**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name:

**Lawrence Andolino**

**Ward: 29**

Occupation: Attorney

Education:

Juris Doctor **-**John Marshall Law School, Chicago, Illinois: 1995

Bachelor of Arts Political Science-Dominican University, River Forest, Illinois: 1991

Diploma- Holy Cross High School, River Grove, Illinois: 1987

Graduate St. Angela Grammar School

Previous political and civic experience:

Sayre Language Academy Elected Local School Board Representative.

Instrumental in establishing Sayre School as a community first school to accept all children from the community.

Executive Director of the Galewood-Montclare Community Organization; instrumental in attracting economic development and commercial beautification projects.

Pro-bono attorney represented Alderman Sposato (36) and residents of 29th

Ward in opposition to Pawnshop zoning. Spearheaded petition and email drive to show proactive community support to secure a Mariano’s grocery store.

Village Attorney Franklin Park, deployed use of the public nuisance ordinance to curtail illegal business activity.

**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:

Yes I support restructuring the pension systems to ensure their sustainability.

The deficit is because of skipped payments by the City, not excessive income and benefits to workers. Data shows that a majority of workers receiving a pension take in between $25,000 and $50,000.00 per year. The pension issue is not just a City problem, it is a State problem and a comprehensive strategy is needed. In order to achieve this goal, the State legislator needs to give our City some time to shore up its finances and work with all parties for a solution. Temporarily, the $600 million payment due, needs to be decreased. We need to put a new pension structure in place for **new hires**, including a potential increase in the retirement age for this new group. We must ensure that the people who have already paid into their pensions do not received diminished benefits. Any decrease would not pass constitutional muster and cannot be considered.

**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 not support a property tax increase. I believe the way to look at the pensions is to fund based on an actuarial basis not on the basis if having funding to cover the draw from retired workers if everyone in the pension system spontaneously retires immediately.

A more immediate reform that can begin is with the legislators that created the problem. For 2011, for example, the State reports there were 182 active members in the Illinois General Assembly Retirement System with their total expected payroll to be $14.7 million. Taxpayers will be paying $12.1 million into the fund which is approximately [82% of the Legislator’s salaries](http://www.championnews.net/files/quinns_82_percent_from_GARS_Page_18.pdf) which is like paying the salary of $68,000 per year and another $55,000 for each legislator for their pension.

We should consider abolishing pensions for new Legislators as this plan is poorly funded in addition to the rest of the plans. Serving in the House and Senate isn't supposed to be a lifelong career. It shouldn't come with a retirement package; this would be a good start for reform and restructure. The best way to collect more tax revenue is to increase the amount of tax payers, not taxes. We need to ensure that benefits do not rise faster than the rate of inflation.

**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**?

The current financial difficulties stem from a **lack of employer contributions**.

The teachers contribute 9% of their pay check for their pension and do not receive social security which By comparison, Social Security benefits are based upon a 6 percent contribution. Teachers contribute 50 percent more to their retirement than the average Social Security member. The State does not equally fund the pensions with the proper share of taxes generated from our city. For example, in the past, the suburban and downstate pension system received over $2.5 billion in annual support from the State and the Chicago fund nothing. Dramatically cutting pension benefits will not fix the pension problem.

The reality is that the City of Chicago not only funds the Chicago Teachers pension, it also funds the State teacher’s pension without equal contribution from the State.

We need a system that designates a fair amount of state income tax revenue toward local governments. A progressive income tax can be considered. Sales tax reform would be a step in the right direction to generate revenue and create a more fair tax structure. The sales tax should be geared toward the luxury service industry. Services now account for two-thirds of what Americans spend. We need to close corporate loopholes while creating a tax structure that is business friendly for job growth. We can then re appropriate this revenue to shore up our pensions. We can create more job growth and business growth with a stable and fair corporate tax structure. Illinois does not have a coherent policy applicable to the entire business community; there are literally thousands of special exemptions, breaks, discounts, credits.

**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:

Yes I would support a reform of the sales tax base to include a policy geared toward luxury services. We need to put a progressive sales tax system in place that is not regressive in nature. Exploring luxury services can be a form of revenue and the tax burden on necessities such as food and basic necessities can be lowered.

