

IVI-IPO 2012 GENERAL ASSEMBLY QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 1

DATE 12/19/2011 DISTRICT: 7th PARTY: Democratic
NAME: Beyonca Johnson
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CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Marvin Harrison
NUMBER OF PETITION SIGNATURES FILED: 1570 NUMBER REQUIRED: 500

A) Elective or appointive public or party offices previously held including dates. N/A

B) Other elective offices for which you have been a candidate. N/A

C) What is your primary occupation? Business Owner of Credit/Financial Firm

D) Briefly list your civic activities of the past ten years. Volunteer with several Non for Profits Organizations (The Support Group, Breaking Ground) Youth mentoring, Feed the homeless

E) What subjects have you studied and what experience have you had which will be most helpful to you in the office you seek? Received Bachelors at DeVry in Computer Info Systems studied Management

F) What candidates have you supported in past elections? Please be specific in describing your role in each campaign. State Rep.

LaShawn K. Ford (Web designer, graphic arts, communications)
G) Please list all endorsements you have received so far. NONE

H) As concisely as possible, please state why you feel you should be endorsed over the other candidate(s). What goals for the office you seek are most important to you personally? SEE attached document

I) What is your campaign budget? How much have you raised to date? \$65,000 budget / approximately \$3,000

J) How many people are on your campaign staff? How many volunteers are on your list? 5 on staff, 30+ volunteers

H) As concisely as possible, please state why you feel you should be endorsed over the other candidate(s). What goals for the office you seek are most important to you personally?

I have experience at building something new from nothing: my business Credit Chx Corp. I can take a vision and turn it into a plan and then execute the plan. I understand the top issues facing the district are jobs and education. I believe my plan for how to address these issues is practical and will get more results than my opponents. I also think my plan to remain accessible and accountable is what's needed across Illinois, representatives focused on their communities, not where to get campaign contributions.

I will mention one of my opponents by name: Emanuel "Chris" Welch. He's a liar. He can tell you everything you want to hear and you should not support him. He has the kind of charm that makes a good first impression, but don't be fooled. Research his record. Interview people who have dealt with him. Welch is bad news.

Dear IVI-IPO,

Below is my response to your candidate questionnaire. I have taken the liberty of organizing the issues in a way that reflects my priorities.

I am a first time candidate, so my thinking is evolving. I want to balance staying true to who I am—my principles and life experience—with the ability to grow intellectually as I learn more about issues.

Jobs: my #1 priority

I aspire to represent a district that is entirely in suburban Cook County. It includes River Forest and La Grange Park, particularly affluent suburbs, on the high end and Bellwood and Maywood, economically challenged communities, on the low end.

The federal government

Because the State of Illinois has limited power to borrow money, it cannot take the bold action the federal government can and should to stimulate the economy and create jobs. I am dissatisfied with what state and local officials have done so far to push the federal government to take action. I will criticize Congress and the President. When the banks needed government money to avoid suffering the consequences of their own bad decisions, there was an endless amount of money available instantly. But when it comes to creating and protecting middle-class jobs, all of a sudden politicians and media pundits get religion about "excessive government spending". I will call for the federal government to act to create and protect middle-class jobs. And I will ask other state and local officials to join me.

Formal powers of state government

To the extent I get to set the spending priorities in my district, my priority is programs that help people get jobs.

While the job scene is horrible for older workers, younger workers, workers with less than a bachelor's degree, African-Americans and Latinos, there are some jobs out there. And there are some opportunities to create small businesses. I want to make sure the people in my communities have the best chance of taking advantage of the opportunities that are available.

Many of the programs that exist already are in the city. People in the suburbs need to get word about what's already available. But let's see what can be done to provide more of these services to people in western Cook County near where they live.

Informal powers of the office

I do not intend to wait until I assume office to help people with jobs. I want to start a weekly support group that meets at my business where people can meet for encouragement, information on what employers are hiring and tips about getting interviews and making a positive impression during interviews.

Not working is demoralizing. These people need support on a personal level, something government isn't good at providing.

