

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](mailto: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: John Arena  
OFFICE SOUGHT: Alderman

INCUMBENT? **YES**  
WARD (if appropriate): 45

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?

**I support several measures to help reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS:**

- outreach to at-risk populations to provide education and help prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS
- funding and research for drugs that help prevent the spread of HIV
- greater support for homeless LGBTQ youth and other populations who may not have access to family or community support
- focus on outreach and education aimed at young people
- expand access to health care for those impacted by HIV/AIDS

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

**I support a woman's right to choose and the current law, which protects that right. I have worked with the Chicago Police Department to support the rights of those seeking access family planning resources at the Family Planning Associates health clinic, while respecting the first amendment rights of protestors near that clinic.**

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

**Thanks to the hard work of elected officials and activists before me over the last 30 years, education efforts have led to increased awareness of the disease, progress has been made in reducing the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the stigma associated with the disease has been greatly reduced. I support HIV/AIDS treatment and education funding to continue the shift we have seen in which a positive diagnosis is no longer a death sentence. HIV/AIDS can be a manageable disease with**

**the proper level of funding for education, prevention and treatment. Such funding can both save lives and reduce health care costs.**

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? **Yes.**

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 would support such a school to the extent that it provides a safe haven for all LGBT students from a hostile educational or family environment. I am generally in favor of an integrated environment for all students, to help foster understanding and reduce discrimination.**

**More broadly, I will continue to work to make sure CPS is supportive of all students, and offers resources to any minority group, including LGBT students, who may be more likely to be bullied or ostracized.**

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. There is no reason to exclude any group from history education.**

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 serve, including people of color and the transgender community?

**A fully-staffed police force with officers who are well-trained and sensitive to the needs of the community will help officers have better relationships with the citizens they serve. This is especially relevant regarding relationships with the transgender community, and I support training police so that they understand the proper**

**protocols for working with that community.**

**Chicago needs to hire more police officers to improve public safety. The city is hiring 500 new officers and needs to hire 1,000 more to keep up with recent attrition.**

**CPD resources should be devoted to neighborhood police officers walking or driving a beat and developing relationships in their communities. Addressing crime in a reactionary fashion through mobile saturation teams is less effective than investing in officers who work consistently in an area and know the people who live there.**

**I support Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) and believe CAPS meetings support the goal of improved police-community relations. The city should also work to build a diverse police force reflective of the communities it serves, and an educated police force that is supportive of the differences among us that make Chicago great.**

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 a member of City Council's Progressive Reform Caucus, I was one of the leaders of the effort to increase the city's minimum wage to \$15 per hour. I voted for the ordinance that will raise the minimum wage to \$13 per hour and I will continue to fight to increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.**

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

**As noted above, hiring more police and focusing on community policing will help reduce the crime rate in Chicago. I also support expanded bike patrols – that is the new paradigm for officers “walking the beat.” Our police force should consist of officers who are visible and approachable to help prevent crime before it happens.**

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

**The biggest financial challenge facing the 45<sup>th</sup> Ward is continuing the hard work of economic development to increase sales and property tax revenue and reduce costs associated with vacant storefronts and abandoned properties.**

**I have successfully attracted employers to the Ward since I was elected in 2011. This involved a layered approach, because there is no silver bullet to creating jobs and sustainable economic development. I worked to bring cultural attractions to the ward to make the area more attractive to both residents and potential employers. I focused on infrastructure improvements so that employers' workers are able to get to work and so that businesses are able to receive the city services they need to operate. I also supported reasonable density developments close to shopping districts and public transportation.**

**Finally, I reached out to potential employers. My office invites businesses to see the area, invites potential employers to come to dinner at new restaurants in the area, tour the neighborhood – all in an effort to highlight the positive changes in the 45<sup>th</sup> Ward since I took office. Marketing new attractions and developments to potential new businesses has resulted in a positive snowball effect.**

**Since I was elected Alderman, I have worked with property and business owners to bring more than 80 new businesses to the 45<sup>th</sup> Ward. New businesses attract residents and shoppers, which attract new businesses, and so forth in a virtuous cycle that benefits residents and the city's finances alike.**

**I will continue to use these approaches to promote economic development throughout the 45<sup>th</sup> Ward, and I would like to see this approach replicated in other parts of the city.**

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 best way to support the homeless youth population is to take steps to prevent youth homelessness. I have fought to increase the minimum wage and job opportunities in the city, which decreases the likelihood that families or youth will become homeless. I also support stay-in-school initiatives, drug awareness education and youth outreach and employment opportunities.**

**For currently homeless youth, I support CPS services and outreach to identify and help the homeless youth population. I also support the expansion of safe spaces for LGBTQ youth who may not come from supportive environments and need support. I encourage recognition of homelessness not as a criminal issue to be addressed by police, but as a socioeconomic issue to be addressed by our society.**

**I will work with the Department of Family and Support Services and my City Council colleagues to understand the issues facing the city's homeless population and offer support and ideas. Some of the things we can do to support the homeless population and specifically the LGBTQ homeless population are to prioritize funds for homelessness in the family services budget, make sure resources are available for the homeless LGBTQ population, open more homeless shelters, target jobs programs to homeless youth and LGBTQ homeless youth in particular, and change the policy that forces transgender homeless people to report their biological gender when going to a shelter.**

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 was a strong supporter of the Equality Illinois initiative and attended the signing of that bill. The Progressive Reform Caucus and I introduced and passed a resolution calling for Illinois to pass legislation legalizing same-sex marriage.**

**I have participated both as a candidate and elected official in the Chicago Pride Parade. As a public official I feel strongly about using the office to show visible support for the LGBT community.**

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

**The ongoing fight for equal rights and fair treatment. Codifying basic civil rights at the national level and on a state-by-state basis for the LGBT community would address problems such as unequal access to marriage, adoption rights, immigration and access to health care. Transgender people must be included in this expansion of civil rights, with a focus on two pressing issues: ease of and access to birth certificate changes, and access to health care for transition needs such as surgery and hormone therapy treatment.**