

2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: Raymond A. Lopez

Ward: 15

Occupation: Skycap – Southwest Airlines

Education: St. Camillus Catholic Elementary School
St. Laurence Catholic High School
University of Illinois-Chicago

Previous political and civic experience:

Democratic Committeeman, 15th Ward (2012-present)
Chicago Five for the Homeless, Founding partner
School Board, Pope John Paull II Catholic Elementary school, member
Holy Name Society, Five Holy Martyrs Parish, member
Local School Council, John F. Kennedy High School (2001-2003)

1) City Pensions

No – I do not support restructuring/reducing benefits for former/current participants in the pension funds. The City of Chicago must meet its financial obligations. Former & current employees made or continue to make their required contributions in good faith that the city intended to meet its obligation.

Only after all possible budgetary efficiencies have been exhausted would I entertain the possibility of raising property taxes. Homeowners already feel the pain of fee increases as well the too-the-limit tax increases by other government bodies. One possible alternative would be to allow electronic gaming inside local bars/restaurants requiring a portion of revenue be dedicated to the pension funds.

2) Chicago Public School pensions

In order to ensure that Chicago Public Schools has the most funds available used in the best possible way, I support both having a top-down forensic audit of the Board of Education budget in order to maximize all avenues of efficiency. Additionally, I support the repatriation of TIF surplus funds to taxing bodies.

3) Revenue

Yes – I support the expansion of the sales tax base to include more consumer services.

No – I do not support a specific tax against non-Chicago residents.

No – I do not support an electronic financial transaction tax, or “LaSalle Street tax.”

4) Crime

Yes – I support hiring the full complement of police officers budgeted for by the City Council, which provides funding for approximately 1,000 officers.

I would be willing to entertain all options that do not harm law-abiding citizens while reinforcing accountability on all parties, especially regarding gun transfers or loss. Additionally, I would support requiring insurance for guns, similar to insurance options offered for vehicles.

5) Elected school board

No – I do not support changing to an elected school board. There is no guarantee that having more politicians in the education business will provide for better educational opportunities for students. I feel that greater support, training and responsibility for Local School Councils would have greater impact on improving the quality of education on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis.

6) Tax-increment financing districts

I support having surplus TIF funds repatriated to those original taxing bodies from which they were excluded.

7) Neighborhood economic development

Before jobs or economic development can be aggressively pursued, we must combat the image of our communities being unsafe. No business or entrepreneur will come to an area known for shootings, robbery or gang activity. I plan to work aggressively with the Chicago Police Department to foster safe, welcoming economic districts in all corners of the ward. Additionally, I will work to aggressively preserve the 250+ small- and/or family-owned businesses that exist in the ward. A 15th Ward Zoning Committee comprised of local businesses leaders will be empanelled to make decisions about business zoning & licensing.

8) Size of the Chicago City Council

I believe that the size of the City Council and function of a Chicago alderman should remain the same. It has been argued that the major factor keeping Chicago from turning into Detroit was the fact that local alderman have a direct impact on the local, regional needs of their respective wards.

9) A Chicago casino

Yes – As a concept, I support gambling expansion, specifically electronic gambling within local restaurants/bars.

10) Red light and speed cameras

Neither – Many issues have been brought to light by recent news reports citing timing variances. These variances have caused the public to lose trust in the fairness of the red-light camera program. Additionally, the intent of speed cameras have come under fire as revenue generators, not necessarily as something to protect “safety zones” around schools and parks. In order to restore complete confidence in both programs, we must consider having an outside, independent review to ensure fairness, proper placement/distribution, and establish metrics for success/failure.

11) Ward issues

The top three issues in the ward are: 1) improving the safety and security of our communities; 2) strengthening access to quality public education; and 3) improving the delivery of city services to all corners of the 15th Ward.