

IVI-IPO 2012 WARD COMMITTEEMAN QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 1

DATE 01/04/2012 WARD: 32nd PARTY: Democratic

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CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Nicholas Wilbat

NUMBER OF PETITION SIGNATURES FILED: Approximately 1600 NUMBER REQUIRED: 549

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

State Representative, 1996-2010, Cook County Commissioner, 2010-Current.

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

U.S. House of Representatives – 5th District

C) What is your primary occupation?

Legislator

D) Briefly list your civic activities of the past ten years.

DePaul University School of Education - Dean's Advisory Council; Chicago Gateway Green-Board of Directors; Adjunct Lecturer-Northwestern University; Illinois State Crime Commission-Board of Directors; numerous others.

E) What subjects have you studied and what experience have you had which will be most helpful to you in the office you seek?

I have a B.A in economics from The University of Michigan; a J.D. from Northwestern University; as well as fourteen years as State Representative. As importantly, I have lived and raised a family in the 32nd Ward for the last 15 years, during which I have been involved in progressive politics in all areas of the ward.

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

I have supported dozens of candidates during my time as an elected official. Just recently, in my capacity as committeeman, my organization worked to collect signatures for Democrats throughout Cook County to help place their names on the March 20th primary ballots. I have been working to elect Ricardo Munoz Clerk of the Circuit Court to help bring about more independence in county government.

G) Please list all endorsements you have received so far.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle

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 worked to create an independent and viable Democratic ward organization for the first time in the history of the 32nd Ward. I have always worked to increase voter turnout and will continue to move forward trying to include as many people in the democratic process. I will continue to be available to my constituents and provide forums for my constituents, so their voice can be heard in local politics.

D) What is your campaign budget? How much have you raised to date?

I have not determined a campaign budget at this point nor have I held a fundraiser in over a year as I have been focusing on my newly elected position.

J) How many people are on your campaign staff? How many volunteers are on your list?

I have one paid campaign staffer and a have a large number of volunteers who regularly offer their assistance with my efforts.

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?

I believe that the present requirement, determined by historical vote turnout in each respective ward, is set at a level that is both fair and achievable for serious candidates.

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?

There should be a mechanism that would provide for local voters to replace a Committeeman vacancy rather than leave it to the Cook County Democratic Party. While I do not think that there should be a special election, due to costs and the fact that the office is inherently a political one, I think that it would be practical to schedule such an election in concurrence with the next regularly scheduled election.

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?

One of the reasons I am running is my belief that the slating process, with the input of an appropriate number of independent and progressive Committeemen, can be a valuable indicator for voters. It is my intention to work together with like-minded progressive Ward Committeemen and suburban Committeemen to create a dynamic previously unseen in Cook County. To that end, I have regular discussions with a number of these individuals to discuss relevant issues.

4. Should the party finance the campaigns of selected candidates in contested primary elections or non-partisan elections (such as aldermanic elections)?

I am uncomfortable with a candidate having too much support or undue influence from any single source, be it the Party or legislative leadership. In my entire tenure in office, I have not accepted contributions from either of these sources.

5. Does a committeeman have a responsibility to support the party's candidates after they have been selected in a primary election?

A committeeman has a responsibility to support those candidates who he or she believes will best represent their constituents. I believe that the Cook County Democratic Party's past efforts to require the support of slated candidates is misguided and not in the best interests of good government. When warranted, I have not hesitated to go against slated candidates if I believe that a challenger is more qualified. My current support of Ricardo Munoz for Clerk of the Circuit Court is just the latest example of my independence.

6. Do you feel it is appropriate for elected officials to hold a party office? Please explain your position.

I think that it is appropriate for those elected officials who are in partisan offices to also be a committeeman. I think that an Alderman holding such an office contradicts the underlying non-partisan nature of the Aldermanic office and raises the appearance that provision of city services may hinge on political activity.

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.

I have spent many years getting people involved local elections. I have mobilized volunteers in their local communities with the belief that the best motivator is the chance to make a difference in their own neighborhood. It is my intention to provide forums for ward residents to discuss various political issues of interest and have a chance to interact with the elected officials who represent them and with the candidates seeking to represent them. I am confident that such activities can be done with the assistance of volunteers and interns, as I have done in the past.

9. How do you propose to finance your ward operations?

As I have stated, much of my envisioned activities can be accomplished on a minimal budget. For those costs that are necessary, it is my intention to raise funds from individuals interested in supporting an independent ward organization.

10. What plans do you have to enhance voter registration and voter turn out in your ward?

The best mechanism to create involvement in the process is to inform voters, not only about the candidates for office, but as to why their vote is important. Now more than ever, voters need to understand the importance of who represents them at every level of government, and the importance of their role in putting them in office in the first place. At virtually every event at which I speak, I talk about the importance of voter registration and involvement in the process.

11. Does your organization have/or will have members? If so how does one become a member?

We do not maintain a formal structure as I believe that a dynamic crowd-sourced organization is best suited to mobilize volunteers in any given election cycle.

12. Should members of a ward organization have a role in determining endorsements?

In a representative democracy, the Committeeman should be constantly listening to their constituents and ascertaining the pulse of their thoughts. I believe that this is a much more democratic form of representation than is limiting decision-making to a select group.

13. Does or will your ward organization communicate openly with residents and activists? Will you have a website to convey current information and volunteer opportunities?

I maintain and actively use an e-mail database consisting of several thousand ward residents. I send regular newsletters out informing them of issues of interest and upcoming events.

14. What idea do you have to finding and retaining high quality election judges?

I have long been an open proponent of merit selection for judges. The key to retaining or removing sitting judges must be rooted in aggressive voter education efforts so that voters base their decisions on substantive issues rather than gender or ethnicity.

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?

My online presence and efforts have been highlighted in political science textbooks and my use of social media to interact with voters and potential voters has been the subject of numerous articles. I continue to use and build upon my past efforts.

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?

Voters need to be kept informed of not only who the candidates are, but how they got into office. The best way for voters to express their thoughts on the process is by casting their votes against unqualified officials or candidates.

17. Question for Incumbent: What have you done to involve more people in the political process? What further steps will you take?

Since being elected in 1996, I have vocally advocated the importance of voter involvement in the electoral process. I have stressed this through appearances at community and chamber functions, through social media efforts and e-mail newsletters and by hosting information tents at street fairs, etc. letting people know how they can make a difference. I have also offered internships in my office and have had interns ranging in age from 15-80.

18. Will you follow the Cook County judicial retention “vote Yes” campaign?

I don't believe that judges are entitled to their position for life. It is my intention to take into account the bar association reviews of sitting judges and alert voters of any judges who may not be suitable for retention.

19. **For Republicans**: What actions will you take to make the GOP more competitive in Cook County races?