

WINDY CITY TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

City Races (Mayor, Clerk and Treasurer)

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). 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: Jesus "Chuy" Garcia INCUMBENT? NO
OFFICE SOUGHT: Mayor WARD (if appropriate): Citywide

1) Do you have or would you install a written policy in your office regarding sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination? Yes, and this policy would include policies against discrimination based on both sexual orientation and gender-identity.

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?

Yes. While we have made great strides in treatment for HIV/AIDS, we still need to work to lessen the impact it has. I will work with the Chicago Department of Public Health and organizations such as the AIDS Foundation of Chicago to ensure that we are doing everything we can to bring HIV prevention and education resources to all communities.

We also have to continue to be creative to make sure we are reaching young people, particularly gay youths, with prevention education. It's simply a fact of life that young people today are reaching sexual maturity at a younger age. Our programs to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases have to respond to that reality. There also need to be specific efforts directed at African-American men and transgender people who are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS yet allotted few resources for treatment and prevention.

I would also encourage opportunities to increase cooperation and coordination between the City's HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs and those carried out by the Cook County Health and Hospitals System to make sure that we are maximizing the funds we spend on those programs

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

I support the basic principles of Roe v. Wade and the right to choose when or whether to have an abortion, in consultation with one's physicians, without government intrusion.

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

I support Chicago Public Schools teaching comprehensive sexual health education that is medically accurate, age appropriate, same-sex partner inclusive and with information on both abstinence and prevention in order to reduce rates of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and unintended pregnancies among youth.

In addition, I would seek an outside review of those programs by HIV/AIDS prevention experts, and we have a wealth of such experts in Chicago, with a goal of finding ways we can improve what we're teaching in CPS. Chicago has done a better job than many cities when it comes to HIV/AIDS prevention outreach to youths, but the rate of infection in that age group is still too high. As long as that's the case, we have to try to do better.

For treatment, again I would explore opportunities to improve cooperation and coordination between the City's HIV/AIDS treatment programs and those carried out by the Cook County Health and Hospitals System to make sure that we are maximizing the funds we have available for those efforts. Based on my experience as a Cook County commissioner, who has worked closely with Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, I am confident that we can find ways to do so while continuing to help more people.

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. We have strong hate crimes laws on the books at the city, state, and federal level. However, we could do a better job when it comes to making sure that our police and prosecutors are fully trained on how and when to use them. I would order a review of our police education policies and programs related to hate crimes and make sure that every member of the Chicago Police Department is well versed on when it's appropriate to investigate whether a violation constitutes a hate crime. And I would urge the Cook County State's Attorney's office to fully prosecute those violations when they occur. We must send a message that hate crimes will not be tolerated in the city of Chicago.

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. I would reverse Mayor Emanuel's decision in 2011 to eliminate the Advisory Council on LGBTQ Issues. As Mayor, I will want input from the LGBTQ community on issues of specific concern to them, and the Advisory Council can serve as a vital source of the type of dialogue that needs to exist between the mayor and the LGBTQ community. In addition, the Advisory Council over the years it existed helped shape groundbreaking policy initiatives in Chicago, served as a bridge between the LGBTQ community and city government, and brought global recognition to Chicago through its stewardship of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame. I would reinstitute the Advisory Council on LGBTQ Issues and look forward to working with it to ensure that Chicago's LGBTQ community has direct access to the mayor's office.

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 support efforts to create such a school in the CPS system. A school that incorporates LGBTQ perspectives in its courses and is dedicated to serving LGBTQ youths at risk would give many Chicago youths a far better chance at doing well in school and completing their high school education. Too many of those youths are dropping out and falling through the cracks; we have to do everything we can to prevent that. Such a school could also serve as a professional development hub and model program for the entire CPS system in the development of policies and curriculum that are supportive of LGBTQ students and other students at risk. Eventually, this school could host workshops and training programs for teachers and administrators throughout CPS based on its development of those policies and programs. It could also offer helpful programs and information for parents of LGBTQ youths.

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

Yes. I believe we must do all we can to limit bullying against LGBTQ youths and bullying against any youths for any reason. Our children should not be afraid to go to school. I would work to ensure that CPS has the best anti-bullying training possible, make sure it is updated when necessary, and require all staff at CPS to take part in that training.

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

Yes. I believe this is an important component in addressing and lessening the bias that still exists against LGBTQ people in many quarters. Throughout their years in CPS, our children should be taught all people and the positive contributions they make to our community and the world are equally valuable, regardless of the sexual orientation, as well as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and age of the people making those contributions. And our students should learn about the history and evils of discrimination and bias, as well as the sacrifices and courage shown by people who have worked to overcome and eliminate that discrimination.

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

Yes. Please see my answer to Question 3.

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?

Yes. The lack of trust between residents and police impairs our ability to keep neighborhoods safe. I believe in true community policing and a restorative justice approach to addressing community violence.

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 continue to support a higher minimum wage of \$15 an hour. Allowing businesses to pay substandard wages to their employees only shifts the burden for their care onto the public. A higher minimum wage will help lift families out of poverty and off of the public welfare rolls.

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

Violent crime is a staggering problem throughout the entire city. By the numbers, Chicago is sadly considered the new murder capital of the nation, having surpassed New York, a city nearly triple our population. That said, I would take a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of violence by addressing the employment needs in our neighborhoods. As a recent study by the University of Chicago Crime Lab demonstrated, a public summer jobs program for high school students from disadvantaged neighborhoods in Chicago reduced violent crime arrests by 43 percent over a 16-month

period. Sadly, that same report found youth employment in the summer months is near a 60-year low.

