

# IVI-IPO 2012 WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 1

DATE December 17, 2011 PARTY: Democratic

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NUMBER OF PETITION SIGNATURES FILED: 20,500+ NUMBER REQUIRED: 5,586

A) Elective or appointive public or party offices previously held including dates. **Commissioner, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, 2006-Present**

B) Other elective offices for which you have been a candidate. **None**

C) What is your primary occupation? **Commissioner, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago**

D) Briefly list your civic activities of the past ten years. **I serve on the board of the Great Lakes Protection Fund, the Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute (Chair), the Illinois Women's Institute for Leadership, and Congregation Sukkat Shalom in Wilmette. I was the founding editor of *Chicago Wilderness Magazine* and am an active volunteer restoring prairies and oak woods in the forest preserves. In 1996 I became a founding board member of Friends of the Forest Preserves. I am also a member of the Women's Board at the University of Chicago.**

E) What subjects have you studied and what experience have you had which will be most helpful to you in the office you seek? **In 2008 I earned a certificate in Executive Education from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, a special three-week program for Senior Executives in State & Local Government. I graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Goucher College in Baltimore, MD with a degree in Philosophy & Visual Arts. I earned a Master's degree from Johns Hopkins University in Liberal Arts and a Master's of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Columbia College (Chicago). I speak and write extensively about Great Lakes water issues, including essays on Huffington Post Chicago. I have climbed 42 of the 54 mountains in Colorado more than 14,000' high.**

F) What candidates have you supported in past elections? Please be specific in describing your role in each campaign. **I was elected as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention for Senator Barack Obama from Illinois' 9<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in 2008 and have been a volunteer on numerous political campaigns, including those of Forrest Claypool (2002), Governor Howard Dean (2003), Senator Barack Obama (2004, 2008), Congresswoman Melissa Bean (2004), David Miller (2006, 2010), Todd Connor for MWRD (2010), Robin Kelly (2010), Toni Preckwinkle (2010), Governor Pat Quinn and Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon (2010) and State Representative Daniel Biss (2008, 2010). I participated in the first Meetup in Evanston for Gov. Howard Dean's campaign in March 2003 and have been an active member of Democracy for America ever since. I was selected to participate in the Illinois Women's Institute for Leadership in 2003, a program designed to recruit and groom Democratic women to run for office.**

G) Please list all endorsements you have received so far. **Cook County Democratic Party, Northside Democracy for America, Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund**

**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 first ran for commissioner because I wanted to help the District become a leader in education about water as a precious resource. I wanted to see the District promote innovative policies for water conservation - and demonstrate best practices at its facilities and on its lands for water conservation. I am pleased to report that my efforts – joined by my colleagues – have resulted in some significant achievements in the last five years, including:**

- **Voting to support disinfection of the wastewater discharged into the Chicago waterways at two large treatment plants to improve water quality and recreational use**
- **Appointing in June 2011 the first executive director in 50 years to come from outside the ranks of District employees**
- **Opening up the District’s federal lobbying contract to a competitive RFQ process (after 35 years of contract renewals with the same firm)**
- **Providing health care benefits for same sex and opposite sex domestic partners of District employees**
- **Conducting rigorous tests of three different permeable surfaces in the parking lot at the Stickney treatment plant to monitor performance, providing essential data on this green infrastructure approach in our climate**
- **Promoting a green procurement policy at the District, including purchase of electric vehicles**

**I’m running for re-election because big challenges remain and I still have an appetite to take them on. My goal is to provide strong leadership – asking questions, pushing for accountability, transparency, and fiscal responsibility – and helping to make the MWRD a model of resource recovery and stewardship for the 21st century.**

**In my next term, I intend to work on several key initiatives:**

- **Passing a strong stormwater ordinance to reduce flooding and improve water quality in rivers and streams**
- **Establishing an independent inspector general for this agency**
- **Developing and promoting safe, secure collection program for unused and expired pharmaceuticals**
- **Expanding and promoting use of green infrastructure to capture rain where it falls and recharge our underground water supply.**

**I) What is your campaign budget? How much have you raised to date? Budget- \$325,000; Raised to date- \$240,000**

**J) How many people are on your campaign staff? How many volunteers are on your list? Two staff members- Campaign Manager and Fundraiser. 100+ volunteers**

