

LGBT Mayoral Committee Questionnaire
Answers submitted by Rahm Emanuel

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1. Briefly list your involvement with LGBT issues and organizations over the last ten years.

I've spent my career fighting for LGBT equality. Most recently, I lobbied members of the Illinois legislature to pass the Civil Unions bill, and I lobbied members of the US Congress to pass the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell. As President Obama's chief of staff, I worked to get an executive order signed securing hospital visitation rights for gay and lesbian couples. The order, which resulted from a meeting between myself and members of the Chicago LGBT community, prohibits hospitals from continuing this form of discrimination. I also worked with the Obama Administration to lobby Congress for passage of the Matthew Shepard Act, and in the appointments of over 150 openly LGBT applicants to federal jobs.

While in Congress from 2002-2008, I earned a 100% rating on HRC's Congressional Scorecard and co-sponsored many significant LGBT legislative initiatives, such as the Matthew Shepard Act, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act. In addition, I secured a \$1.25 million federal grant for construction of the Center on Halsted, the then-largest federal grant to an LGBT organization.

LGBT City of Chicago Employee Benefits

1. Which additional benefits would you seek to extend to LGBT employees that are not currently being offered by the City?

LGBT employees should be treated on par with their heterosexual counterparts in City of Chicago employment (including the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Transit Authority and the City Colleges of Chicago). The City currently extends benefits to LGBT employees and their eligible domestic partners. Starting on July 1, 2011, recently passed civil unions legislation should mandate equal treatment for LGBT employees and their partners. In the event gaps remain in the City's pension fund benefits that require further changes to Illinois State law, I will work to ensure such changes are enacted.

2. Would you actively advocate for ensuring that LGBT employees are afforded the same partnership benefits as those individuals who are able to marry? Please be specific.

Yes. I celebrate with the community the passage of comprehensive civil union legislation this month in Springfield. I vigorously advocated passage to members of the state legislature. I continue to believe that full marriage equality, in name and in rights, should always be the goal. While in Congress, I voted repeatedly against discriminatory efforts to make marriage equality more difficult to attain for gay and

lesbian couples. I voted against the Marriage Protection Amendment, which attempted to define marriage as only between one man and one woman.

Education

- 1. What are your criteria for hiring and evaluating the CEO of Chicago Public Schools (CPS)? What aspects of diversity are important to you for this role and how, if at all, would the CEO be evaluated for creating a system where all students feel safe and respected within the Chicago Public Schools' system?**

It is vital that the CEO of Chicago Public Schools have a deep understanding of the issues facing LGBT youth. I will make 100% enforcement of anti-bullying policies an absolute mandate and task the incoming CPS leader to test new strategies to end bullying. The recent string of LGBT youth suicides across the country has underscored that bullying is a critical issue plaguing schools. For many in the LGBT community, this problem is all too familiar – more than 85 percent of gay and lesbian youth report being harassed in school and a third report having skipped school out of fear. Our city cannot be whole until every child feels secure and welcome in our schools.

- 2. Will you commit to the inclusion of LGBT families and students in CPS policy formation and in plans/programs/activities of CPS?**

Yes.

- 3. How would you support system-wide inclusion of LGBTQ topics in curricula in age-appropriate ways? Would you support system-wide sex-education that includes HIV and STI prevention in age appropriate ways?**

I will work with the Chicago Public Schools to provide age-appropriate education about HIV/AIDS and STI prevention as well as developing a strategic partnership with other levels of government, non-profits and the private sector to implement the National HIV/AIDS strategy goals recently released by President Obama.

- 4. Would you institute a CPS-wide online occurrence reporting system that includes reports of bullying and discrimination filed by students, staff and families that also tracks the category of protected class against which the incident was directed? If so, would you give students, staff and families an oversight role in tracking complaints and their resolutions in order to identify potential issues for schools, school leadership, school security, etc.?**

I am open to any proposal that strengthens our ability to fight against bullying and discrimination in public schools. I would need to study this proposal further to ensure that it does not infringe on privacy rights of both the victim and the accused.