(I hope this addresses question #83: "What are your proposals to help people who do not qualify for TANF or for unemployment benefits?")

Education: #2 priority

Three problem districts

My district includes four high school districts and twice as many elementary school districts. Mostly these districts are well-funded. And with three exceptions the districts perform at least reasonably well. The three problem school districts are District 88 (an elementary school district which serves Bellwood, Stone Park and small parts of other communities), District 89 (an elementary school district which serves Maywood and Melrose Park) and District 209, Proviso Township High Schools. Emanuel "Chris" Welch, one of my opponents, has been president of the board of education at District 209 for the last decade. He's also billed District 88 for hundreds of thousands in legal bills.

The main problem facing Districts 88, 89 and 209 is not a lack of funding, but machine politics. The solution is not more money, but more organizing and building trust in the community.

Organizing to improve education

We need to build two types of organizations to remove machine politics from our schools. We need a watchdog organization that documents the bad behavior of the machine politicians and their cronies.

And we need to build organizations that will recruit independent school board candidates capable of governing the schools properly and provide the political muscle to get the independent candidates elected.

As my volunteers go door to door, we will be asking for the contact information to build the organizations to get our schools back to their main purpose, educating students.

Welch pilfers from taxpayers

It would be nice if we got some support from the Cook County State's Attorney and the U.S. Attorney. Welch recently tried to get District 209 to pay a legal settlement on a personal matter. He also tried to pass \$40,000 in personal legal bills to District 209. The payments were approved by Welch's majority, but rejected by the State Board of Elections representative that is providing oversight. The district has been financially mismanaged, hence the oversight.

Welch tried to spend \$440,000 of money taxpayers provided for education to settle his personal legal problems. Last I checked, Proviso citizens pay taxes that pay the salaries at the State's Attorney's office and at the Justice Department. It's not too much to expect Anita Alvarez and Patrick Fitzgerald to prosecute someone who tries to steal from Proviso taxpayers and students.

48. Will you vote to increase state funding to at least 50% of public education costs?
The school districts in my representative district are generally funded well by state and national standards.

I'm for getting school districts on the low end a fair shake. But part of the equation needs to be accountability that local districts are wasting money.

I'm going to work with the teachers unions and other advocacy organizations to get education properly funded, but it those same organizations need to work with people in my communities to expel the machine politics and parasitic politicians from school districts in my communities.

49. Do you support vouchers or other means of public funding for private or parochial schools?
I favor a quality public education being available to children across Illinois. Any voucher program that weakens the commitment to quality public education is unacceptable. Again, this is a two-way street. I'm going to stand with the teachers unions, but I expect the teachers unions to stand with the students and taxpayers of my communities in ridding our schools of the machine politics that have taken root there.

50. Do you support public funding of charter or contract schools?
I favor a quality public education being available to all children across Illinois. Generally, I am suspicious that "alternatives" to traditional public education are some rich person's scheme to undermine the unions that represent teachers and other unionized school employees.

51. Do you support abolition of the General Assembly scholarship fund?

I would rather have more money for staff that's accountable to me than have the scholarship program. I lean toward abolishing the program. But until it's abolished, I'm going to use it to benefit my constituents.

Service: being accessible and accountable (#3 campaign issue)

Here's what I've learned about politics from activists who have been involved in state and local politics longer than I. Politicians who got started as outsiders and reformers often become insiders after being inside the system.

Fundraising

I am determined to stay accessible to the people of my district's communities while I am in office. How?

During this primary election I will raise money from any legal source, but once I win the primary on March 20, 2012, I am going to form a committee of my supporters to figure a set of rules about fundraising that will keep me accountable. I will not raise money from lobbyists. I will not raise money from lawyers who work at firms that bill state and local government. I will limit my fundraising from politicians from communities in my district. I am considering a complete ban on raising funds from politicians outside my district. I am considering a complete ban on raising political action committee (PAC) money.

