**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Irma Cornier

Ward: 31st Ward

Occupation: Community Outreach Coordinator

Education: Loyola University, M.A. Social Justice & Community Development 2014

Columbia College Chicago, B.A. Media 2003

 Previous political and civic experience:

Community outreach and public event coordination through providing free accessible services to the predominant Latino population in Chicago for the Belmont Cragin, Hermosa Park, and Humboldt Park Communities. Volunteered with various homeless programs including “Hot Meals for the Homeless,” “Meals in Humboldt Park,” “Outreach to the Homeless ministry,” Collected toys, medical supplies, and toiletries for Lydia Home and orphanages both here and out of the country. Helped several seniors with public assistance programs and aided numerous veterans with their benefits and recognition. I have conducted community engagements in both the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center and Cook County Jail. Aldermanic Graduate Intern for the City of Chicago in 2014 for over 6 months. Precinct Coordinator and Poll Watcher for the former 8th District Cook County Commissioner Edwin Reyes 2014, Volunteer for Senator William Delgado in 2014, and Canvasser and Organizer for Mayoral Candidate Pastor Wilfredo De Jesus in 2011.

**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:

Many difficult decisions will have to be made. At this time the pension solution is directly tied to what the Supreme Court and the State Legislature will do, as it relates to pensions. Then a clear and long term answer can be offered for the pension and the overall financial health of the city.

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?

Only if it is the last case scenario after all other options have been exhausted.

**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 will work with other public officials to intervene dialogue with State Legislation the duties and obligations to the CTPF. We will work collaboratively to propose and come to a consensus on an overdue matter that should have been resolved decades prior to my candidacy for office.

**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.

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain: Outrageous amounts of monies are being spent funding overtime on current over exhausted police personnel. I believe increasing the police personnel will not only reduce crime, but it will allow a far more productive crime prevention team that will increase safety for residents and morale in Chicago Law Enforcement.

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

The straw purchase legislation where it prohibits the transfer of a firearm purchased from one source for another person. The Supreme Court passed a 5-4 ruling that allows strict enforcement of the federal ban on gun "straw purchases," or one person buying a gun for another. This allows safety and the stringent law and procedures a person has to undergo and stipulates in writing, "Warning: you are not the actual buyer if you are acquiring the firearm on behalf of another person. If you are not the actual buyer, the dealer cannot transfer the firearm to you."

**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:

I am in favor of an elected school board. I believe that the parents who send their children to city public schools should have a voice in who represents the school board and the interest of their children.

**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?

I believe in implementing the TIF spending in our city budgets which will allow it to become democratically controlled. I also believe that there should be a measure of performance and that the developers have to be held accountable for their projects. Moreover, we need to include the public and allow the residents to monitor city spending online through the adoption of the “Transparency 2.0.”

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

I would attract employers by helping to create a safer environment for the residents and potential business investors. I would encourage employers to hire local residents by using my aldermanic office as a conduit.

**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 believe that the City Council would be far more productive with 35 members as oppose to 50, because they can concentrate on the issues and create a concise group that will resolve matters quickly as oppose to having to wait upon 50 members. I believe this will also help reduce and alleviate the budget deficit.

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No: No

Please explain:

I do not support a casino in Chicago because it will demoralize our city and create additional problems for both the residents that reside near the casino and the city. It will promote drinking and can create an atmosphere that is not suitable for our family friendly environment in Chicago. I believe it will increase gambling addiction and crime.

**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 believe we have too many and their primary function is to generate revenue. Potentially, I might keep those cameras that have proven to prevent accidents but not those that steal from the public.

**11) Ward issues**

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

The three top issues in my ward are crime prevention, public safety and resources for our youth. Crime prevention and public safety which would help stimulate greater business activity by providing a safe environment for existing business owners and those willing to invest in our community. This would not only benefit business but would provide safety and an improved quality of life to the residents of the ward. The biggest concern I hear from the residents is that there is too much gang activity and lack of resources for our youth. There has always been a lack of resources for our youth. I would achieve it by proposing community centers and implementing a street intervention youth program.