Creating more business initiatives is needed. Services are the primary vehicles that drive the economy. With more revenue there can be an increase in our City’s share of the state tax revenue. The tax base in Illinois is extraordinarily narrow compared with other states, because our State does not tax services.

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

Yes or No:

I would consider **a modified congestion tax**. There is no question that traffic congestion is the city **has increased and has taken a toll on our roads and cost Chicagoans hundreds of millions of dollars and hours of added travel times**. We need to alleviate the traffic and the costs of maintaining our streets. There are many people that work in the City and use City services that do not contribute to the payment of keeping up with our infrastructure. There can be revenue generated from suburban residents that enter the City, secure jobs in our city and avail themselves to the city and the cost of City tax payers.

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

Yes or No:

No.

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

I would create a more progressive income tax system. I believe sales tax should be geared toward service and luxury services rather than staples people need. We need to create a predictable and uniform business tax that is fair, closes loopholes and creates an environment that draws business and jobs. I do not favor a LaSalle Street tax it would be there are concerns with its constitutionality.

We need to focus on green technology. Creating a larger tax bases increase revenue not increasing taxes. The Green Economy has experienced sustained growth in comparison to other sectors. Based on recent studies, Chicago is the nation’s largest exporter of green goods and services. Illinois has tried to make the state a hub for electric vehicles, promoting battery development at Argonne National Laboratory, as well as the rollout of electric car charging stations and related training programs at the state's colleges and universities. About 26 percent of green jobs are involved in manufacturing. The creating of these jobs will create a greater tax base. We need to explore allowing a casino in Chicago. I would explore a modified congestion tax as explained above.

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No:

Yes, the easy answer is to hire more police officers and I agree we need to. The reality however is that we just cannot afford enough office. In addition, to just hire more officers will not solve our crime problems. We need to attack the crime problem at the source. A majority of the violence and crime is because of gang activity. Statistical data shows that the average gang member is 16 years old and generally the first arrest occurs between the ages of 17 and 18 years of age. We need to implement a bottom up strategy.

The bottom up strategy requires educating our children and creating programs at a young age to attempt to deter future gang membership and to attack the gang leadership structure. **We need to address this problem at the grade school level. Instilling hope and core values at an early age is just as important as teaching math and reading. We need to** teach children **conflict resolution at an early age**. We need to have required conflict resolution programs at a young age and teach our children the violence is not the solution to the problem and instill this core value early when the children are most receptive. **We need to ensure there are adequate programs and after school activities early in a child's life.** We need ensure that our **parks and school have after school programs and we need to encourage local parents and leaders to participate in career days in the local schools.** We need to begin early with our children to let them know there are goals to strive for whether it be a career in teaching, an electrician, a carpenter, a doctor, a lawyer or a whole host of opportunities that can exists. A regular career day to engage the children and peak their interest will help to give these children hope.

We need to **create opportunities for children to join boy scouts and girl scouts**. Our parks need to **implement more organized sports** that teach team work and goals. These **programs need to continue on to high school and the high schools need to offer more vocational programs.** Not every child will go to college because of either income or desire. We need to give alternatives to children for careers early on and teach marketable skills. I would advocate for strict enforcement of truancy to ensure the child is in school. If we begin to teach and engage the children at a young age we can prevent many children from joining these gangs.

**There are approximately 12,000 police officers in our City. We need to use the resources we have and strategically identify arrest and prosecute the gang leaders**. Our C.A.**P.S. program can provide the information on where the gang activity is** and the major players in this activity and possibly the location of these individuals. The Gang Audit is designed to gather the following intelligence from each district: gang name, gang faction name, territorial borders, faction size, alliances, conflicts, organizational level, and propensity for violence. If you can identify the leadership and the source you can target the problem.

All too often, a gang activity is prosecuted and the individual ends up on probation only to return to their gang. We need to ensure that conditions of probation will also be sentenced to gang probation. District commanders will ensure that a list of gang members that are enrolled in the program have mandatory curfew hours, residency requirements, and prohibition against associating with gang members.

We need to instill a sense of safety and presence to our neighbors and a deterrent to gang members. The commanders need to make a **regular effort to have roll calls on the blocks in the heavy gang areas**; this sends a psychological message to the members that the police are in their community and active.

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

I would support increased and minimum mandatory prison sentences for those guilty of illegal guns. We need to support legislation that is a deterrent and punishes those who have guns illegally. The laws need to target the illegal possession of weapons used on the streets for crime and take these individuals off the streets.

