**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Denice Davis

Ward: 46th

Occupation: Service Coordinator for adults that are mentally challenged

Education: BA degree in Secretarial Sciences from Catherine College 1989

Previous political and civic experience:

1989-1994 Assistant to Alderman Helen Shiller 46th Ward

1994-1996 Director of Community Affairs, Congressman Bobby L. Rush

1st Congressional District

1996-2011 Chief of Staff to Alderman Helen Shiller

**1) City Pensions**

Chicago's fire and police pensions are greatly underfunded, and the city is required by the state to make a $550 million payment into the pension funds by the end of 2015. Do you support restructuring the pension systems, inevitably reducing benefits, to put the funds on sound financial footing?

Yes or No: Yes

Please Explain:

The fact that the city did not do its part in paying into the pension, which has caused the pension crisis.

Chicago's pension systems for municipal workers and laborers already have been restructured, reducing benefits, but the city has yet to identify where it will find the revenue to sufficiently fund those systems. Under what circumstances would you support a property tax increase to raise the needed revenue for the fire and police pensions and/or the municipal workers and laborers pensions?

Forensic audit of city finances to indentify areas of waste in all departments that will save money. Increased transparency to identify how existing dollars are spent. Identify different sources of revenue that are not Fines and Fees. The inevitability of an increase in property tax to ensure that we can address our debt obligation and pension obligation. Everyone has to be willing to share in the pain of addressing the pension problem. It’s in our collective interest. I would propose and increase in the service tax and commuter tax.

**2) Chicago Public Schools pensions**

Large and growing payments required to keep the Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund solvent are squeezing CPS' budget, forcing cuts elsewhere and limiting investment. The Chicago Board of Education has increased property taxes, but it is not enough to keep up with the high annual costs. What measures do you support to ensure a solvent retirement system and to improve the district's finances?

We have to be fair; we must honor our pensions to the people that went to work every day to serve our city. The Illinois Constitution has specific language that protects pensions. You (the state) cannot renege now on a promise you made in 1992. The states’ budget problems cannot be solved by cutting pensions. The states constitution did not say a portion of your entitled pension will be paid out or that the state legislatures can just restructure pension payments under the disguise of using the term “REFORM”.

First, funding for schools would not be based on the zip code or for those in communities that have the highest income per capita. Every Chicago Public School in every section of the city or the county should be given what each school needs to meet the expected achievement goals for all students by providing the resources needed to give an equitable education. In addition, politicians should listen more to those who are doing the work in the trenches, the actual work. The key to improving public education in Chicago is to implement sound education policy and practice- not just doing what is politically expedient. We must put our education system back in the hands of educational professionals, not corporate managers or those who have no sense of what good education policy and practice looks like.

**3) Revenue**  
  
In light of the financial issues discussed above, do you support any or all of the following measures, each of which would require**,** at a minimum, approval by the Illinois Legislature?

\* A statewide expansion of the sales tax base to include more consumer services

Yes or No: No

\* A tax on non-Chicago residents who work in the city

Yes or No: Yes

\* A tax on electronic financial transactions on Chicago’s trading exchanges, known as the “LaSalle Street tax”

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain your views, if you wish, on any of these three revenue-generating measures.

We have been taxed, taxed and taxed again, it is time for corporations, LaSalle Street Tax (Chicago’s Wall St.) and commuters pay the millions of dollars that they make off everyday Chicago families. We need alternative resources of revenue for the city. We cannot keep plugging our budget shortfalls with tickets, fines, and fees. That is one reason why I am for a commuter tax. People come into Chicago from the suburbs or even the neighboring states, collect their paycheck, take it home with them, and then spend their money in their own municipalities. While we the hard working people of Chicago keep getting beat down with city stickers, red light and speed cameras, residential permit parking stickers and guest passes. We the people of Chicago have nothing left to give. We have to eat too.

**4) Crime**

Do you support hiring more police officers to combat crime and gun violence in Chicago?

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain: Number one the Chicago Police Department works entirely too much overtime, which causes lack of rest and lack in judgment. This would avoid volatile situations and elevate millions of dollars paid out to victims families for inappropriate police behavior. We cannot tell individual wards that we need to reallocate police services to high crime areas. Additionally this would create a restored justice practice to build relationships in the community this will rebuild trust.

What legislation in Springfield would you support to try to stem the flow of illegal guns into Chicago?

**The stop the illegal firearms act of 2013 and Chicago Crime Intelligence Center with ATF**

**5) Elected school board**

An advisory referendum on switching Chicago to an elected school board, rather than an appointed board, is expected to be on the ballot in more than 30 wards on Feb. 24. Currently, the mayor appoints all seven board membersand the Schools CEO. Do you support a change to an elected school board?

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain: I am fully in support and circulated petitions in the 46th ward for an elected school board. With an appointed school board and CEO, you are beholding to the administration and or the bodies of people that appointed you. You have no say so about any issue; you are not independent in your actions or your thinking. You must move lock step with whatever is asked of you.

It doesn’t take rocket science to know that an elected school board will absolutely support the Teachers, parents, and most importantly the children.

**I think the question is why doesn’t Chicago, the only city in Illinois don’t have an elected school board.**

**6) Tax-increment financing districts**

TIFs are the primary economic development tool of the city. In a TIF district, taxes from the growth in property values are set aside for 23 years to be used for public projects and private development. Do you support increasing the annual TIF surplus that the mayor and the City Council have declared in each of the last few years, money that goes to the schools and other city agencies?

Yes or No: NO

What reforms would you propose for the city's TIF program?

There need to be increased transparency, a clear accounting of how T.I.F. dollars are used, increased accountability and more community driven input on how T.I.F. dollars should be used in each individual community. T.I.F funds should be used solely for the intent and purposes for which they were created, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago park District and Blighted areas.

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

What would you do as alderman to boost economic development in your ward, and bring jobs to your community?

Launch and implement workforce development programs so that you have a high quality labor force in the ward. Developing comprehensive economic development plan for the ward helps create cohesive development. The plan must be developed with community input at the forefront.

**8) Size of the Chicago City Council**

The City Council has 50 members, but civic groups and other regularly argue for reducing the size of the Council. What should the size of the Council be? Please provide a specific number. And why?

I think the wards should remain the same unless you are going to increase the budget and the size of the aldermanic staff. You are initially giving less alderman much larger wards and currently unless, you are the head of a large committee, you only get 4 full time staff and maybe out of you contractual money you can hire 2 full time employees for $15. to $18. an hour without benefits. (Obama Care) Additionally if you run a full service ward, office this will be a very difficult task. Eventually some part of your ward will go lacking.

**9) A Chicago casino**

Do you support, in general concept, establishing a gambling casino in Chicago?

Yes or No:

Yes and No

Please explain:

There are pros and cons to supporting casino gambling in the City of Chicago, I believe it would bring a tremendous amount of jobs and revenue however; unfortunately, it could cause a lot of people gamble away their only source of revenue in hopes of getting rich quick.

**10) Red light and speed cameras**

Does the city have an acceptable number of red light and speed cameras currently, and are they properly employed?

Yes or No:

Yes to the first question.

No to the second half of the question.

Please explain:

I will support the red light camera program when it is implemented fairly and is not used primarily as a revenue-generated scheme.

**11) Ward issues**

What are the top three issues in your ward — the ones you talk about most on the campaign trail?

Transparency, more community input in the decision making process of what happens in the ward.

Affordable housing development without displacement

Crime fighting for choices and resources for our young people.