

**Name \* Jacob Ringer**

**Political/civic background: \***

I am a longtime Chicago resident with deep roots in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. From the time I was old enough to walk, I understood that serving this community would be my life's work. As a kid, I went to community meetings with my parents, who taught me how to speak up and advocate for what I care about. As a teen, I volunteered for area programs that helped my severely disabled sister. Now as an adult, I seek to represent the people of this area in City Council.

I graduated as valedictorian of a private high school that helped me navigate my own learning differences. I received my undergraduate degree in finance from Tulane University. While there, I saw tragedy strike first-hand as Hurricane Katrina literally uprooted my school community. It was an education that accelerated my interest in serving others. I later completed my Master's degree in Finance from Tulane. As part of my commitment to serving others, I spent close to a year in Ghana, Myanmar and Indonesia working in schools and on community projects.

When I returned to Chicago after grad school, I knew my professional life must be rooted in helping make Chicago and our neighborhoods stronger. In 2011, I became the first chief of staff for the Chief Financial Officer of Chicago. Clearly, city finances are one of the most pressing problems for our city and I immersed myself in understanding the challenges and opportunities we face. I am proud when I hear Mayor Emanuel say that his greatest accomplishment in 8 years as Mayor was in strengthening our city finances.

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 also helped create the first Chicago Investors Conference, opening the City's books to the people that buy City bonds and providing transparency to our citizens. That idea has now become a market best practice, copied by cities around the nation. I participated in reworking the highly-disparaged parking meters contract, eliminating paid parking in our neighborhoods on Sundays and launching pay-by-cell. I also helped shine a spotlight on the unacceptable funding levels of our 4 pension funds.

After my time at the City, I went to work for a law firm, where I focused on consulting and strategy for companies ranging from start-ups and non-profits to Fortune 500 sized companies. I used my expertise to help clients with Chicago-based projects work with current Alderman and other stakeholders to guide them to make decisions more quickly and strategically. I then joined mHUB, Chicago's non-profit manufacturing incubator focused on creating jobs for Chicagoans and providing the conditions for physical product innovation to thrive. At this incubator, I was responsible for maintaining and recruiting a diverse membership and helping start-ups and others in the industry look at old problems in new ways. I left that position to focus full-time on the 43rd ward.

I have always volunteered in some capacity and after I moved back to Chicago I made an effort to get involved at the community level. I joined the Lincoln Park Auxiliary Board in 2012 and from 2016 to 2018, I served as President and am proud of the over \$500,000 raised while I was heading the organization. I served on the Executive Committee of the Center for Economic Progress from 2014 to 2018 helping over ten-thousand low-income clients get free assistance with income taxes and take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit.

**Occupation: \*** Currently committed to full time campaign for 43<sup>rd</sup> ward alderman

**Education:** Undergraduate degree in Marketing and Consumer Behavior and a master's degree in Finance both from Tulane University

**Campaign website (if applicable):** [www.Ringer4Results.com](http://www.Ringer4Results.com)

Twitter handle (if applicable): @jacobringer

Facebook page (if applicable): <https://www.facebook.com/Ringer4Results>

Instagram page (if applicable): <https://www.instagram.com/ringer4results/>

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Please write your responses in the field directly below each question.

### Top priorities

**What are the top three priorities for your ward? \***

Crime is one of the top issues, if not the number one issue, 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.

We also need to revitalize the Lincoln Park and Old Town neighborhoods and focus on growth and viability of small and local businesses. As a full-time alderman, I will be on the ground talking with businesses, communicating with other officials and starting a dialogue on how we can fill vacant storefronts and encourage commerce in our ward especially through appropriate economic development and infrastructure. I believe that infrastructure is the number one priority for the Lincoln Yards Development. I've been advocating for an east-west bridge at Armitage for several years now and, while I'm excited to see that in current plans, I believe that a stadium puts too much strain on current or even proposed infrastructure. I think that even limited office space would be a better use than a stadium that will strain the local infrastructure, but a better use would be additional green space. This is why I was the first, and I believe to date, only person to talk to the Chicago Park District about park plans in this area several months ago.

I understand the city's finances in and out from my time working with the CFO of the City and 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 and know how to communicate and reach consensus.

I will be transparent and responsive, bringing back weekly ward night and open office hours to hear from businesses, developers and residents, and I will proactively communicate with ward residents when there are interruptions or modifications to city services.

