

**IVI-IPO 2012 WARD COMMITTEEMAN QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 1**

**DATE:** Dec. 19, 2011      **WARD:** 5      **PARTY:** Democrat

**NAME:** Leslie A. Hairston

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**CAMPAIGN POLITICAL ADVISOR:** Delmarie Cobb

**NUMBER OF PETITION SIGNATURES FILED:** 1,300      **NUMBER REQUIRED:** 642

**A) Elective or appointive public or party offices previously held including dates. Elected 5<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman in 1999 and re-elected in 2003, 2007 and 2011. Elected 5<sup>th</sup> Ward Committeeman in 2000 and re-elected in 2004 and 2008.**

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

**C) What is your primary occupation? I am an attorney but work almost solely in my capacity as alderman of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward.**

**D) Briefly list your civic activities of the past ten years. Please refer to bio at the end.**

**E) What subjects have you studied and what experience have you had which will be most helpful to you in the office you seek? Please refer to bio at the end.**

**F) What candidates have you supported? Please be specific in describing your role in each campaign. State Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie, State Sen. Kwame Raoul, U.S. Cong. Bobby Rush, State Rep. Will Burns, State Rep. Marlow Colvin, State Sen. Donne Trotter, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, and Barak Obama for all his elected positions. I assisted with hosting rallies, field work, serving as a surrogate speaker, and organizing election day volunteers.**

G) Please list all endorsements you have received so far. **I am in the process of seeking endorsements now.**

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 am a lifelong resident of the area I have represented as both alderman and committeeman for over 10 years. I have established relationships with every stakeholder segment of my diverse constituency and have a bottom to top understanding of the issues. I know the barriers to progress and have found creative ways to keep the ward moving forward. As alderman, I have worked hard to bridge the economic differences between the ward's neighborhoods, mainly through encouraging anyone to be a part of the meetings, forums, initiatives and variety of events sponsored by my office. Inclusiveness has also been a primary goal for me as committeemen, except the focus is on encouraging people to utilize the opportunities afforded through the electoral process.**

I) What is your campaign budget? **Approximately \$25,000.** How much have you raised to date? **We will begin fundraising in January.**

J) How many people are on your campaign staff? **No paid staff.** How many volunteers are on your list? **Approximately 300.**

#### **IVI-IPO 2012 WARD COMMITTEEMAN QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 2**

1. Should the present signature requirement for a Committeeman's nominating petition be changed? If so, how? **No. The current process is sufficiently accessible to those serious about running for office.**
2. Should there be a law (like that for replacing an alderman, etc.) for replacing a ward or township Committeeman who leaves office during her/his term? **Illinois revised statutes already cover such situations.**
3. What are your views on slating, the selection of candidates by the party or party committees prior to a primary or non-partisan elections? If you are opposed to slating, will you participate in slating sessions? **I do not oppose slating. The process generally works. However, as an African American, a woman and independent Democrat, I am aware there have been situations where the party has not recognized viable candidates preferred by the people and when the best candidate was not slated.**
4. Should the party finance the campaigns of selected candidates in contested primary elections or non-partisan elections (such as aldermanic elections)? **Although this has been a reality – particularly in the past – the party today simply does not have the funds to exercise clout as it once did. I do not think that is a bad thing, as the burden of raising funds should rest on the candidate – e.g., her/his**

**ability to connect with average citizens, to do the nitty-gritty work associated with garnering support. Otherwise parties could impose their idea of what is best over the people's choice.**

