



AFSCME Council 31
2019 Aldermanic Candidate
Questionnaire



Completed questionnaires are due no later than close of business on December 10, 2018. You may fax your responses to 312-861-1672, ATTN: Adrienne Alexander. You can scan and email your responses in as well. If you're interested in an electronic copy, email aalexander@afscme31.org.

Candidate Name Jacob Ringer

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Committee Name Ringer for Results

Committee Address 614 West Willow Street

1. BACKGROUND

Are you a member of a union? Which one(s) are/have you been affiliated with?

A: No

Have you ever held public office? If yes, during what time period (and for which office)?

A: No

What is your employment background?

A: Chief of Staff for Chief Financial Officer City of Chicago, Senior Director at Reyes Kurson, Community Development Manager at mHUB

## 2. PRIORITIES

Briefly describe your key priorities and issue(s) on which you will focus if elected or re-elected.

A: Crime is one of the top issues, if not the number one, that I hear about in every part of this ward. I think we need to rethink crime prevention in Chicago and have more police walking a beat so that they are part of our communities and able to proactively address crime while it's happening or even prevent it from happening in the first place.

As a full-time alderman, I will be active and engaged in this and other community issues, especially around, attracting local business and filling vacant storefronts. I will be transparent and responsive, bringing back weekly ward night and open office hours and proactively communicating with ward residents when there are interruptions or modifications to city services.

I will be a unifying voice in City Council, working with both new and current aldermen to explore new sources of revenue and creative solutions for more efficient government. My understanding of city finances and the challenges ahead will be invaluable to appropriately evaluate financial proposals. I have personally worked with many of the aldermen and government officials on legislation both in and around government.

## 3. RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Would you oppose any attempt to weaken the right of workers to organize unions without management interference, and to bargain collectively for wages, benefits, and working conditions?

A: Yes, as alderman I will oppose any attempts to weaken the right of workers to organize

Would you be willing to provide public support for employees seeking to organize and meeting employer resistance by (check as many as applicable):

- Speaking at a rally?
- Asking an employer to remain neutral in an organizing campaign?
- Holding a hearing to draw attention to employer abuses of worker rights?
- Sending a letter to employees in support of organizing a union?

Taxi cabs are a vital part of the city's transportation system. But recent city policy changes have had a major impact on drivers' abilities to stay afloat financially. Drivers today face increased competition from under-regulated "rideshare" competitors. Would you support the following:

A: I previously have supported the ITTA and legislative attempts to regulate rideshare in the City of Chicago

- Drivers' union organizing efforts to have a voice in city policies that govern their working conditions, profession and income?
- Efforts to ensure more balanced regulation of the "rideshare" industry?
- An ordinance that would reform the skewed rules and processes that can leave taxi drivers making less than minimum wage?
- Legislation modeled after New York City aimed at establishing minimum earnings standard for "rideshare" drivers and a cap on the number of licenses to keep supply in line with demand?

#### 4. REVENUE

Adequately funding the city's on-going operations as well as meeting its pension and other long-term debt obligations will require significant new city revenues in the next four years.

Would you be willing to support generating revenues through higher taxes and fees to maintain and improve vital public services?

If so, which revenue enhancements would you consider supporting?

- Reforming TIFs (Tax Incremental Financing) and restoring the revenues they divert to the city and school district?
- Raising the city's portion of the property tax levy?  
A: I'd need to see the language
- Broadening the sales tax to selected services (requires state legislation)?
- Instituting a city income tax (requires state legislation)?
- Other? (please describe)

A: Absolutely, Among the projects I worked on with the City's Finance team was municipal marketing. With innovative ideas, we helped deliver \$25 million of new revenues without raising taxes or cutting services and is on track to deliver more than \$200 million over 20 years. I would like to find more solutions like that.

The State of Illinois also faces huge revenue needs in order to continue funding vital services needed by Chicagoans, including education, health care, human services and public safety.

Will you support an amendment to the Illinois constitution allowing for a Fair Tax based on graduated income tax rates?

A: Yes, this is needed due to the state's current financial situation. I support a statewide progressive income tax. The governor-elect has talked about this being a priority of his and I support those efforts.

It was previously reported that banks have taken nearly \$800 million in profits from the City of Chicago and Chicago Public Schools through interest rate swap arrangements. Media reports confirm banks and industry professionals misrepresented risks and provided inadequate information in order to secure these agreements, violating rules that require banks to deal fairly and not engage in unfair practices.

Would you oppose efforts to engage in these types of contracts going forward?

A: I absolutely believe that all liability should be fully and appropriately disclosed for any city financial investments now and in the future.

## 5. RETIREES

Chicago's four pension systems are underfunded by \$28B. State law requires that the City of Chicago add an additional \$2.1B by 2023 in order to stabilize the pension funds and ensure that employees receive their constitutionally guaranteed benefits. This will require additional revenue sources.

Do you favor enacting new revenue sufficient to fund the city's pension funds according to this schedule?

A: I strongly believe that the State—which passes pension laws that Chicago taxpayers must fund—should be part of the solution. Taxing retirement income is one area that could be considered, with the pensions funds a recipient of that new revenue stream.

Will you oppose efforts to reduce the pension benefits of current or future City of Chicago employees?