There must also be a long-term and on-going commitment to Community Policing. True community policing remains a proven and effective way to both solve crimes and actually to prevent it. It constitutes a genuine partnership with a neighborhood based on trust built over time between long-term beat officers and neighborhoods they serve. It takes training and commitment.

I will also keep the promise Mayor Emanuel broke – the promise to put 1,000 new police officers on the street. Without those officers, we will never be able to end the heartbreaking violence that has taken the lives of so many of our children.

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

The pension crisis is a problem we created together as a City, and it is a problem that will require everyone's participation to resolve. That said, I do not support cutting benefits for current retirees. Many retired City workers have only their pensions to see them through their old age. They have worked hard and paid into their pension funds for years, and it would be wrong to change the rules on them now. Although the Supreme Court of Illinois has not yet weighed in on the matter, I was not surprised that the Circuit Court ruled recently that the State pension legislation violated the clear language in the State Constitution, declaring pensions to be a contractual right of pensioners. If the Supreme Court accepts the Attorney General's argument that the State may limit pension benefits as an exercise of its police powers, we will carefully review the ruling and its implications for further addressing this very serious problem.

Regardless of the outcome of that litigation, I would consider reducing the City's contribution to pension benefits for future employees and other cost-saving measures. However, I believe in the right of collective bargaining and the important social policies that it reflects, and I would prefer to negotiate such changes with the elected union leadership. I respect the contributions our workers make to our city, and I believe we will be able to come up with a solution to everyone's advantage, so long as we work together from that foundation of respect.

I also have a record of reducing taxes on Cook County taxpayers, and I think it is important for our families and businesses to know we will not try to balance our books on their backs. I do not support a property tax rise to fund pensions, because I know too many families – and especially senior citizens -- who are already struggling to pay their existing tax bills.

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?

LGBTQ youth become homeless for many reasons. Some are thrown out by their parents for lack of understanding and homophobia, while others leave them out of fear. To prevent homelessness and reduce unstable housing situations, I would make more housing resources available to families at the greatest risk. I would put to use current unused funding and resources from the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) including unleashed and unoccupied public housing units and unissued vouchers to immediately help thousands of cost-burdened and at-risk low-income families across the city. I would make sure CHA and other housing providers are trained on the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's new equal access rule for the LGBTQ community to reduce discrimination. I would also make good use of the estimated \$58 million sitting in the city's Affordable Requirements Ordinance fund to create more affordable housing options for low-income families.

To help LGBTQ youth who are forced onto the streets by different circumstances including abuse and fear of their own family members, I would consult with the organizers of the 2014 Homeless LGBTQ Youth summit to understand the challenges in implementing the many solutions that came from that event as well as the successes so far. As mayor I would make sure that city agencies work to get current information about resources for the new resource website launched (LGBThomelessness.com).

I would work with community organizations such as the Center on Halsted, The Night Ministry, Howard Brown Health Center, La Casa Norte, Vida/SIDA, and others to get them what is needed to support the important work they do to address this issue. Since this population faces a much higher rate of violence once homeless, I would encourage and support more shelter and safe haven options specifically for homeless LGBTQ youths as well as homeless youths in general. I would also seek to increase the sites with training and capacity to support LGBTQ youth, especially in the south and southwest sides of the city which lack LGBTQ-specific resources.

In addition, I would make sure that we are fully utilizing the resources of the Chicago Department of Public Health to provide services to these youths. Where we can, I would seek opportunities for CDPH to coordinate those services with other providers so homeless youths receive the health services they so often need but have trouble accessing. I would also support resources going to preventative programming in our schools including preventing bullying but also training administrators and teachers about the specific issues affecting LGBTQ youth that can push students out of schools including violence from bullying, harassment and hate crime.

Finally, recognizing that "lifting all boats financially should also include the youth" I support raising minimum wage to \$15 an hour, which can help anyone afford and keep

housing.

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. Unfortunately, the City of Chicago would not be able to implement such a policy on its own because in Illinois birth certificates and any changes sought in a person's birth certificate falls under the purview of the Illinois Department of Public Health's Department of Vital Records. As Mayor, I would certainly support efforts to change Illinois state laws and policies in order to make the process of changing birth certificates easier and less costly for transgender people, as I believe the current process is unduly burdensome.

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

Yes. Tania Unzueta, long-time Chicago LGBTQ and immigrant rights activist has been hired as Latino Campaign Director. She will be responsible for efforts to engage the Latino community citywide.

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

I was proud to be one of the first elected officials to take part in the Gay Pride parade when it was still considered a risky decision for elected officials to participate. More substantively, I have been a strong and consistent support of legislation advancing the full equality of the LGBTQ community.

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

We in Illinois have come a long way in recent years. I'm proud that in our city and state we've protected the rights of LGBTQ people to employment, housing, public accommodations and other services. I'm also proud that we now, at long last, recognize the right of same-gender couples to marry. Recognition of those rights notwithstanding, however, we still have to work to lessen bias against LGBT people. No group of people feels the brunt of that still-existing bias more than our LGBTQ youths. As such, I believe the problem of LGBTQ youths being abandoned by their families and forced to live on the streets is the most urgent problem facing the community today.

As a society, we have to do more to address the root causes of this problem. That begins with doing a better job of educating all our children about why it's wrong to discriminate, and here in Chicago we should make sure we do the best we can to provide that education in our schools. It has to start when children are young and it has to continue throughout

their years in the CPS system.

As a city, we have to respond to the personal crises in the lives of these homeless youths by doing everything we can to provide them with shelter, medical and other services, and opportunities to complete their education in all parts of the city. They may be abandoned by their families, but we want them to know that they are always a part of our Chicago family, that we will not abandon them, and that we will give them every opportunity to succeed in life. It's the least we can do.