

IVI-IPO 2006 COOK COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 1

DATE: December 31, 2005

PARTY: Democratic

CANDIDATE FOR: Vacancy of James J. Jorzak Sixth Subcircuit

NAME: Ramon Ocasio III

CAMPAIGN ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 47-8518 CHICAGO IL 60647

CAMPAIGN MANAGER: BRUCE EMBREY

NUMBER OF SIGNATURES FILED: OVER 2000

NUMBER REQUIRED: 500

Elective or appointive public and/or party offices held including dates.

Local School Council Member at InterAmerican Magnet School Elected 1989-91;
ReElected 1991-93

Other elective offices for which you have been a candidate. NONE

What subjects have you studied and what experience have you had which will be most useful to you in the office you seek? See resume

Please detail your prior political activity, if any. Non-applicable

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

See answer to question 6. See all answers to all questions.

Please state any evaluation ratings you have received for any judicial office by any bar association.

In 2002, I was evaluated for an Associate Judge position. Every member of the Alliance including the Asian American Bar Association, Black Women Lawyers Association, Chicago Council of Lawyers, Cook County Bar Association, Decalogue Society of Lawyers, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois, Illinois State Bar Association, Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago, Puerto Rican Bar Association of Illinois, and the Women's Bar Association of Illinois. Each Association found me either "QUALIFIED" OR "RECOMMENDED." The Hispanic and Puerto Rican Bar Association found me "Highly Qualified."

In addition, I was evaluated in 2002 by the Chicago Bar Association who found me "QUALIFIED."

IVI-IPO 2006 COOK COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT
QUESTIONNAIRE – SECTION 1

Ramon Ocasio III
Candidate for Judge
Sixth Subcircuit

1. The disproportionate number of African Americans and Latinos facing the **death penalty** raises issues that support it being abolished. One of the tenets of our criminal justice system is that it be fair and just. And unless one accepts the proposition that African Americans and Latinos are more likely to commit heinous or otherwise atrocious acts than members of other groups are the death penalty may be rejected. Proponents of the death penalty argue that if the problems can be fixed than the death penalty can be reinstated and serve the proper role of deterrent. The primary function of the death penalty as a deterrent or as retribution may depend on one's point of view. However, the loss of life of some is not make right by a greater good shared by others if the benefits of equal protections of the law are not afforded to all.

2. The basic liberties of citizens in a just society are to be equally held by men and women. Now if it were possible, at least theoretically, that men could bear children would restrictions to the right of a woman *or a man* to have an abortion be restricted. While such musings may provide or suggest an answer, judges are faced with the task of following precedent. The law of the land permits a woman's **right to an abortion**. Citizens must be left alone by government to make personal decisions otherwise their self-respect may be compromise.

3. **Mandatory sentencing laws** were instituted because of the wide variance of penalties handed down by different judges. Apparently judges differed about their views of seemingly similar circumstances and this inconsistency and disuniformity in federal law lead to the perception that improper influences were being injected and likely served as a catalyst for these laws. Nonetheless Judges rulings must be transparent; Judges must be honest about their reasoning resisting manipulating facts and the independence of their rulings must be respected.

4. Biologically, neurologically, emotionally juveniles are different from adults. **Treating juveniles as adults** according to some was an expedient way for some politicians to appease the public about more complex social issues. Harsher penalties are easier to dole out than resolving the socio-economic matrix facing juveniles.

5. In 1992, Colorado citizens passed an amendment to their state constitution referring to homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation, conduct, practices, or relationships. It said that none of these could "entitle any person or class of persons to have or claim any minority status, quota preferences, protected status or claim of discrimination. The Supreme Court overturned the amendment. Notwithstanding, **gay rights** have yet to be detected in the constitution.

Military recruiting at American law schools was curtailed when law professors decided that the military policy to discriminate against gays and lesbians was unacceptable. In response, the Congress pass the Solomon amendment denying federal funding to any law school that refused military recruiters at their law school. In the same vein, **gay rights** came at a price.

The issue of **gay marriage** has been used by Karl Rove to activate fundamentalists, cultural conservatives and homophobes to inhibit, forbid and assault the concept of **gay rights**. Homophobia is the irrational fear and hatred of those who love and sexually desire those of the same sex. The denial of marriage to same sex partners is a form of discrimination that serves to deny equal treatment to a group or to persons perceived to be members of a group. The result is to restrict the opportunities or rewards available to others, while maintaining those opportunities and rewards for one's own membership group.

6. One weakness of the Circuit Court of Cook County is the lack of Hispanic Judges. The Sixth Subcircuit was created to address the lack of Latino judges in Cook County. There are currently about 414 Judges in the Circuit Court of Cook County and of those Judges only eight are Latino. That is to say only eight are full Circuit Court Judges. We have ten additional [Latino] Associate Judges. Combining the two groups means that only 4.35% of Cook County Judges are Latino. The Hispanic community is estimated to be 20% of the total Cook County population.

7. The Chief Judge should be seen as a model for other Judges. Fair, competent, hardworking, and independent. If a system can be developed that produces such a Judge, use it.

8. If judges were assigned to divisions where they are familiar then it would solve the problem of new judges not knowing that area of law as well. On the other hand it may raise issues. Supreme Court Rule 63 dictates that a judge should perform his or her duties impartially and diligently. Any instance where the Judge has a prior relationship requires that recusal be considered

If I am fortunate enough to be elected as a Circuit Court Judge past history indicates that I would be assigned to the traffic division. Notwithstanding, wherever I am assigned I will work hard.

9. Without the doctrine of precedent and the safeguard of appellate review judges might be in peril. However, if judges rule on only the question presented by the case at hand and interpret precedent honestly that peril would diminish.

10. If a sitting judge were indicted a leave of absence with pay might be warranted.