A The Supreme Court has been clear and unequivocal in the right of City pensioners to receive their benefits. I believe pensions are a clear fiscal debt of the City of Chicago that must be paid for. I believe it is time to have a true and honest conversation with the public about how many decades it will take to pay those obligations.

The City of Chicago recently eliminated health care coverage long promised to retired City of Chicago employees. As a result, the City has already cut back on the subsidies it provides for such coverage, causing considerable hardship for many retirees who have only modest pensions and do not receive Social Security or, in some cases, Medicare. Will you support efforts to reestablish a program of affordable health care for City retirees?

A: I believe that healthcare is a human right and that protecting and expanding coverage under the ACA is the appropriate solution to realizing the goal of quality healthcare for all Americans.

## 6. SERVICE QUALITY

In recent city budgets, the city has responded to revenue shortfalls by reducing front-line staff through attrition and slow-hiring, mandatory furlough days, and lay-offs. The results have meant fewer services in the neighborhoods and long delays for city administrative functions for local businesses. Would you support adequate front-line worker staffing levels to maintain or improve service delivery in the city's budget?

A: The City of Chicago is the city that works and I think the city can be as good as or better than private contractors for some city services. Chicagoans deserve the best service possible. Ultimately, I believe that can be provided through an aldermanic led budget process. We need to make sure that we're keeping frontline staff at levels where service is not an issue. If we have City Council leading on the budget, we can be more transparent and collaborative on how those services are funded.

An Office of the Inspector General report found that the Chicago Police Department often assigns full-duty sworn officers to jobs that do not need to be performed by sworn personnel. This practice results in higher costs and fewer officers on the streets. Would you support policies to ensure that sworn officers are dedicated to the vital community safety roles they have been trained to carry out, and administrative functions are assigned to appropriate civilian staff?

A: Yes, crime and financial responsibility are two of my top priorities. It is time to rethink how we do crime prevention in Chicago. We need more cops walking a beat so that they are part of our communities. Residents need to know and trust those police. When cops and communities connect, they know when something is out of place and they are in a position to respond to crimes while they are happening. That connection is the best way to prevent crime from happening in the first place. This is a financially responsible solution to community policing.

In 2011, the Chicago Department of Public Health closed down six City mental health clinics and is neglecting to adequately staff the remaining clinics despite a widely documented crisis in the availability of mental health services, especially for low-income individuals. Would you support strengthening the City's network of CDPH community mental health centers to ensure access for those in need?

A: Both my wife and I have a long commitment to the night ministry and other organizations that serve at risk communities. My mother was an art therapist for people with mental and physical disabilities in the UIC system for many years. This is an issue that hits close to home with me and I support the best services possible for that community, given our current fiscal reality.

## 7. PRIVATIZATION

In recent years, Chicago has become known as the "privatization capitol" of American cities. Major public assets like the Chicago Skyway and city parking meters have been sold or leased out for upfront cash, even though the result is long-term revenue losses to the city. At the same time services now being performed by City employees are being contracted out to private firms, even when there are no significant savings realized and no improvement in services.

Would you oppose further efforts to privatize City services?

A: The City has and will continue to have a broad range of contracts with vendors that could be called “privatization.” For example, parking at the airports is managed by private parties. What has created the most egregious problems are when the rights to provide City services is literally sold to a private vendor and cash is used to offset budget crises. I believe my voice would help other aldermen evaluate these projects. As Chief of Staff to the CFO, I was deeply immersed in helping evaluate the privatization agreements for the parking meters, underground parking garages, digital network, and other contracts. We immediately posted activity reports and worked to help the public understand those contracts. Transparency is a strong disinfectant. I also help review the privatization of Midway Airport, which was considered in great detail and rejected. As part of that process, an oversight board including labor, City Council and independent community voices was tasked with reviewing every step of the process. That outside review board was also provided with its own, separate financial advisors and outside counsel. Every document was posted online for public consideration. Importantly, Chicagoans knew that the opportunity had been thoughtfully analyzed by City officials and reviewed by outside, independent experts. It represents a model for how all future contracts should be considered. I believe my experience will be of significant help to the Council. Additional regulation is no replacement for transparency, judgment and proper analysis.

Would you oppose further privatization of public assets that reduce city revenues in the long term and substitute lower wage jobs for family-supporting jobs held by city residents?

A: I believe the parking meter deal was the wrong asset, wrong deal, and wrong use of the revenue it generated. But creative solutions are needed. I think true fair competition can lead to better services, but I believe that we need to reevaluate competition both in near and long term. In recent years there has been privatization that upon further review should come back to city services

## 8. CAMPAIGN QUESTIONS

How many petition signatures did you file with to obtain your place on the ballot?

A: ~1600

Please list the names of your paid staff and consultants with their job duties.

A: Paid staff and consultants include:

[REDACTED]

How much money have you raised to date?

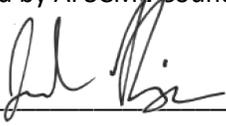
A: We have approximately \$115,000 in receipts

Who are your most notable supporters – elected officials, businesspeople, unions?

A: We are currently seeking endorsements

**SIGNATURE**

I attest that these answers represent my actions and beliefs, are now part of my public record, and may be used by AFSCME Council 31 to keep union members informed about important issues.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John B. ...", written over a horizontal line.

12/10/18

Signature

Date