduce crime overall by 11.9% between 2010 and 2012 (the most recent year for which data is available). I will continue in my role as a fiscal watchdog to ensure that property taxes are affordable for our residents.

We must replace some of the economic activity lost when Children's Memorial Hospital closed in Lincoln Park. The construction of the Children's site will begin the process of revitalizing Lincoln Avenue, which will be buttressed by the economic development plans we are investigating.

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?

Our City must address the issue of youth homelessness. I am supportive of measures to increase prevention, education, and services for homeless youth.

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 in Chicago?

Yes

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

I do not ask my employees or staff about personal matters, including sexual orientation.

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

I have consistently been an outspoken ally of the LGBT community and a prominent advocate for marriage equality. I support measures taken to reduce discrimination and increase opportunities for LGBT individuals.

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

The LGBT community can be proud of several recent hard-fought successes, including finally making marriage equality a reality in Illinois.

There is still a long road ahead. Individuals in the LGBT community still face discrimination and unacceptable rates of victimization. I believe we need to strive for a world where differences in sexual orientation are celebrated and inclusivity, rather than discrimination, is ubiquitous.