- 5. How will you fight to end anti-gay and other forms of bullying in schools (K-12)? Will you ensure that appropriate policies are written and implemented in schools to prevent or respond appropriately to bullying?**

I will make 100% enforcement of anti-bullying policies an absolute mandate and task the incoming CPS leader to test new strategies to end bullying. Teachers and administrators, hall monitors and lunch room aides all must set the tone and engage directly whenever bullying takes place. Encouraging parental involvement in our

students' education increases the likelihood that students will succeed in school – and it can also have an impact on a student's conduct in the classroom.

Rather than avoiding the issue, schools should embrace LGBT youth and make clear that it's okay to be a gay or lesbian student in Chicago and Chicago Public Schools. Gay-straight alliances and other programs that provide support for LGBT youth can help to ensure that our schools are welcoming all students. I will work with CPS school administrators and officials and allied organizations to make sure that all schools have such alliances or similar programs.

Aging

- 1. How would you support an assessment of the capacity of the city of Chicago to provide culturally competent and welcoming programming for LGBT seniors?**

I recognize that LGBT seniors are a vulnerable population with unique and specific needs. I will undertake an assessment of the city's capacity to provide culturally competent and welcoming programming for LGBT seniors, and will carry out Mayor Daley's pledge to help create affordable housing for LGBT seniors.

- 2. How will you work with LGBT community agencies in Chicago to increase their capacity to service LGBT seniors?**

I will ensure that city agencies work side-by-side with community agencies to improve the lives of LGBT citizens. I am likewise committed to keeping housing and health care for the most needy a priority in future budgets.

- 3. Will you recognize LGBT seniors as a vulnerable population with unique and specific needs and designated as a target population under the criteria of the Area Plan for the Chicago Department on Senior Services?**

Yes.

Youth Homelessness

- 1. What needs to be done to make Chicago a safer, more open community to LGBT youth to prevent homelessness?**

Homelessness and poverty are a very serious issue in Chicago and disproportionately affect the LGBT community. LGBT youth, women and communities of color are particularly impacted. I will require that city agencies work closely with service providers to ensure that our neediest citizens are cared for and put on a path to stable housing, and I will work to increase the stock of shelters and affordable housing units and make sure that housing is welcoming and available to LGBT citizens. A well-rounded strategy will also require sensitivity training so that LGBT homeless are treated with dignity and fairness.

- 2. How will you work to improve LGBT competency in city departments and among organizations that receive city funds?**

As mentioned above, I will advocate for sensitivity training and require departments to work together and make better use of their resources so that more youth can benefit from city services.

Transgender Rights

- 1. Homelessness is a constant problem in the transgender community and is greatly linked to lack of employment opportunities for transgendered people. What will you do as mayor to address the problem of homelessness and employment among transgender individuals?**

I will see that city agencies work closely with service providers to ensure that our neediest citizens are cared for and put on a path to stable housing. I will work to increase the stock of shelters and affordable housing units and make sure that housing is welcoming and available to transgender citizens.

- 2. How will you investigate and remedy the persistent instances of discrimination against transgender people that go unreported?**

Transgender people experience some of the most extreme and pervasive problems of any group within the LGBT community. I will work with the community to educate the public about transphobia and help build a better life for transgender people in employment, education, public health, public accommodations and housing.

- 3. Can you commit to inclusion more transgender people to work in municipal government, including in managerial and directorial positions?**

Yes.

Marriage Equality

- 1. Will you support equal marriage rights for same sex couples? Will you advocate for marriage equality on the state and federal level?**

Yes. While the recent victory on civil unions should be applauded, I believe we must never stop fighting for full marriage equality. While in Congress, I voted repeatedly against discriminatory efforts to make marriage equality more difficult to attain for gay and lesbian couples. I voted against the Marriage Protection Amendment, which attempted to define marriage as only between one man and one woman.