**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 board should be elected. The board in current form is not representative of the people, educators and families it serves.

**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

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

First, people including city legislators do not understand how the TIF district works other than a cursory working knowledge. The city need to make the TIF data available to the public in a form that is understandable. To this end, there should be a master list created. The reform needs to have oversight and management by a governing body. The city need to make the TIF data available to the public in a form that is understandable. To this end, there should be a master list created. The reform needs to have oversight and management by a governing body. As to TIF expenditures, there should be a detailed breakdown of how much of the TIF funding goes to consultants, job training etc. There should be independent oversight. There needs to be a long term TIF plan for a comprehensive use and not an ad hoc basis. Once a property is developed a policy of releasing it from the TIF should be strongly considered. There also needs to be an evaluation process. TIF districts need to be reviewed to determine if there is an actual development and benefits from the district and if not, then the TIF should be terminated. TIF's have been the subject of controversy for subsidizing private entities. The use of these TIF's can be beneficial and have long terms gains. The City needs to employ a specific transparent process that is understandable to the public when the TIF funds are used this way. Once TIF money builds a new project, it goes back into the general tax rolls, and that TIF-created development starts to return money to schools, parks, and other taxing bodies. The TIFs have to have a redevelopment agreement up front, indicating the types of jobs that are created, community benefits to ensure they fit into the plan.

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

I will make a concerted effort to create an identity and showcase the strengths of my community to market it for development. Similar efforts have been successful in Lincoln Park, Hyde Park, Buck Town, Sauganash.

Austin is a unique community with many assets. Our community has a suburban character as it borders many suburbs and has excellent proximity to downtown Chicago. We have a diverse population and a housing stock second to none. Columbus Park and Austin Town Hall are untapped assets we can build around. Our major business streets and boulevards are ripe for development. We need to market our assets and employ a proper use of TIF funds (Tax Increment Financing) to create economic development.

All too often we see **new restaurants, grocery stores and retail stores opening**  **in the suburbs next to us instead of the 29th Ward.** The suburbs’ taxes are not lower, and we do not suffer from a lack of ability to support these establishments. The problem is that the when a business seeks to open, Oak Park, and Elmwood Park come to mind because of proactive marketing on their part. I will **spearhead an effort to market this community**. We need to bring our community to the attention of these prospective establishments **so they invest in the 29th Ward**.

Several years ago this effort attracted the first Starbucks to our community. At the time I was the executive director of the Galewood-Montclare Community Organization. We experienced a vacancy on our main street North Avenue. It was our belief that attracting a trendy coffee house would spur further development on our main street and help craft the type of business district we wanted.

We created a marketing piece to show case our community and we created an economic marketing study to show we had the economic ability to support this establishment and further show that there was not significant competition nearby. We also showed a desire for this business use. In addition, we installed identification banners and planters throughout our business district for a more pleasing commercial environment. Our efforts were successful in attracting the Starbucks and several trendy restaurants took residence after.

I plan to employ the same strategy and efforts throughout the ward and with the aid of TIF funds and further access to resources an alderman has such as development data and contacts I believe I will be successful. In addition, I will use the **Aldermanic menu to deploy funding to improve the parking, streetscape and infrastructure necessary to attract new business.**

**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 size of City Council should be cut. Reducing the size of Chicago’s City Council would save money. Not only would the city save a combined salary and expense account of $183,280 for each alderman eliminated, but some ward staff positions would be cut and government functions would be consolidated. It’s tough to justify the size of Chicago’s Council when the city’s population has dropped by 200,000 in the last decade, and when every other city in the nation save for New York has far smaller councils.

We are now on a grid system and we have multiple ways of ordering repairs, trees and other services that having so many Aldermen is just not necessary.

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No:

Yes

Please explain:

There are gambling establishments throughout the state. Chicago needs to explore creative ways to generate revenue. Chicago should be able to capture this revenue stream.

**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:

The red light program has been a disaster. For example there has been evidence of spikes were caused by equipment malfunctions and human tinkering. There are serious questions whether these cameras have to be operated fairly and as such they need to be removed.

**11) Ward issues**

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

The top three issues are Crime and Economic Development and inadequate City Services.