

2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: Jeffrey Baker

Ward: 21st

Occupation: CDL Driver

Education: Some college

Previous political and civic experience:

I served as a volunteer for Alderman Arenda Troutman, later becoming a precinct captain, then area coordinator and eventually became the President of her 20th Ward Regular Democrats organization. I helped two political candidates, Che "Rhymefest" and Dock Walls, for Che's campaign I simply served as a field soldier, and for Dock Walls, I helped to organize street teams.

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:

We must keep our contractual obligations, even if it means using some of the Tax Increment Financing surplus to ensure pension solvency. Keeping our contractual obligations should be seen as an emergency that requires extraordinary measures. We have a flawed system that must inevitably be restructured, but restructuring past promises, is not restructuring, it is reneging.

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? A property tax increase would be a last resort. We must first explore other options such as;

- Naming rights of city owned property.
- We must give our City treasurer more freedom to explore other banking options which might yield higher interest and

- Tax increment finances should be used to invest in cornering the market of an emerging market, such as digital manufacturing, that we have already begun to invest in with federal support.

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?

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.

4) Crime

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

Yes or No: **YES**

Please explain:

I believe that hiring more officers is a necessary, yet short term numerical solution to a problem in need of a new strategy. Stemming the flow of guns, officers walking beats and becoming more familiar with residents, restorative justice options more regularly used by courts, community input and power over policing decisions and job appointments, would all go a long way to build a better relationship between the community and the police force that protects it, and an even longer way to reducing the need to saturate areas with police presence.

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

- I would support laws that focused on substantially fining and revoking FOID cards of repeat victims of gun theft
- I would support laws that levied stiff fines and license revocation on gun show hosts, and gun show vendors that demonstrated a lax system of buyer verification, similar to the way in which we punish retailers that sale liquor to minors
- I would support a law, that requires gun manufacturers to develop and implement a tracking system that reflects the electronic and micro-manufacturing advances of the times we live in.

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 members and the Schools CEO. Do you support a change to an elected school board?

Yes or No: **YES**

Please explain: The numbers indicate that, a mayor appointed board of education, is no more successful than the city council appointed boards of the past. We must bring the power of entities this crucial to the lives of constituents, closer to the direct control of the constituents, and allow we, the constituents to hold ourselves accountable. Along with this change, we must also increase the length of LSC office terms.

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? I disagree with the notion that TIFs are an economic development tool, and also disagree with the inference that these surplus funds support schools and city agencies. That being said, the power over the current TIF funds should be legislated into the hands of those within the communities in which those funds were taken, and that power over directing those dollars and appointing those on the oversight, must be taken out of the hands of a mayor.

7) Neighborhood economic development

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

Organize and guide cooperative investing, allowing the community increase its ownership of the retail market within its own boundaries.

I would support parity legislation that would bring some balance to the way that city development contracts and dollars are awarded.

I would guide the organization of an Industry Ownership And Job Creation Plan, to quickly move the community toward economic self-sufficiency.

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?

The city council should consist of 50 aldermen, representing approximately 53,000 constituents each. Increasing the size of an alderman's district would hinder his or her ability to be the closest access to political power, that those 53,000 constituents have. Communicating with and addressing 53,000 constituents is a daunting task for the average citizen that wants to be a representative in this political process, increasing that difficulty would be undemocratic.

9) A Chicago casino

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

Yes or No: **NO**

Please explain: **The social ills, crime and addictions that accompany this industry, would far outweigh the profits for the city, unless the city decided to build something that would rival the tourist attractions in Las Vegas and Atlantic city.**

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: **NO**

Please explain: **The city has far too many of these TAXES, disguised as community safety measures. The red light and speed camera programs should be dismantled.**

11) Ward issues

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

- **Organizing our number of votes into a voting bloc, that demands Fear, Respect & Action**
- **Contract parity worth Billions and Industry Ownership for Job Creation**
- **Elected school board & Funding equity**