

Windy City Times

YOUR NAME: Jacob Ringer INCUMBENT? NO

OFFICE SOUGHT: Alderman WARD (if appropriate): 43rd

1) Do you have or would you install a written policy in your office regarding sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination?

I have implemented a policy in line with the IL DEM County Chairs Association and made clear to my staff that my campaign will not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

2) Have you started or would you start sensitivity training for your staff members regarding LGBT-related issues?

Yes, if elected, I will ensure that my staff has all appropriate sensitivity training.

3) Have you taken or would you take any steps to further HIV/AIDS treatment and education programs? If so, what are those measures?

My wife Dana and I have long been involved in the Night Ministry where I helped start the associate board and Dana recently joined its Board of Directors. As part of its mission to support homeless individuals and accepting them as they are, the Night Ministry provides mobile health services 6 nights a week including rapid HIV testing. In addition to my support of Night Ministry, I will support access to health centers that provide preventive health care, including reproductive health care, especially to underserved communities. This includes in school health centers and comprehensive sexual health education in schools. There is no reason and no excuse not to provide basic healthcare and education in our modern society and in a city as prosperous as ours.

4) What is your position on abortion as it pertains to the law?

I absolutely support a woman's right to choose, I believe this is settled law and should be protected under state laws in case that ever changes.

5) What is your position regarding funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and education?

I believe we need to adequately fund HIV/AIDS treatment and education with a focus on historically underserved communities in an evidence-based approach with the aim of reducing infection rates and locating clinics in areas of greatest need.

6) Do you favor marriage equality (marriage between two people of the same gender)?

Yes

7) Do you favor hate-crimes legislation that increases penalties for crimes committed based on the sexual orientation or gender identity of the person attacked?

Yes

8) Do you believe that LGBT individuals should become foster parents if they are qualified?

Yes

9) Do you believe that LGBT individuals have the right to adopt children if they are qualified?

Yes

10) What are your thoughts on a school that would be designed specifically for LGBT students, much like the Harvey Milk School in New York City?

I am in favor of local five-year school plans addressing the needs and desires of local school communities and I think that an LGBT school is a possibility in that context. In any event, we must ensure that we have inclusive curriculum and programming throughout the district to ensure that LGBT students feel welcome throughout CPS.

11) Would you advocate for mandatory anti-bullying policies/training in Chicago public schools?

Yes

12) Would you advocate for mandatory LGBT-inclusive education in Chicago public schools starting in middle school?

Yes

13) Would you advocate for mandatory comprehensive, LGBT-inclusive and age-appropriate sex education in Chicago public schools starting in middle school?

Yes

14) What would you recommend to have a better relationship between police and the citizens they serve, including people of color and the transgender community?

I support an ordinance codifying into law the provisions of the consent decree which implements a suite of ideas to effectively address bad conduct and would go a long way toward improving perception of CPD in the community.

The City and officers shouldn't be operating under expired contracts. I support evaluating and implementing improved use-of-force guidelines, department-wide de-escalation training, analysis and investigation of officer-involved shootings, and researching new ways to reduce future incidents.

I believe the majority of police officers are hardworking and fair and should have nothing to fear from improved training and oversight. Most officers have the mindset of protecting and honorably serving their communities and I'll support CPD in that goal. These policies support those officers' relationship with the communities they serve by restoring public trust and removing bad apples that undermine or abuse that relationship. These policies enshrined in a contract and public ordinance would lead to positive changes internally and begin to restore the police-community relationship. We need these provisions to weed out bad apples that give good

cops a bad reputation. I also support removing side jobs and incomes that cause conflicts of interests for all public officials including police and aldermen.

15) What do you think is the ideal minimum wage for the city of Chicago?

Our governor-elect has stated that he will act on this in his first six months and I hope that he is successful because a statewide solution would be ideal. As alderman, I will seek a balanced approach to wage growth to assure we remain competitive with our neighboring communities and national competitors. The best plan for the working men and women of our City is creating, protecting and preserving a healthy, growing economy.

16) How do you propose to handle the crime rate in Chicago, especially in minority neighborhoods?

Crime is the number one issue I hear from people in my ward when I'm knocking doors. I understand that my neighborhood is not the epicenter of violent crime in Chicago, but we are not immune to the problems faced across the city. The problem we have now is a fundamental change in the sort of crime we're seeing in this neighborhood. What we're seeing today feels different because now it's a gun in your face and people are afraid to visit a neighbor after dark or even walk the dog in broad daylight.

We deserve safer neighborhoods and that means having more officers assigned to walk a beat. We need true community policing back in Chicago. We should be fighting for more resources to address crime. Whenever officers are put in our district it is unclear how long they'll stay here. I believe we need more police and better training as part of a comprehensive strategy of true community policing with a data-driven approach. There's a major disconnect between our police and the communities they serve and CPD has even identified this is an issue that is hindering recruitment. We should be doing more to build that relationship.