5. Does a committeeman have a responsibility to support the party's candidates after they have been selected in a primary election? **The general tendency is to do that. But for various reasons (see No. 3 above) one may want to support another candidate.**
6. Do you feel it is appropriate for elected officials to hold a party office? Please explain your position. **Yes. As an elected official, it is important for the committeeman to ensure candidates be properly vetted, that independent candidates have a fair opportunity to be considered and to have diverse leadership represented in party committees.**
7. Have you or would you send letters to government officials soliciting jobs or promotions for individuals? **No.**
8. Have you formed or would you form a ward-wide organization? Discuss structure, meetings, membership, staff and budget. **Committeeman is an unpaid position. The 5<sup>th</sup> Ward Regular Democratic Organization is composed entirely of volunteers and *pro bono* advisors. The focus is generally voter participation – education, registration, turnout, etc. We do fundraising to support election day operations and training -- volunteer meals (*e.g.*, for runners, poll watchers) and printing (*e.g.*, signs, sample ballots, palm cards), which typically total about \$20,000.**
9. How do you propose to finance your ward operations? **Fundraising activities.**
10. What plans do you have to enhance voter registration and voter turn out in your ward? **Continuing to support registration and Get Out The Vote drives, as well as training of election judges.**
11. Does your organization have/or will have members? If so how does one become a member? **My ward organization is open to anyone.**
12. Should members of a ward organization have a role in determining endorsements? **Yes.**
13. Does or will your ward organization communicate openly with residents and activists? **Yes.** Will you have a website to convey current information and volunteer opportunities? **We have devoted our fundraising to practical needs related to election days. However, I have been gradually upgrading my campaign-funded aldermanic Web site and should be able to include resources as a committeeman.**

14. What idea do you have to finding and retaining high quality election judges? **I am fortunate to have a very involved ward, with a large, diverse pool of excellent, experienced people willing to serve in that capacity. We also periodically invite the Board of Elections to hold training for new judges.**
15. What strategies will you employ to engage the residents in you ward and increase voter participation with emphasis on how you will attract younger voters? **In addition to strategies mentioned above, I have been working with youth and young adult organizations on the issue, as well as with social media consultants who specialize in engaging 17-34 year-olds in the electoral process. We also offer rides to the polls, which can be an important factor for many lower-income voters of all ages.**
16. What should be done to include voters in the decision making process for replacing candidates on the ballot and filling vacancies of elected officials? **There are existing provisions that govern this process. The ward organization should be a resource for nurturing people interested in public service.**
17. Question for Incumbent: What have you done to involve more people in the political process? What further steps will you take? **Please see Nos. 8, 10, 13, and 15 for steps I have taken as the current committeeman. As I also mentioned above, I have a very involved constituency open to taking advantage of and suggesting ways to increase inclusion. I do whatever possible to initiate and facilitate various avenues for that. I am proud to say that, regardless of the offices being filled, the 5<sup>th</sup> consistently ranks among the top 10 wards in the city in voter turnout.**
18. Will you follow the Cook County judicial retention “vote yes” campaign? **No. I have always done my homework to support those candidates who merit retention.**
19. **For Republicans:** What actions will you take to make the GOP more competitive in Cook County races?

### **LESLIE A. HAIRSTON**

A fierce community advocate with deep roots in the South Shore and Hyde Park neighborhoods, 5<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman and Committeeman Leslie A. Hairston has built a professional career dedicated to public service. She has practiced law both publicly and privately. A strong litigator, she served as an assistant attorney general for the state of Illinois and was staff attorney and special prosecutor for the State’s Attorney’s Appellate Prosecutor’s Office, where she argued before the Illinois State Supreme Court. She remains an active member of the Illinois State Bar Association.

In addition to her professional activities, Hairston participates in several community organizations and causes. She is a long-time member of the South Shore Cultural Center, Hyde Park Advisory and O’Keefe Area Councils, as well as Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. She currently serves as a board member for

Kaleidoscope Inc. and is a past member of the McFarland Mental Health Center with the Illinois Department of Mental Health and Disabilities, as well as a former beat facilitator for CAPS.

In the City Council, Hairston serves on the Committees on Economic, Capital and Technology Development (vice chair), Budget and Government Operations; Committees, Rules and Ethics; Finance; Health and Environmental Protection; Special Events, Cultural Affairs and Recreation.