**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Carmen Hernandez

Ward: 38th

Occupation: Water Management City of Chicago

Education: GED, 65 hours of College, United States Military

Previous political and civic experience: Father of six, I’m a member of the Illinois National Guard 933rd Military Police Company, a City employee, and a Tax Payer!

**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 and No

Please Explain: Yes, I do believe we have to pay our bills, and some changes will have to be made to our pension system. But before we take benefits away from the people who paid their fare share, we need to find out what happened to the money they invested. I believe that a reduction in the size of the City Council would send a message to the employees of this City that we have a real problem.

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? I need to see the books!

**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 need more information on this subject, before I could make an informed decision, I just don’t know what are the options at this point.

**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: NO

\* 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 should look at cutting the budget first, and cutting the city council is a good start.

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain: I think it’s time to take a completely different approach to fighting crime, I would favor creating an auxiliary force of police officers and use them as a force multiplier, kind of how we use the National Guard and Army reserve to supplement the regular Army in time’s of an emergency.

What legislation in Springfield would you support to try to stem the flow of illegal guns into Chicago? I’m a card carrying member of the NRA, and yes I believe in gun control.

**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: It’s all about accountability, I would favor a four region system. A key to an elected school board would have to involve public funding of the process of electing members, it should be a paid position and limited to one six year term.

**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: I’m not really sure; I would need more information about how it’s been run in the past and what results have taken place.

What reforms would you propose for the city's TIF program? More openness and make sure that we are getting the most for our money.

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

What would you do as alderman to boost economic development in your ward, and bring jobs to your community? One of our biggest problems is parking. The city council along with the former Mayor has destroyed local businesses by selling our parking meters. We have to find a way to reverse the damage done, help small business with tax issues and less red tape.

**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? YES!

I believe that the State has the power to reduce. In the last 30years, 32 Aldermen have gone to prison or had to resign, so I think a reasonable number is around 25.

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain: We’re a big City it would bring jobs and a steady stream of revenue.

**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 red light and speed cameras are for the most part set up to make money, the safety of the public has taken a back seat to another back door tax on the motoring public.

**11) Ward issues**

What are the top three issues in your ward — the ones you talk about most on the campaign trail? 1. Reduce the size of the City council.

2. Getting more police in the ward.

3. We are having a problem with illegal conversions in the ward, and absentee landlords, I would use the building dept. and whatever city resources I would have at my disposal to fight this problem.