**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Roger L Washington

Ward: 24

Occupation: Police Officer, Educator at Malcolm X, Ordained Pastor

Education: Master’s in Safety and Public Administration

Previous political and civic experience:

**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:

Please Explain:

*I believe that there are other ways we can fund the pension system without reducing benefits. There are several ways we can generate new revenue streams. First, I believe that we can create a LaSalle Street tax. Billions can be generated and used to fund the pension and our school system. Another revenue stream would be to enact a commuter tax on those who travel to the city to work and to leave at the end of day. Finally, we should consider taxing more services in the city of Chicago. Some studies show that hundred millions of dollars can be generated if the tax base was expanded to certain services.*

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?

*By no means can I support a property tax hike. I would represent one of the poorest wards in the city that struggle every day to make survive. Raising property taxes will be an added burden on them and may even cause them to move out of the city because they cannot afford the property taxes or the raises in rent due to property taxes.*

**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?

*I believe that there are other ways we can fund the pension system without raising property taxes. There are several ways we can generate new revenue streams. First, I believe that we can create a LaSalle Street tax. Billions can be generated and used to fund the pension and our school system. Another revenue stream would be to enact a commuter tax on those who travel to the city to work and to leave at the end of day. Finally, we should consider taxing more services in the city of Chicago. Some studies show that hundred millions of dollars can be generated if the tax base was expanded to certain services.*

**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:

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

Yes or No:

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

Yes or No:

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

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No:

Please explain:

*As a police officer, I see the growing need for my city to have more patrols and more officers on the streets to help reduce crime. I see it every day and safety is a necessity for the success of our city.*

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

**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:

Please explain:

*I wholeheartedly support an elected school. Many of the schools on the Westside would have not faced closure if we had some one from our community representing us. The criteria for a Chief Executive Officer should include a background in education, years of experience, and should be hired by the elected school board and not the mayor.*

**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:

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

*First I believe in greater transparency when it comes to TIF dollars. I believe the best way to ensure that our TIF dollars are spent effectively is to have the residents of my ward decide how the dollars will be spent. I believe in a participatory budget process where residents can vote and give their ideas on how the TIF dollars are used.*

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

1. *I would use TIF dollars to help promote community owned businesses in my ward instead of big corporate entities. I would use TIF dollars to help create more community owned businesses.*
2. *I want an ordinance created for my ward that states that any construction project that happens in my ward has to have half of their workers hired from my ward.*
3. *I support a 15 dollar minimum wage that will put more money into people pockets and generate revenue for businesses and the city which will then create more jobs.*
4. *I want to create a youth summer jobs programs in my ward that will give the youth opportunities to earn money and to keep them off the streets.*

**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?

*Have no comment on this issue at this time until I have more information.*

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No:

Please explain:

*Yes and No. I understand the need for a casino that could generate billions in revenue for the city. However, I worry about the effect it would have on lower income communities such as mine where people would go to the casino and gamble their earnings a way because they need more money.*

**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:

Please explain:

*I believe that we need to get rid of all the speed cameras and red light cameras in the city.*

**11) Ward issues**

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

1. *I will focus on using the TIF dollars in my ward to revitalize the infrastructure of ward. Just recently the 24th Ward saw 24 million dollars strip away in a finance committee meeting because the incumbent was not present. The money, which included TIF funds and proposed projects, was given to other Chicago departments. Under my tutelage this will not happen again.*
2. *I will work with the state legislature to encourage the formation of an elected school board. There were many schools that were shut down on the Westside including the 24th Ward and this would have never happened if we had an elected representative.*
3. *Just recently, it was made public that Wall Street and their banks were involved in fraudulent swaps that have cost the city millions. This is unacceptable. This is money that could have been used to help fix our streets, better fund our schools, and give city workers that back pay that they deserve. I will move to have the millions that were lost, given back to the city.*
4. *I am an advocate for the Obama presidential library to be located in the Lawndale neighborhood. I hope to use my influence to have the library in Lawndale which would spur economic growth and development.*
5. *Shutting down the red light camera program in the city*