### Recent civic work

**Please tell us what you have done in the last two years to serve the city, your neighborhood or a civic organization. Please be specific. \***

I have served as the President of the Lincoln Park Zoo Auxiliary Board for the last two years and in that role, I also served as an Ex Officio trustee of the Zoo's board of directors. Along with serving the Lincoln Park Zoo, I have served on the Executive Community for the Center for Economic Progress since 2014.

This culminated in a merging of organizations this past year between the Center for Economic progress and Ladder Up, which will now be one of the top ten largest earned income tax credit filer providers in the country. I also regularly attend neighborhood CAPS meetings for every beat in the 43rd ward and have been paying close attention to the Lincoln Yard's developments, community meetings, TIF and North Branch framework meetings preceding it. In the past, I have served on the Night Ministry's Associate Board and worked with Rags of Honor. While, I am not yet a CPS parent, I've also attended multiple LSC meetings throughout the ward to understand the challenges.

## Pensions

**Chicago is on the hook for \$42 billion in unfunded pension liabilities, which works out to \$35,000 for every household. Those pensions, in the language of the Illinois Constitution, "shall not be diminished or impaired." Should the state Constitution be amended to allow a reduction in pension benefits for current city employees or retirees? How about reducing pension benefits for new employees? Please explain. \***

I strongly believe that the State – which passes pension laws that Chicago taxpayers must fund – should be part of the solution. The City Council does not control the Illinois State Constitution or pension laws directly. When it comes to the idea of being able to negotiate future COLA, if the constitution were changed, that is something I would consider. However, under the current constitution, the Supreme Court has been clear and unequivocal in the right of City pensioners to receive their benefits. Until and unless that changes, pensions are a clear fiscal debt that the City of Chicago must pay for. The only way out of this problem is to bring in new revenue.

I believe that pension obligation bonds are false promises and not fiscally responsible. If the pension funds were to lose every cent of the pension obligation bond, tax payers of Chicago would still be on the hook to pay for these obligations. Furthermore, the claimed arbitrage play is based on a rate of return set by the pension funds that has decreased in recent years and could fall even lower, thus eliminating all savings.

## Revenue

**Of the following often proposed sources of new revenue for Chicago, which of the following do you favor, and why? A Chicago casino, legalized and taxed recreational marijuana, a LaSalle Street tax, a commuter tax, a property tax increase, a municipal sales tax increase, a real estate transfer tax increase, video gambling. \***  
**What other sources of new revenue do you favor or oppose? \***

I believe that small property owners and local businesses have been taxed enough. While I understand we need revenue to run the City of Chicago, I don't think that's the answer and I would only look to property taxes as a last resort. I worked on one of the only projects over the last decade that brought additional revenue to the city without raising fines, taxes, or fees for services. One of my projects I spearheaded at the city was the creation of digital billboards on the expressway which will raise more than 200 million dollars over 20 years. My unique approach to problem-solving helped the city to find this new revenue stream without raising taxes fines or fees. I'd like to find more solutions like that.

When it comes to new revenue streams, I am a believer that we need to look at every possibility, including a casino, recreational marijuana, taxing retirement income video gambling, a commuter tax, and municipal marketing before we look at property taxes as a solution.

Split answer: which ones?

I believe that small property owners and local businesses have been taxed enough. While I understand we need revenue to run the City of Chicago, I don't think that's the answer and I would only look to property taxes as a last resort. I worked on one of the only projects over the last decade that brought additional revenue to the city without raising fines, taxes, or fees for services and, continuing on that trend, I would support a casino, recreational marijuana, taxing retirement income, video gambling, and municipal marketing and a commuter tax.

Split answer: New revenue?

When it comes to new revenue streams, I am a believer that we need to look at every possibility. One of my projects I spearheaded at the city was the creation of digital billboards on the expressway which will raise more than 200 million dollars over 20 years. My unique approach to problem-solving helped the city to find this new revenue stream without raising taxes, fines or fees. I'd like to find more solutions like that before we look at property taxes as a solution.

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## TIFs

**Tax-increment financing districts are a primary economic development tool for Chicago. In a TIF district, taxes from the growth of property values are set aside for 23 years to be used to support public projects and private development. What changes do you favor, if any, in Chicago's TIF program? \***

Each TIF needs to be individually and continually evaluated. We have the Red Purple Modernization TIF in this ward, which is being used in a way that it was designed for and I support that TIF because it is functioning as an economic development tool as intended. I am an advocate for infrastructure and I believe that TIFs can be a viable funding mechanism for public infrastructure.