## **IVI-IPO 2012 WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 2**

**1. Should Commissioners be elected at-large or by district? I’ve wrestled with this question since I first sought IVI-IPO’s endorsement six years ago. From one perspective, serving in districts might encourage Commissioners to be more accountable to and responsive to constituents. However, after serving for five years on the Board, I believe it is much more important for Commissioners to be able to take the “balcony view” and to consider deployment of resources county-wide, especially with respect to stormwater management. If elected by districts, the temptation might be to steer limited resources to each district – commissioner may try to show they can “bring home the bacon” – rather than devote them where they are most needed. I also feel there are other ways to help Cook County residents connect with Commissioners. (Commissioners could each be assigned a territory – a particular watershed, for instance – and a “who to call” list could be published on the District’s web site, for instance.) I think being able to make decisions about water management regionwide is going to be increasingly important and I think being elected at-large supports that perspective best.**

**2. Should cumulative voting be used to elect commissioners? I don't have enough information on cumulative voting to recommend or dismiss it at this time.**

**3. Do you have a business relationship with or financial interest in any entity doing business with the MWRD or other governmental bodies in Cook County? As part of a larger portfolio, I own stock in some companies that do business with MWRD (Adobe, Cisco, for example), but I have no direct input on business decisions the Board makes concerning transactions with these companies. On the few occasions when contracts between the District and companies supplying products from these companies have come before the Board, I have voted ‘Present.’**

**4. Will you accept or have you accepted campaign donations from current or potential suppliers, employees or outside contractors of the district? I will not accept campaign contributions from District employees. I have accepted contributions from companies that do business with the District, but have voluntarily limited those contributions to**

**a maximum of \$1500, the same restrictions as the city of Chicago imposes.**

5. a. In what circumstances should the District contract for outside professional services?

**When the District does not have expertise in-house to perform certain tasks or assignments, it makes sense to recruit and use outside professional services.**

b. In what circumstances should competitive bidding for contracts be required?

**I believe that in almost all circumstances, competitive bidding for contracts should be required. For professional services, this can be accomplished through an RFP/RFQ process.**

c. Please comment on any existing abuses.

6. Do you support Patronage in hiring and promoting public employees? **No.**

7. Will you support public postings of all permanent and temporary jobs at the District? **Yes, I believe this is already the case.**

8. Do you support Affirmative Action? **Yes.**

9. Do you favor permitting MWRD employees to hold other public sector employment concurrently? **No.**

10. Do you favor permitting MWRD employees to have outside employment or contracts with entities that do business with the district? **No.**

11. Is the District in good financial condition? Please comment on both expenditures and sources of revenues.

**Yes, the District is in good financial condition. However, the dependence on property tax revenues for the bulk of its operating budget as well as past draw-downs in the Corporate Fund have made for several years of tight budgets. The three largest expenditures at the District are salaries, health care, and energy. The District has had no layoff or furlough days for employees, but in the 2012 budget there will be 148 fewer employees than in 2011. There have been no salary increases for non-represented District employees for three years and all employees will be contributing more to their health care and pension benefits in 2012 and beyond. In addition, the District participated in a reverse auction for electricity purchases that resulted in a very favorable rate for the next two years. And the District has been taking other measures to reduce energy use. The agency has earned three AAA bond ratings (very rare among IL government agencies) and has established a trust to address looming issues with Other Post-Employee Benefits (health care). In the 2012 budget, the Board also approved measures to increase the District's contribution to the pension fund to redress the unfunded pension liability.**

12. Under what circumstances would you support sale of MWRD property? **When the parcel is deemed surplus and there is no foreseeable need for the parcel for corporate purposes (i.e. in order to fulfill the District's core mission).**

13. a. What should be the MWRD's role in policy on lakefront, riverfront and canal development? **In 2012, the District will be undertaking a comprehensive review of its land holdings and land management policies. We need to have current information on what lands the District owns, the leases and tenants in place, and the condition of the District's holdings. The District's lands should, first and foremost, serve to fulfill its core mission – protecting the drinking water supply for Cook County, treating wastewater, and managing stormwater. Given that, I support a collaborative partnership with neighboring municipalities to promote economic development and stormwater BMPs on District lands.**

b. What responsibility should it have for planning or monitoring such development? **I think the District can be a partner with other agencies but its primary mission is not economic or real estate development.**