I realize I'm going to have to spend more time raising small contributions. I'm willing to do this because I want to be accountable and accessible. I'm not getting into politics to become drinking buddies with bank lobbyists.

Keeping the communities organized

How can we keep politicians accountable? It's simple, in theory. If our communities are organized, politicians will feel resistance from the people as soon as the politician starts voting against the people and with the big money interest groups.

I will help build the organizations that will hold the politicians accountable. See what I wrote on education.

After building these organizations, I want to step away. I don't want to form multiple chapters of the Beyonca Johnson fan club. I want organizations that will hold public officials accountable from the most local issues to national and international issues.

15. Do you support dollar limits on campaign contributions? Yes

20. Will you accept or have you accepted campaign donations from current or potential suppliers, employees, or outside contractors?

I expect my committee will create rules that prevent contributions from these parties.

16. Do you support dollar limits on political committee transfers? Yes

17. Do you support the same limits on leadership PACs as on candidate PACs? Yes.

18. Do you support dollar limits on campaign expenditures? Yes.

I do believe individual legislators have more power than they believe. If I succeed in raising enough money to get re-elected while eschewing the normal sources of campaign funds, groups like IVI-IPO should challenge other representatives and senators, especially from “safe” districts to follow suit.

Other areas raised by IVI-IPO

Civil Rights & Civil Liberties

52. Do you support Affirmative Action?

Yes. Affirmative Action is part of how we create opportunity in America. We should strive to create a society where there is more opportunity from one generation to the next.

54. Do you favor legislation legalizing civil marriage between two people of the same gender?

I favor having the law reflect what is happening in people's lives. Move On has been pushing a video of an Iowan testifying in that state's legislature. He's right. People form relationships based on what they want. The laws of the state should be kept current with the lives people are leading.

56. Do you support legislation to prohibit discrimination in housing against unmarried individuals residing together?

If you aren't free to have sex in your own home with the person you choose in the way that works for you, you aren't free. To me, this right is implied in the Bill of Rights, Fourth Amendment and all.

57. Do you support the decriminalization of Marijuana?

Yes. In fact, I'm with Peter Tosh. Legalize it.

55. Do you support mandatory AIDS testing for insurance or employment?

My understanding is that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act prohibits denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions. To the extent insurers are allowed to set rates based on health conditions, it seems like AIDS should be treated like other comparable medical conditions.

60. Should state police be allowed to stop vehicle operators to test for DUI on grounds other than probable cause?

I support the Bill of Rights. People should be able to move in public unmolested by law enforcement.

61. Would you support legislation to include data on pedestrian, as well as motor vehicle, stops by police for the purpose of gathering statistics on racial profiling?

I have witnessed some egregiously bad behavior by police officers toward Black teenage males. I'm open to gathering more data, but we need to professionalize law enforcement in Illinois. Cops mistreating Blacks isn't a secret. The people who are in denial aren't going to change their minds based on more

data. We need better training and better screening who goes into law enforcement. Sadists and people who have authority issues should be screened out.

Taxes and Economic Policy

28. Do you support amending the constitution to institute a graduated income tax?

I favor eliminating all tax breaks until the Illinois Constitution is amended on this point. Illinois' tax code has become absurdly unfair.

Upon being sworn into the General Assembly I will write a letter to Speaker Madigan and Senate President Cullerton calling for a vote on amending the Illinois Constitution to eliminate the flat tax requirement. I will personally ask every member of the General Assembly to be a signatory to the letter. The people will be able to see which senators and representatives joined me and which refused.

This vote should be held by July 31, 2013. Challengers should have time to organize against senators and representatives who resist amending the Illinois Constitution on this point.

38. How would you fully fund the state pension systems?

Right now the pension system is being fixed by having younger citizens pay higher taxes and having younger workers join inferior pension programs. The younger workers weren't the ones who voted in the politicians who raided the pension funds. Illinois avoided raising taxes for years by raiding the pension funds. It seems grossly unfair to penalize people who weren't even old enough to vote when the bad decisions were made for the irresponsible behavior of their elders. And it's mostly unfair to government employees that their pensions are underfunded. The unpleasant answer is that Illinois needs more revenue to fix legacy problems created by politicians in the past.

