**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: **Raul Montes, Jr.**

Ward: **22nd Ward Alderman**

Occupation: **Substitute teacher and private security**

Education: **Bachelors of Science degree in Criminal Justice**

Previous political and civic experience:

**I have been a community activist which has brought attention to address well over 600 issues from citizens and community leaders. I have also assisted and taken a leadership role in bringing positive attention in to the improvement of the quality of life issues for all residents in the 22nd Ward and throughout Chicago.**

**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:

**After an in-depth careful review and examining all legal contractual city obligations, I would look at all options to seek out a negotiated mutual resolution that the City can meet and the unions will meet and accept.**

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 would commit all red light camera revenue and apply those funds to pay for the pension systems.**

**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 would look deeper into the CPS Central Office and make cuts with personnel and shift those funds to the Pension fund.**

**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.

**I would need more information to explore the impact this would create before I could honestly comment on any tax increase.**

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No: **NO**

Please explain:

**I would propose that we explore more community involvement. We need a comprehensive approach to community engagement to assist the current police in reducing crime.**

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

**There is legislation currently in place to stem the flow of illegal guns. We need a comprehensive community approach with the support of all levels of law enforcement to assist in this effort.**

**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:

**This is the only school district in the State of Illinois where a Mayor appoints a school board. We have relied too much on the Mayor to improve the educational system in Chicago. The current school board has been a rubber stamp for the Mayor. The voting citizens from Chicago need to elect true representation from across the City to get results.**

**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:

**Yes, I will TIF districts if it benefits the 22nd ward.**

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

**I would explore support of TIF districts along the 22nd ward corridors. An investment of TIF money would be better spent to improve infrastructure within the 22nd Ward. This additional funding would provide a greater impact by expanding the scope of meaningful local community afterschool programs such as the Boys & Clubs, YMCA and others would create a much needed benefit to our youthful community who are most vulnerable to gangs and crime.**

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

**I have supported numerous community projects that complimented our commercial strip and stress local shopping and support our local businesses. There is always room for improvement and I would jointly develop a marketing plan to attract investors by working with the local chamber of commerce to attract new and needed businesses to the community. There is also a parcel of land in the 22nd Ward that has potential for the development of an industrial complex or manufacturing plant that would become a welcomed attraction for the right company. The invitation for a new business complex or large company would offer diverse employment opportunities for the families in the 22nd Ward.**

**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 density and diverse population of people in Chicago needs representation to meet the challenges of the complexity and diverse constituency throughout the various wards. I feel keeping the 50 City Aldermen currently in place is adequate and manageable to meet their needs.**

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No: **YES**

Please explain:

**The issuance of a gaming license for a casino perhaps along Navy Pier or docked along the City of Chicago Shores would be a huge economic boost to the local economy. We can also commit these profits to pay for the City pension shortfalls.**

**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:

**I do not support any of the red light and speed cameras as a safety tool. They should all be removed. They have angered residents and citizens and have not a significant impact on safety. I have protested at intersections with “Citizens to abolish Red-light cameras.”**

**11) Ward issues**

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

1. **Economic Development**
2. **Youth Crime**
3. **Parking meters, red light and speed cameras**