**Stephanie D. Coleman**

**Candidate for 16th Ward Alderman
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**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Stephanie D. Coleman

Ward: 16th

Education: Master of Science in Nonprofit Management (MSNM)

Previous political and civic experience: N/A

**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:

Restructuring the pension systems along with surveying the existing enrollees in their interest to return to work without punishment/penalties and requiring that firefighters and police officers hired after 2014 to contribute approximately 2% more to the plan. In addition, the taxing of consumer services. has the potential to provide the additional revenue the city needs.

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?

If the taxing of consumer services cannot produce the revenue needed to support the pension system, an increase in the property may be the only feasible choice, however, I would certainly be an advocate for other alternatives or measures.

**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?

Placing a cap on pension payouts based on the number of years of service in addition to appropriating more revenue generated by the new taxation of consumer services should be assessed for feasibility.

**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.

A tax rate similar to that of the state’s 0.01% has the potential of generating significant revenue for the city’s ailing budget while lessening the burden of additional taxation on middle or lower class.

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No:

Please explain:

Chicago has approximately 2.6M residents and 12,505 police officers the residents of Chicago could benefit from at least 500 more officers and the additional officers would help CPD provide better services without shifting vital manpower during higher crime season/events.

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

Stiffer penalties for individuals with unregistered guns and increase in fees for gun registration.

**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:

Chicago residents that have children attending the Chicago Public Schools should have the opportunity to nominate and elect members of the Chicago School Board. In order to address the issues that plague the Chicago School System parents and not special interest or mayors friends, should elect members of the Chicago School Board and family should have a say in the education of their children.

**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?

I propose public and open community meetings for more accountability on where/how TIF funds are being spent.

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

Enhance targeted business districts to attract and market new businesses which will bring jobs to the residents of the 16th Ward. Also, as Alderman, I would identify certain marketable business districts and use TIF resources to attract new businesses and enhance existing businesses as well.

**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?

50 Alderman is a sufficient number to represent Chicago’s population.

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

**Yes** or No:

Please explain:

Only under condition that programs such as Gamblers anonymous and some type of mental health program is fully funded. Also, provided the 16th Ward receive its fair share of the revenue and jobs generated by the casino.

**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:

They are too many red light and speed cameras. I’m opposed to the present amount of cameras I would not support any increase in the Red Light Camera program unless there is more transparent progress in the program.

**11) Ward issues**

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

Economic development for both businesses and adequate affordable housing

Education-More cohesive foundation between public/charter/private schools

Crime- Reduce the need for criminal activities by motivating young people and adults to get involved in the community.