Criminal Justice

104. Do you support life sentences for juvenile offenders?

What I support is the governor using his (or her) discretion better. There are going to be mistakes in the criminal justice system. Last I checked, Illinois was still incarcerating torture victims of Jon Burge who were almost assuredly innocent of the crimes they were convicted of. Neither Gov. Blagojevich nor Gov. Quinn used their powers wisely. I would like the governor to be forced to review petitions for pardons, clemency and commutation periodically. If someone had done over ten years in prison for a crime committed while he was a juvenile, I would hope the governor would exercise some compassion and common sense.

95. Do you support legislation permitting the carrying of concealed weapons?

My first reaction is that people don't need to be carrying concealed weapons. However, there are stories real, embellished and theoretical that make it hard to say "no". It seems like allowing conceal carry should be linked to better reporting of the transfer of firearms so we can prevent firearms flowing into the illicit market. If gun owners want conceal carry badly enough they shouldn't balk at more reporting of sale and transfer of firearms and sleuthing out straw buyers.

97. Do you support capital punishment?

The version of me that goes to church feels like capital punishment is playing God in a way that's profane. How many people need to be exonerated before we reject capital punishment permanently?

However, the part of me that thirsts for economic justice wants to expand the death penalty. I want to write laws that execute corporations and corporate executives who make decisions that do over \$200 million worth of harm. If the Acme Corporation does \$200 million worth of harm in Illinois, then Acme's CEO should be tried in Illinois. And if his decisions cause the harm, he should be executed in Illinois. I also support dissolving corporations that do harm in Illinois or at least prohibiting them from doing business here again.

Health & Human Services

74. Do you support repealing the Illinois Abortion Law of 1975 and replacing it with a law stating that decisions about reproductive matters are to be made privately between a woman and her doctor, without governmental interference?

Because I have sued an elected official for sexual harassment (one of my opponents in this election), I have had to come to grips with discussing my sex life in public forums.

I have not publicly discussed this before, but I have had an abortion. I fully support women deciding whether or not to continue a pregnancy. It's a tough enough decision without a bunch of politicians getting involved. It ain't their business. Until politicians fix the economy—something that is in their job description—they should keep their mouths shut about abortion. Mostly it's just a bunch of talk to get donors to open their wallets anyways.

76. Do you support allowing the government to decide what medical care a physician may provide to patients during pregnancy?

The government limits the medical care a physician is supposed to provide all the time. Until a drug is approved by the FDA, it can only be used as part of a clinical trial under specific circumstances. However, these restrictions are mostly set by the federal government and professional bodies. I do not favor the Illinois General Assembly making decisions for pregnant women that are specific to pregnant women. It seems outside the scope of the body's purpose and expertise.

80. Do you support raising TANF benefits to at least equal the poverty level?

What I support is government enacting policies that increase employment so there will be far fewer people relying on government programs. The system holds together with a few people getting government assistance. The rates of unemployment are not sustainable in Bellwood, Broadview and Maywood. The social infrastructure will come apart if the employment issue isn't addressed.

Poverty programs are not a substitute for good paying jobs.

73. What is your plan to provide sufficient funding to provide community based services for discharged mental health patients?

Would repealing the CME tax break cover it?

77. Allowing pharmacies or pharmacists to refuse to fill prescriptions based on their own conscientious objections and send customers away without being served?

No. If you don't want to be a pharmacist, don't be a pharmacist. If you want to be licensed in Illinois, you have to play by our rules.

Housing

87. Would you support legislation requiring mortgage holders to honor the terms of existing residential leases in effect when property is foreclosed upon?

Yes, but I would go further. At some point in the process—prior to the title reverting—the mortgage holder should be required to notify the tenants. Failure to properly notify the tenants should delay any action against the tenants by six months, even the tenants on month-to-month leases. The foreclosure process needs to be conducted in a much more professional manner. These are big events, changing the ownership of property. They should be conducted in a way that seems legitimate, not like some ex-con repo man grabbing a car from a drug dealer's ex-gf.