However, I believe we must manage TIFs thoughtfully and responsibly. They should only be used to spur growth, thereby creating revenue that would not have otherwise existed. I believe TIF projects, such as the newly considered Courtland Clybourne Corridor TIF, should be defined before they are approved so we understand the scope of what would be covered within the TIF. The Courtland Clybourne Corridor TIF is unique in that the developer is financing and building the infrastructure and using the TIF for repayment so the details of what falls within the TIF should be very clear. I also believe all TIFs should expire upon completion of the project rather than on an arbitrary timescale.

## Aldermanic power

**What will you do to rein in aldermanic prerogative? \***

This will be a historic election for Chicago in that it will likely result in a majority freshman and second term city council. With this new council makeup and a new mayor, now is the opportunity to work to make changes to aldermanic prerogative to better serve the city while protecting the individuality of each ward.

## Police reform

**The City of Chicago has entered into a federally monitored consent decree to overhaul the training and practices of the Chicago Police Department. Civil libertarians say it is long overdue, but others say it is unnecessary and could make it tougher for the police to do their job. What's your view? \***

I support an ordinance codifying the provisions of the consent decree into law. I believe that the majority of police officers are hardworking and fair and have nothing to fear from improved training and oversight. This policy supports those officers and their relationship with the communities they serve by restoring the public trust and removing the bad apples that undermine or abuse that relationship.

## Guns

**What should Chicago do to reduce the number of illegal guns? \***

I believe the best way to reduce the illegal number of guns is to focus on state legislation to regulate all gun dealers. This includes training of employees to recognize illegal straw sales before they occur. Additionally, 60% of illegal guns recovered in Chicago come from outside Illinois, a strong national background check system would help reduce this number. I also support stricter security for train yards. As a transit hub, Chicago should know what is transiting through our city. Regulations alone won't end our problems with gun violence--we need to create job training and education opportunities to prevent individuals from becoming involved in crime before they escalate to firearms.

## Schools

**What is the appropriate role of charter schools within the Chicago Public Schools system? \***  
**Should the Chicago Board of Education be solely appointed by the mayor, as is now the case? \***  
**Or should Chicago switch to an elected school board or some hybrid? \***

I believe there should be a moratorium on additional charter schools. I support true planning for growth of our communities and planning our schools to grow with our communities instead of being a hindrance to that growth. Though there are no charter schools in the 43<sup>rd</sup> ward, I believe that there is a place for charter schools within the system of public schools as incubators and testing grounds for innovation that can then be applied system-wide. I do not believe that charter schools should be used as a replacement for public schools as this leads to divestment from public education and erosion of uniform educational standards. While I do not support expansion of charters, I do support currently operating institutions that our communities are relying on as long as those charters are meeting academic standards.

## Affordable housing

**Is there enough affordable housing in your ward? Please explain. \***

The reality is no. There are long-time residents in this ward who can't afford to live in their neighborhood anymore. There are college students who aren't able to live near the colleges they attend. While the definition of affordable housing may vary, objectively there is not enough affordable housing in our ward.

## Immigration

**Chicago, by ordinance, is an official "welcoming city." This means the Chicago police are generally prohibited from detaining undocumented immigrants on behalf of federal immigration authorities. What's your position on this policy? What more — or less — should be done with respect to undocumented immigrants who live in Chicago? \***

We need to address immigration on a federal level. The current policies of the presidential administration are not the answer. I support Chicago as a welcoming city and believe we need to do more to support refugees including helping them to access housing and healthcare.

## Ethics

**Should the inspector general have the power to audit and review City Council programs, operations and committees? Why or why not? \***

Yes. I support a fully funded and independent Inspector General.

**Would you employ, or have you employed, staff in your office who have outside jobs or contracts with entities that do business with the city? If so, please explain. \***

No. I do not currently and have no intention to do so.

## Role model

**Is there a past or current alderman whom you model yourself after, or would model yourself after, or take inspiration from? Please explain. \***

I respect Alderman Pawar as he has been an independent voice on the City Council. We don't necessarily share all the same positions but his commitment to the residents of his ward and openness and accessibility to the residents of his ward is something that I would like to emulate.