



## **DC for Democracy**

## **2010 City Council Questionnaire**

### **1) Why are you running for City Council and if (re)elected, what are the three most important things you intend to accomplish in the near term?**

I am running for Council at-Large because I believe I can better serve the people of the District of Columbia than the incumbent. When elected I will:

- (1) Introduce legislation to allow the courts to have more jurisdictions over the sentencing of violent juveniles and force DYRS to have secure facilities to house violent criminals. I will require DYRS to share escapee names with the community (while still protecting juvenile records) to enhance MPD and communities working together to make their neighborhoods safer. This legislation will include a mandate for bringing nationally proven rehabilitation programs for education and job training into DYRS to begin to work with young offenders before they become adult offenders.
- (2) I will introduce legislation to set up an Independent "Ombudsman" to give parents and the community a voice in school reform. I am committed to supporting school reform and moving it forward in a completely open and transparent way. Continuity is crucial but so is the buy in of parents and the community.
- (3) I will introduce legislation to upgrade workforce development programs so that the funds spent on these programs will be focused on moving people from unemployment to work by preparing them with the skill-sets needed for the available jobs. This includes vocational education with an emphasis on technology, allied health and green careers. I will focus on the issue of bringing down unemployment in the District which has reached nearly 30% in areas east of the river.

### **2) What are the three most important issues facing the District of Columbia in the next decade?**

I believe that the City can focus on more than three things at once and we will need to do that. The top three areas that we need to work on in the City in the next decade are: (1) continuing to reform and upgrade our education system, including a community college and workforce development programs; (2) public safety – creating safer streets and neighborhoods for our residents while focusing on repairing and "fixing" our juvenile justice system; and (3) rededicating our commitment to the economic development as it relates to the small businessmen and women who are the cornerstones for many of our neighborhoods. However there are other important issues that we must continue to focus on such as curbing the HIV & AIDS epidemic, building affordable housing and guaranteeing a safety net for the least among us. Recent statistics show us that the median income for a Caucasian resident of the District is about \$100,000 while the median income for African Americans is \$40,000. That is an unsustainable difference and the city must focus its economic development efforts on changing that and making sure that all of our citizens are prepared and qualified to enter the workforce, gain employment, and support themselves and their families.

### **3) What are your qualifications to serve as Council member?**

I am a small town boy who grew up in Smackover Arkansas. My father was a union member and my mother was a substitute teacher. I learned early on that the way to move forward in life was acquiring a good education. I earned an undergraduate and a graduate degree in education and moved to the District of Columbia in 1988. I immersed myself in the life of the District. In succession I worked for The American



University, joined the Clinton/Gore administration working in the Congressional Relations office of the Department of Agriculture and then for Vice President and Mrs. Gore. I was Chief of Staff to Mrs. Gore and a Deputy Campaign Manager in Gore 2000. After that I was hired by Mayor Anthony Williams who I first met at the Department of Agriculture to work as a neighborhood service coordinator. I learned the city from the ground up helping 1000's of people with problems that crossed all city agencies. I then ran neighborhood services for Mayor Adrian Fenty and was named Director of Parks and Recreation in August of 2007. I will be the only member of the new Council with actual successful experience managing a staff and budget of a DC City agency. This life experience and work experience gives me an incredible knowledge and skill set to do the job required of a DC City Councilmember. I am prepared to provide real oversight of City agencies, am prepared and ready to work with our Congressional Representative and other members of Congress to fight to ensure that the budget and legislation passed by the Council remains as passed. I am also ready to continue our fight for Statehood.

I have spent the last eight (8) years out in the community - on average five nights a week, attending community meetings, ANC meetings, civic association meetings, etc. In addition I have also served as a Reserve Police Officer for the Metropolitan Police Department where I have walked a foot beat in Adams Morgan and ridden patrol citywide. I know this city and I am prepared, experienced and ready to lead as an At-Large City Councilmember.

**4) In the context of the projected budget shortfall, do you believe the current budget discussions fairly balance increases in revenue against spending reductions, and fairly allocate the burden of revenue increases? If not, what would you propose?**

I propose that we do a line by line budget review to determine what areas can be cut and which areas need more money before we add to the tax burden of the residents of the District. I do not support adding dozens of nuisance taxes each year to balance the budget which never solves the problems we are facing but simply puts them off another year. I propose sharing with the residents of the District the facts in open forums and then making sure that any new taxes proposed are progressive and not regressive. We need to balance what the tax burden to district residents is with that of surrounding jurisdictions and justify any new taxes if we determine they are needed. I propose that we tie our economic development policy to any new taxing decisions. We cannot continue to outspend our revenue and borrow from the future of the District to make up the difference. I propose that we name a "Budget Commission" chaired by someone like Alice Rivlin to help review the budget from the bottom up and make recommendations to the Council by September 30<sup>th</sup>. We know that the CFO will again come to the Council in the next quarter to say how much this budget will need to be cut. The time to look at these issues is now and not wait for the last minute when budget negotiations become political rather than rational. If we take the politics out of the budget people will again develop a trust in the process. To do this is one of the reasons I am running for office.

