**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: **Daniel “Danny” Solis**

Ward: **25**

Occupation: **Alderman, City of Chicago 25th Ward**

Education: **Attended St. Mel’s High School and the University of Illinois at Chicago.**

Previous political and civic experience:

**I began my career as a community organizer and entered the classrooms as teacher. Subsequently, I assumed a leadership role as the Founder and Executive Director of the Latino Youth Alternative High School. I also served as the first Latino Executive Director of the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, and served on the Board of Directors for the Eighteenth Street Development Corporation and Gads Hill Center.**

**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:

**As a city we are working to address this issue and we have achieved important breakthroughs with organized labor that is acceptable for taxpayers, employees, and government. What changes can be made is still a matter being decided by the Illinois Supreme Court. I await the court’s decision and hope it can provide further guidance on the issue going forward.**

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?

**These are times that tough decisions should be made. We should exhaust all available options for increasing funding to meet our obligations before exploring higher taxes and fees. I support finding new, more efficient ways of doing things as well as finding areas of waste that can be cut from our budget before considering higher taxes and fees. I also support a progressive income tax at the state level that will require the wealthy to pay their fair share.**

**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?

**What changes can be made is still a matter being decided by the Illinois Supreme Court. I await the court’s decision and hope it can provide further guidance on the issue going forward.**

**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: **I would first prefer to see a progressive income tax at the state level.**

\* 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.

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No:

Please explain: **I think a simple answer is that we need to ensure adequate police coverage and to do so we need to hire more cops, not only for high crime but for low crime areas as well. I would want to make sure that we have adequate funding before committing to something we can’t afford.**

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

**I would support any legislation that would help reduce the number of illegal guns on our city 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 membersand the Schools CEO. Do you support a change to an elected school board?

Yes or No:

Please explain:

**I am interested in the idea of a hybrid school board that would combine both elected and appointed members. I think this is important to ensure that there is adequate representation of the Latino community on the board as the City’s Hispanic population continues to grow.**

**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:

**TIFs have been a very helpful tool in the 25th Ward for improving infrastructure and creating jobs. I was able to use TIF funds to help with an expansion of the neighborhood high school, Benito Juarez, and for improvements at Whittier in Pilsen. We also used TIF funds in the Pilsen Industrial Corridor to bring over 3,000 new jobs to the area including many at the International Produce Market. I was also able to use TIF funding to help with the construction of a new library and field house for the Chinatown community. We also use TIF funding for infrastructure improvements including sidewalk repairs, green technology alley reconstructions, and improving lighting for public safety.**

**I support the continuation of these TIF districts in the 25th Ward to help benefit the local economy and schools. My goal is to redirect as many TIF funds as possible back into the community that is paying into the TIFs to minimize the surplus in those funds.**

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

**I support efforts to make TIF spending more transparent.**

**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 been very successful in bringing jobs to the ward during my term as Alderman. Using TIF funding I was able to bring over 3,000 jobs to the Pilsen Industrial Corridor. I sit down with anyone interested in doing business in the ward and ask them to meet with union representatives to try to get local jobs for residents. The key to economic development is making the ward a place where people want to live, work, and play. We have opened major arts and cultural institutions, restaurants, and larger businesses such as the International Produce Market and the American Linen Company.**

**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?

**Aldermen are our residents’ gateway to city services. More aldermen means better representation for our communities and greater accountability to the taxpayers. It seems clear to me that, we in the Hispanic community, need as much representation in our communities as possible and this would not save us a significant amount of money.**

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No: **Yes**

Please explain:

**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:

**I believe that the goal of the traffic light camera program is to improve public safety and I certainly support that effort. I think we should ensure that the program is being fairly and appropriately run.**

Please explain:

**11) Ward issues**

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

**My top priorities have been and will continue to be focusing on economic development and job creation, quality education for our children and fighting crime in the community. I have also been a strong advocate for immigration rights throughout my career and believe we need to continue to seek solutions for the country’s broken immigration system.**