85. Do you favor mandating that landlords give tenants notice prior to entering their units?
This seems like basic Fourth Amendment stuff.

86. Do you favor assessing penalties against landlords who engage in illegal or retaliatory evictions?
If a landlord evicts a tenant illegally this should be a criminal matter. Putting someone on the street unexpectedly can be putting his or her physical safety in danger. Also, I wouldn't blame someone evicted illegally for contemplating extra-legal retaliation. A poor person should not have to hire a lawyer to respond to an illegal eviction. A call to the police should be the appropriate response.

Consumer Protection

39. Do you support legislation to increase electric rates outside of the ICC to build a Smart Grid?
I do not like raising utility rates. Too much of past increases have gone to ComEd shareholders, executives and PR campaigns to justify rate increases.

42. Do you support legislation to cap interest rates on credit cards and other consumer loans?
Yes.

My day job is that I own a credit repair business. I see too many people get in the viciously cycle of getting into debt at unreasonable interest rates and their lives become miserable. If the borrower isn't an acceptable risk at a reasonable interest rate then the borrower shouldn't lend the money. Poor people don't exist to be a cash cow for loan sharks with MBAs.

41. Do you support legislation to regulate ATM fees and service charges on credit cards and other consumer loans?
Aren't credit cards regulated at the federal level? I would like to cut ATM fees. I am for cutting service charges regulated at the state level.

Energy & Environment

91. Do you support funding for high speed rail connecting Illinois Metropolitan areas?
I support extending the Blue or Pink Lines to DuPage County, the Oak Brook Mall. I support connecting O'Hare and Midway Airports by a line that runs north-south, perhaps on Harlem and Cicero. I favor

improving Illinois' rail infrastructure. And I particularly favor doing it in a way that will create jobs for people in my district and will allow people in my district to get to jobs more easily.

92. Do you support a comprehensive statewide mass transit plan for Illinois?

I favor having quality public transportation available at an affordable price. Plans don't get people to work, trains and buses do.

Elections & Ethics

21. Do you support a ban on hiring, firing and promotion based on political considerations for non policy making positions?

As someone who was fired for discontinuing a sexual relationship with a politician (one of my opponents in this race), I'm sensitive to people getting fired for non-work matters. However, I think it is reasonable to fire public servants for some political positions. Should someone bigoted against gays or Blacks and vocal about their prejudices be guaranteed a government job? Should a police officer who calls for extra-legal violence against demonstrators keep his job? People who are raising issues about efficiency and following the law shouldn't be fired. But people who have espouse hateful statements and call for illegal activity shouldn't have a law to keep them from getting fired.

5. Should there be a photo ID requirement to cast a ballot?

Abusing law voting residency rules happens in Illinois. I didn't update my voting residence from Forest Park to Maywood when I should have. Sometimes this is done for improper purpose. People vote at addresses where they formerly lived to tip help friends, family and political allies keep political control. I would prefer reforms target this specific issue rather than create a barrier to voting for people who are poor, old or young.

8. Should Illinois institute instant run-off voting?

While this isn't a priority for me, I am glad IVI-IPO raised it as an issue. It has caused me to think about different voting methods. I am in a five-way race where we pretty much all agree that electing Emanuel "Chris" Welch is an unacceptable outcome. In any of the other voting methods, Welch wouldn't have a chance. With the current voting system, being reviled by 70% of the community won't prevent him from being elected. So, maybe we should consider new voting systems.

Please endorse Beyonca Johnson

I have put significant effort into responding to this questionnaire. And I have submitted it by the deadline.

While I did not answer each of the one hundred plus questions, I believe I have explained my worldview in more detail than I have in any one document before.

I hope you will entrust me with the IVI-IPO endorsement. If elected, I will fight for my communities to have good jobs and quality education. I will stay accessible and accountable to the people of my district. I will not be timid about speaking against injustice or fighting for economic justice.