**5) The District of Columbia is suffering significantly higher unemployment than Maryland and Virginia in this recession. Describe your plan for broad-based job recovery.**

My view is that we need to tie our economic development policy to our workforce development policy and ensure that we are training people for the jobs of the future. This includes upgrading our High School technology education programs, building a strong community college, and supporting community based programs like the "HOPE Project" that are currently successful at training people for living wage



employment. I propose that we look closely at building a green economy and at the jobs that field can create such as weatherization projects and developing a facility in the city that builds solar panels. Upgrading our entire education system is of course the long term solution to training and educating people for work but we can't just sit back and wait while current generations remain unemployed. The huge rate of illiteracy in the District only adds to the problem for current generations but we must and can upgrade our literacy programs and we can do all these things with public/private partnerships. All of these efforts need to involve a buy-in by the business community and the faith community if we are to be successful in the long run.

**6) If (re)elected, what will you do to create and protect affordable housing options for both home-buyers and tenants, and alleviate homelessness?**

I am committed to funding the affordable housing trust fund and to make sure that we work creatively with entrepreneurs who are developing and building single and multi-family housing projects. There are many ways to keep affordable housing in the District and working with developers and ANCs can provide some good answers. Projects like View 14 in Columbia Heights was an example of creativity where the developers worked with the community and instead of only providing a few low income apartments they worked with a tenant group a block away to provide the financing for multiple affordable units in the neighborhood. I am in favor of maintaining rent control and making sure that we work to incentivize affordable housing units,

**7) Do you think reform in the D.C. Public Schools is headed in the right direction? Explain your answer.**

Yes. Contrary to the incumbent in my Council race I would have voted YES on School Reform and I still believe that overall school reform is headed in the right direction and must move forward. I believe that we must move school reform away from a focus on personalities and towards a focus on policy. We must demand total transparency in both budgets and policy if we are to continue to move forward. We need to do that because after all of the hard work that has included closing some schools and finally arriving at a new contract with teachers we won't make continued progress unless everyone in the community is involved - including parents and teachers. In order to move forward the entire community can and must be united and committed to reform.

I have proposed an Independent "Ombudsman" to bring parents and the community a voice in reform. I will insist on appropriate Council oversight of reform and will speak out on a regular basis to see that reform continues to move forward. Our children deserve no less from us that to have the opportunities for a successful life that a good education will bring them.

**8) What policies do you recommend for reducing crime and increasing public safety in the District of Columbia?**

I recommend that we first stop pretending that all crime is down by playing sleight of hand with statistics. The government needs to recognize that while the number of homicides is down, and those numbers are down across the nation, violent crime is actually up in the District. We need to address the fact that hate crime is up in the District and we need to address the fact that violent juveniles are escaping from DYRS facilities and committing heinous crimes while on the run. I have served as a Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Reserve Police Officer and will do so again when I am on the Council. I have walked the beat and know our communities and will continue to do so. I will insist that we hold hearings on crime and the discussion on what to do about it, in the communities and neighborhoods most impacted by crime and



out of the Wilson building. I will insist that some hearings are held in the evenings and on weekends when working people and students can participate in the discussion of the solutions to the problems. I will propose stronger education and recreation programs for after school such as the very successful private/public partnership created at the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center. I will work to ensure that the MPD force is brought to the full complement of 4200 authorized by law. I will work to pass legislation that gives the MPD the tools they need to make our communities safer while at the same time ensuring that we protect the rights of law abiding citizens.

**9) What are the three most important steps that need to be taken to revitalize the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority?**

The three steps are:

1. Hiring a nationally respected and excellent manager for the system;
2. Ensuring a steady stream of funding from the jurisdictions it serves and that includes a reliable federal payment; and
3. Coordinating all the local systems with the WMTA to see that we are operating them in the safest and most cost effective manner.

**10) If (re)elected, what steps will you take to invigorate the D.C. statehood movement?**

I would actually speak up on this issue both in the District and on Capitol Hill. I will support groups like DC for Democracy who have as this as their mission. We have in many ways become complacent about this in the District. We can't even get the entire Council to come to meetings and lobby for our citizens. I am committed to statehood and that means I am committed to lobbying, helping to raise the funds needed to do that, and speaking out anywhere and everywhere I can on the issue.