As alderman, I will demand more police in our budget, make sure they have the resources they need to do their job, and that there is continuity in those assignments so that personnel assigned to a community, are accountable to the community. I know my mail man, I know what sports teams he cheers for, my three year-old son knows our street sweeper but we don't know our police. Simply put, we need more police walking a beat and playing a bigger role in our communities. Beat cops, either plainclothes or in uniform, know when something is out of place and are in a better position to respond to crimes while they are happening and, more importantly, prevent it from happening in the first place. This real community policing strategy will address major crimes and have the added benefit of making sure police are ready and available to address petty crimes like porch pirates and broken car windows.

We can also address major crime by going after the illegal guns that fuel it. We must start with the understanding that 60% of illegal guns recovered in Chicago come from outside Illinois and we will not be able to fully address this issue until national politicians step up to pass real gun control with a strong national background check system. Since we can't wait until that happens, in the meantime we need to act locally. I believe the best way to reduce the number illegal of guns is to focus on state legislation to regulate all gun dealers including requirements for training of employees to recognize illegal straw sales before they occur. Lastly, as a transit hub, we need more and better security at our train yards to ensure that legal cargo stays legal and doesn't flow into the black market.

We should do all of this and more and, as alderman, I will support creative solutions to protect our City from unscrupulous out-of-state gun sellers and traffickers. However, regulations alone won't end our problems with gun violence--we need to create job training and educational opportunities and support economic development to prevent individuals from becoming involved in crime before it escalates to firearms.

17) What do you feel is the biggest financial problem facing Chicago? How do you propose to tackle that problem?

This year marked the last installment, \$63 million, of the \$589 million property tax increase voted on by the City Council in 2016. There is more pain to come; The City owes an additional \$586 million annually to pension funds by 2022. In my time at the office of the Chief Financial Officer of the City I helped shine a spotlight on the unacceptable funding levels of our 4 pension funds and I understand this issue and the challenges we face. I worked with the first actuaries ever hired in the City of Chicago, unfortunately that was in 2011.

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. 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 have a track record of delivering alternative revenue and I am the only candidate running anywhere in the City of Chicago who has delivered ongoing revenue without raising taxes, fines and fees. I believe Chicago needs new revenue, but I don't believe that it should be more property taxes and regressive fees and fines. We need to find a way to finance City infrastructure projects, meet our debt obligations and support economic development without putting more strain on homeowners and other low-income residents already struggling under recent tax increases. While I understand we need revenue to run the City of Chicago, I would only look to property taxes as a last resort.

When it comes to new revenue streams, I am a believer that we need to look at every possibility to find alternative revenue sources like the digital billboard project I spearheaded when I worked for the City. That project is projected to bring in \$200 million over 20 years without reaching deeper into the pockets of Chicago residents. Some ideas for alternative revenue sources include a casino, recreational marijuana, taxing retirement income, video gambling, a commuter tax, and municipal marketing. I also believe that there are potential partial privatization deals that could lead to smart investment by the City.

City Council must exercise strong public oversight to ensure that any revenue-generating proposals are considered transparently, and the final outcomes are in the best interests of the City and all its residents. I think my understanding of City finances and the challenges ahead will be invaluable to appropriately evaluate future financial proposals. 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 better government.

18) Some studies show that 40 percent of homeless youth are LGBTQ. What would you do to provide more resources for prevention, education and services for the entire homeless youth population?

We must protect and expand programs and services that serve the homeless and LGBTQ youth and evaluate current programs and non-profit partners that serve the general population of homeless individuals to ensure that LGBTQ youth have equal access to support services. Organizations and services like the Night Ministry and the Crib which provides emergency shelter for LGBTQ youth are the model for supportive services are leading the way on this issue. We must also work to protect affordable housing and to ensure that there isn't discrimination against the LGBTQ community in City services.

19) Are any members of your current staff—either campaign or general office personnel—openly LGBT?

I haven't asked and don't intend to, but if they are that's fine with me.

20) Please list any and all experience you have on LGBT-related issues.

I have been very active in my support of vulnerable LGBTQ individuals through my work and support of the Night Ministry and The Crib, an emergency shelter for at risk LGBTQ youth. All my life, I have known and been around people in the LGBTQ community and it has never been a concern for me or my family. As an artist, my mother's work often intersected with LGBTQ individuals and she and my father raised us to respect all people regardless of their sexuality. I am proud to say that the message took, and I have even stood up in a same sex wedding for a very close friend.

21) What do you feel is the biggest problem facing the LGBT community today?

I think the biggest problem facing LGBTQ community is continued discrimination and a backlash against recent victories on issues like marriage equality. I believe that the march of history is toward greater inclusiveness and understanding. However, we must be vigilant to protect social and legal victories like these by passing supporting local and state legislation so that at least our Illinois and Chicago LGBTQ communities can weather the storm when administrations change.