14. a. Do you support expansion of the MWRD's role into areas of habitat restoration and conservance and creation of public parks and trails? **I see many opportunities for a beneficial convergence of the District's mission for stormwater management with habitat restoration and development of trails and recreational space. I plan to encourage more outside-the-box thinking and planning in this area in my next term.**

15. Do you support the existing agreement between the district and the property owners on the North Branch of the Chicago River? **After many years of discussion, the District and property owners along the North Branch have agreed to a settlement that I believe protects the private property rights of the landowners and protects public health and safety by requiring permits and liability insurance coverage for the structures along the waterways.**

16. Do you think the MWRD should be required to remove phosphorus and nitrogen from the effluent it releases into our waterways? **Insofar as possible, yes.**

17. a. Are you for or against using green technologies to manage storm water? **I have been a strong advocate of green infrastructure techniques since I first ran for the board six years ago. I continue to push for their adoption and inclusion in District policies and permit requirements. I am happy to report that the District has committed to spend a minimum of \$1 million on green infrastructure in 2012 (which I hope can be leveraged through matching grants or some other mechanism) and will develop technical guidance to grant credits for green infrastructure techniques in sewer permit applications (this is new and very positive). I was an early proponent of the District's program to sell rain barrels at cost to Cook County residents – promoting this on my own web site and newsletters – and my advocacy led the District to install three permeable surfaces along with equipment to monitor performance in the parking lot at the District's Stickney treatment plant.**

b. Do you think storm water should be preserved and protected? **Insofar as possible, stormwater should be captured where it falls and kept out of combined sewers. However, the land doesn't have the absorptive capacity to hold all the rain that falls on the landscape. We will still need to treat the rain that enters the combined sewers.**

c. Please explain your answers.

18. What can the MWRD do to exceed minimal requirements for permitting under the Clean Water Act? **The District is currently exploring a technique for biological removal of phosphorus that will produce a slow-release fertilizer for sale. The District is also embarking on a collaborative effort with the 60 municipalities that have separate sewer and storm systems to reduce infiltration and inflow.**

19. What can be done to alleviate flooding in Chicago and the suburbs, which persists despite the construction of TARP?

**In the last three years, Chicago and Cook County have experienced three successive storms that have each broken previous records for rainfall in a 24-hour period (Sept 2008, July 2010, and July 2011). I believe we are seeing a new kind of rain storm – more intense, more localized, and less predictable – that may be a sign of climate change. No engineering system, no matter how large, can alleviate flooding caused by five inches of rain in two hours (as we experienced in July 2011 at O'Hare Airport). However, there is much we can do to slow the flow of rainwater into local sewers and give them greater capacity to deal with the inundation we are experiencing.**

**First, homeowners need to work in concert with their neighbors to install rain barrels and other rainwater harvesting systems – rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs (where appropriate), larger cisterns – and find ways to peel back the concrete skin we've laid over the landscape (by replacing impervious surfaces, such as parking lots, driveways, patios) with permeable surfaces. Where feasible, restrictors can be placed in storm drains to slow the flow into the sewers and use streets as temporary ponding areas. Holding rainwater in the streets is far preferable to having water in people's basements.**

**Second, some municipalities may need to commission studies of their local sewers to determine where bottlenecks occur and invest in repairs or upgrades.**

**Third, the District is supporting projects throughout the County to reduce flooding hotspots that were identified by the detailed watershed plans commissioned several years ago. This work will continue for many years.**

**Fourth, the District may be able to partner with the Forest Preserve District or other agencies in land acquisition or restoration for the purpose of enhancing habitat and stormwater sequestration.**

20. How should the MWRD implement the disinfection of effluent? **The District is currently conducting a technical review of the various technologies used for disinfection. It may be that a combination of UV (ultraviolet) light and chlorination will be most cost-effective for dry weather and wet weather flows. I expect the results of this technical evaluation will be complete sometime in the first half of 2012. The District's executive director has proposed an ambitious but achievable plan to design and implement disinfection at the North Side and Calumet treatment plants by some time in 2015.**