HIV/AIDS & Health

- 1. How will you acknowledge the urgent need for HIV prevention and continue to devote city resources toward programs and initiatives that counter the spread of HIV?**

HIV/AIDS disproportionately impacts the gay community and in particular African-American and Latino men and GBT youth. I will seek to address this problem by targeting prevention programs to communities and populations most impacted, specifically promoting strong community-based programs throughout Chicago and in particular the West and South sides. I will direct the Chicago Department of Public Health to redouble its efforts in prevention and continue working with the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Test Positive Aware

Network, CALOR, Howard Brown, Center on Halsted, South Side Help Center, VIDA/SIDA, Brother's Health Collective and other community groups to achieve reductions in rates of infection.

I am committed to keeping public health and safety a priority in future budgets, including HIV/AIDS prevention, education and services. I've seen the devastation from HIV/AIDS from a national policy level and I have experienced it personally through the loss of close family and friends. I know the pain and hardship caused by this disease. It is an important public health issue that needs to be aggressively targeted for eradication. Prevention through education is the most cost-effective use of public health funding. Given the overall constraints of the city's current fiscal budget, it will be necessary to expand public/private partnerships for both education and treatment in order to continue to make progress against HIV/AIDS.

2. Do you support continued City corporate funding for the Chicago Department of Public Health Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Health?

Yes.

3. How will you address HIV prevention in communities of color?

As discussed in question 1, I will seek to address this problem by targeting prevention programs to communities and populations most impacted, specifically promoting strong community-based programs throughout Chicago and in particular the West and South sides. I will direct the Chicago Department of Public Health to redouble its efforts in prevention and continue working with the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Test Positive Aware Network, CALOR, Howard Brown, Center on Halsted, South Side Help Center, VIDA/SIDA, Brother's Health Collective and other community groups to achieve reductions in rates of infection.

4. How will you work to improve LGBT competency in city health departments and among organizations that receive city funds?

I am a strong supporter of incoming Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle's idea of an independent Cook County Hospital Board and medical clinics throughout the city that will provide affordable, immediate care to underserved populations. I will work with her to develop appropriate facilities and strategies to make sure quality care is provided to everyone in Chicago. Health clinics must work side-by-side with non-profit providers to increase LGBT services and programs throughout the city.

5. What criteria would you use to determine a more equitable way to distribute funding?

Resources need to be targeted to communities and populations that are most impacted, specifically promoting strong community-based programs throughout Chicago and in particular the West and South sides. Prevention through education is the most cost effective use of public health funding. Given the overall constraints of the City's current fiscal budget, it will be necessary to expand public/private partnerships for both education and treatment in order to continue to make progress against HIV/AIDS.

Public Safety

1. Will you promote the active recruitment of LGBT individuals for the Police and Fire Departments?

Yes.

2. How will you strengthen current LGBT sensitivity training programs in both Departments?

I believe in diversity training for the entire Chicago fire and police forces. As co-sponsor of the Matthew Shepard Act, I recognized the need to address hate crimes with appropriate responses. I will ensure that the Superintendent of Police enforces the recently passed federal hate crimes law that includes crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. I will also work with other units of government and labor unions to add, as part of annual performance reviews, an evaluation of how well individuals and departments are following protocols when dealing with LGBT community.

3. Will you commit to placing an LGBT liaison in each police district? Or each of the 5 police areas?

Expansion of LGBT liaisons is a valid idea, the extent of which I will discuss with the incoming Superintendent of Police.

4. Would you support the creation and implementation of standardized guidelines for humane treatment of transgendered individuals while in the custody of the Chicago Police Department – guidelines that would be created by transgendered community members in collaboration with the Chicago Police Department?

Yes. I recognize that members of the transgender community have experienced abuse and disrespectful treatment by law enforcement officials; I believe the department should institute specific policies and procedures regarding interaction with, searches of, and detention of transgender individuals. I will enforce a zero tolerance policy for police abuse.

Advisory Council

1. What role will the Advisory Council on LGBT Issues have in your Administration? Additionally, what role will the Director of the Advisory Council have in your Administration?

The Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues has been an asset for the city as a conduit between the Mayor and the LGBT community. However, its function can be elevated. I intend to have the Council report directly to the Mayor, rather than to a Commissioner, so that community input is heard in City Hall.