

Dear Candidate:

The League of Women Voters of Chicago is a nearly 100-year-old non-partisan education and advocacy organization whose primary goal is to ensure that all citizens are informed voters.

In preparation for the 2019 Municipal Elections, the League is asking all candidates for elective office to complete a brief questionnaire that gathers information voters may use to evaluate the candidates' views and positions.

Answers to these questions will appear in the Illinois Voter Guide, a service provided by the League of Women Voters of Illinois that allows constituents in every ward to learn about the individuals who are running for city offices and help voters make their decision at the ballot box.

You may respond to the questions below in a direct reply to this email or, if you prefer, you may send the answers as a separate document to [President@LWVChicago.org](mailto:President@LWVChicago.org). In either case, please include your name with your responses.

1. Should Chicago have the option of public financing of municipal elections as other major cities do? Why or why not?

Response: Yes, Absolutely. That's why I've signed on to Common Cause's pledge to establish a publicly-funded campaign finance system for aldermanic races. I don't believe its good practice to accept donations from entities seeking permits, zoning changes etc., and limits on campaign contributions mostly serve to protect incumbents. In addition, I have committed not to accept contributions from mayoral candidates or from major entities seeking government relief.

I recognize that self-imposing these limitations now in the absence of such a system while incumbent candidates don't or won't often serves their fundraising advantage. Campaign contributions are a reality of running for office and until or unless we have public financing of elections, upstart campaigns like mine will always be at a disadvantage. If everyone had the same resources, we would be able to have fair comparisons of campaign positions based upon the merits of those positions rather than who can leverage more cash from big donors and special interests.

2. What steps would you take to address the severe lack of affordable housing across the city?

Response: I recently signed the People First pledge where I supported limits on aldermanic prerogative for affordable housing decisions because I support the goals of protecting affordable housing stock and improving housing security across the City as a solution to rising rents and economic inequality in Chicago. Increasing affordable housing stock and overall housing density are two ways to reduce pressure on rising rents and I support policies to achieve those outcomes. I support a mandate for

affordable housing as part of developments and "in lieu of" fees only if the funds raised are used for actual affordable construction. For example, we have such a shortage of housing at this point and those funds can build more housing in other areas than it can here. We should have a mix of incentives for developers to use their skills to support CHA for building more affordable units on vacant land on and offsite and policies to ensure that there is an adequate supply of affordable family sized units available to families in the Section 8 program.

Lastly, we need to work on economic and racial segregation, and to grow through broad-based economic development that will increase incomes so that more people can afford housing.

I may have specific policy differences about how to achieve these goals, but I will always be listening and open to practical ideas to address this important issue.

2a) One option for addressing this problem is to change the way affordable housing decisions are made. Would you agree to shift the responsibility for locating affordable housing units from the ward level to the city level? Please explain your answer.

Response: Yes. This was one of the tenets of the People First Pledge that I signed. I believe that we should limit individual aldermen's ability to block/unduly influence decisions regarding affordable housing because it has been a historic driver of racial segregation in housing across the City.

3. Do you believe that high-quality neighborhood schools should be an option for all students in their neighborhoods? If you do, and if they are not available in all neighborhoods, what steps need to be taken to assure that they are?

Response: I believe that every child in Chicago should be able to attend a high-quality neighborhood school and that means local solutions to local school issues. For example, I am happy to say that we have all tier 1 schools in our ward, but we still have local challenges. Our neighborhood schools are nearing capacity and growing at 3% per year. With the prospect of a major influx of students coming with the Lincoln Yards development, we will need a new public school to increase capacity. In the face of declining enrollment across the City, it's easy for local concerns like these to get lost in the larger conversation around CPS priorities.

We also need some district-wide changes to address systemic issues. We need to make getting access to good schools easier for parents and kids from every neighborhood. I favor a City-wide moratorium on new charter schools until there is a complete and detailed assessment of our current school system. The public deserves to know the population of our schools, the condition of our building facilities, the capacity of the system, the number of seats in charters and the educational outcomes school-by-school.

Standardizing programming so students can get the best education in their neighborhood school, with uniform performance standards and equal funding, would go a long way to addressing disparities in educational outcomes.

3a) Another option is to place a moratorium on the creation or expansion of charter schools. Would you support this option?

Response: 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 43rd 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 universal academic standards.

4. Enrollment in Chicago Public Schools declined significantly in 2018 and 2017, continuing a trend that began in 2003. What steps, if any, would you take to avoid closing more schools?

Response: As a father and parent of 2 boys, Leo (age 3) and Henry (age 1), I've already been active and engaged on this issue and I frequently attend Local School Council meetings. I should first note that while overall CPS enrollment has declined, the neighborhood schools in the 43rd ward are facing the opposite problem. Our schools are nearing capacity with enrollment increasing at 3% per year.

With the prospect of major development at Lincoln Yards, I'm concerned that there may not be the space for all of the children in my ward to go to their neighborhood school unless plans and funding are approved for more schools in this area. I think that local concerns like these get lost in the larger narrative around education policy in Chicago.

I believe that, regardless of whether a school stays open or closes, every child in Chicago should be able to attend a high-quality neighborhood school and that means local solutions to increasing or decreasing enrollment.

What is most important is that we have aldermen who are proactive in planning and forethought. I do not support the closing of schools for short-term budget gains that create long-term problems. We need a five-year plan to address local needs in every ward.

4a) How would you achieve greater use of underused school facilities in areas with declining populations?

Response: I believe my local school plans will go a long way toward addressing this issue. We need to better match facilities with neighborhood needs. With schools in my ward close to capacity, the concern isn't underused facilities, it's where to put the students that are coming down the pike. In other wards, solutions like public private partnerships or inviting existing charters or private schools to share space could be part of the solution while bringing in much needed revenue. Local school plans will also have the added benefit of improving standards across CPS and attracting more parents to stay in the city and send their kids to high quality neighborhood public schools. One thing we can do district-wide is to update our building codes to reflect modern building standards. We shouldn't be building to cold war-era infrastructure standards.

5. How would you address the issue of lead water pipe service lines and the safety of the water supply to homes and public and private buildings?

Response: I believe we should expand the Department of Water Managements' current residential lead testing program to better understand the size and scale of the problem, but we should not wait on full understanding to start solving it. We need a clear plan in place with deadline for replacement of all lead water mains. I am open to the idea of funding such a plan with rate increases, incentivizing homeowners to replace their pipes leading to the main especially while the streets are open for water main replacement and other infrastructure projects, or a combination of funding sources. I also believe that federal and state funding should be part of the solution.

Thank you for your participation, Catherine Mardikes, LWV Chicago, Acting President