**11) A moratorium on earmarks was declared in Fiscal Year 2010. Do you think past practices for awarding earmark grants should be reformed? If so, how?**

I think they should be reformed and I have a proposal that will do that. I believe we need to change the perception that earmarks are simply a giveaway of public funds and the only way to do that is to have all requests for earmarks totally transparent and assure the public that any earmarks appropriated will be used only for the projects they are meant to support and that these projects and the funds will be closely monitored.

Earmarks often go to support non-profit groups in our City that provide services which add positively to the culture or economic development of the District. They provide services in the areas of health, education, recreation, housing etc. Many of these groups, both large and small, are able to provide needed services to the people of the District at a cost much lower than if the DC Government provided them. They do this by combining relatively small amounts of money from the government with donations from the private and business sectors and they use of volunteers to assist in providing the services.

As a member of the DC Council I wouldn't want to close out options for funding earmarks for deserving and important groups because some prior grants went to groups where the money was misused. I believe we can



make the earmark process totally transparent so that any money given to an entity will be closely tracked to ensure that it is being used for the requested purpose.

Funds should never be given in a lump sum but rather over a period of time based on proof of their being appropriately used. All requests for earmarked funds should be placed online and the Councilmember who requests them should have his/her name attached to the request. Each earmark should be assigned to the appropriate committee and committee staff should be following the funding trail and approving each additional allocation of funds. In addition to that any Councilmember whose earmark request has been incorporated into the budget should be required to place a quarterly report online confirming that they have reviewed the progress of the organization who is receiving the funds.

Below is a draft of a form which I would request of each group asking for an earmark through a Council office.



**Special Appropriations  
Request Form**

This form must be submitted to my office by ----- along with the one-page abstract described below. Please fill out the form in its entirety. If you have questions, contact -----in my office at-----or at the email address below. **Note: This form will be made public in its entirety.**

**To Submit This Form:**

E-mail this form to -----The email subject line should include the words “Name of Project,” along with the name of your institution and the name or very short description of the project request (e.g., “Workforce Development Initiative- HOPE PROJECT- Ready for Success”)

If you have more than one appropriations request, **please submit separate emails for each project.**

**Project Information**

**Date Submitted:**

**Name of Submitting Institution:**

**Address of Submitting Institution:**

**Project Name (brief but descriptive title):**

**Project Description (1-2 sentences on how the money will be spent):**

**If more than one request is submitted under your group, please list Priority of Request (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.):**

**CONTACT INFO (you may add more than one contact, but the first entry will be forwarded to the agency if funding is awarded):**

**Name:**

**Phone:**

**E-mail:**

**REQUEST AMOUNT:**

**Total Cost of the Project (including requested amount above):**



**Provide your budget breakdown, and list ALL anticipated sources of funding for the project, and the amount you expect to receive from each source in FY 2011 (e.g., Federal, State, Local, Private, etc.):**

**Expected obligation of FY 2011 District funds, by fiscal year:**

**FY 2011**

**FY 2012**

**FY 2013**

**Is this a one-year project request, or does your organization plan to request District funds for this project for multiple years? If multiple years, provide an estimate for the amounts that would be requested beyond FY 2011.**

**Expected completion date of the project:**

**Did your organization request or receive any District funds in FY 2010?**

**If you have previously received District appropriations funding for this project please list the amount of money this project has received over the past four appropriations cycles. Please include which Member(s) of the Council helped to secure this funding:**

**FY 2010:**

**Member:**

**FY 2009:**

**Member:**

**FY 2008:**

**Member:**

**FY 2007:**

**Member:**

**If your project is officially supported by any local or regional organizations other than your own, list them here:**

**Please attach an abstract of your project (maximum one page) to describe your proposed budget project.**



**12) The District's election laws do not allow the rights of minorities to be subject to popular vote. Do you nevertheless think the District's new Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality Law should be put up for popular vote? Why or why not?**

NO - it should NOT be put to a popular vote. I support the vote of the DC Council for the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality Act and I would have voted yes. I believe that under the home rule charter the legislature has the right to determine that this act is not appropriate for initiatives or referendums. Over 30 years ago the DC Council adopted language that ensured that the rights of minorities protected under the District's Human Rights Act cannot be put to a vote of the general population. I agree with that decision and believe that the Council at that time, made up of many civil rights leaders, did that with full knowledge of what it meant. While this issue is proceeding through the courts at this time, I believe that the City will win its case and there will not be a public vote.

Going back to the federalist papers it was clear that the founding fathers of our nation believed that the rights of the minority should never be put to a vote of the majority. That is a founding principle of our nation.

It is the diversity of the people of the District of Columbia that makes us such a great city and will allow us to climb to even greater heights. We must insist on the separation of church and state and the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality Act does that in very clear language.