**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Darren Tillis

Ward: 24th

Occupation: Independent Insurance Agent , State Farm Insurance

Education: BS Finance, Illinois State University

Previous political and civic experience:

**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: NO

Please Explain:

Pension reform throughout the United States has been ineffective do controllable and uncontrollable factors. Reform has failed to reduce the overall cost of public pensions and they have failed to reduce the financial risk to taxpayers. The barriers to reform can only be removed by the federal government. The federal government should focus on making it harder for states to skip payments into their pension system, eliminate accounting rules that scare states from defined contribution retirement systems and strengthening the incentives for retirement savings.

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 any circumstance that raises taxes to fund fire and police pension

**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 support any measure that limit budget cuts, property tax increases and mass layoffs. A forensic audit should be completed to provide taxpayers with a complete overview of finances.

**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:NO

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:NO

Please explain:

Statistics show that when youth are involved in activities and adults are working, the crime and gun violence is down. By having quality community programing that focuses on developing kids and adults, we could reduce crime. Community Alternative Policing coupled with quality programing is the key.

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

I do not support any future gun control legislation that requires mandatory minimums.

**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 is important that we develop strong LSC’s , PAC’s and make a commitment to empowering parents to be active participants in their children’s educational journey.

**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: NO

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

I think alderman should have more control and decision-making ability with TIF funding within their wards. I would like to see the cost-benefit analysis completed on all TIF projects.

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

Develop a comprehensive plan that involves attracting new residents. Create a vibrant small business community that promote hiring from community. I’ve worked on several community initiatives around improving the community and promoting economic development. I’ve started a business that hires from the community, I’m a founding member to bring the Presidential Library to North Lawndale, I’ve lead and managed youth employment and professional development programs, I’ve returned properties back to tax rolls by rehabbing them and providing affordable housing options.

**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?

I think 50 members are sufficient to handle the communities in the city of Chicago. Reducing the number of alderman would be problematic for communities leading to inadequate city services and poor representation.

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No:Yes

Please explain:

I think a casino would be an added attraction for the city of Chicago and provide an added source of revenue. Many opponents feel that gambling is destructive and exploits the unreasonable and desperate. However, I’m in favor of adding this much needed revenue generator to our list of city attractions

**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 city red light camera issue was troubling from the inception, it’s time we re-evauluate the merits of the camera lights and the affect the lights are having on communities across Chicago.

**11) Ward issues**

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

1. Education
2. Jobs
3. Economic Development