



## 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?

Work to build a united vision and strategy to:

- a) Continue reform of our education system: Reform is going well, but we need to refocus on areas beyond DCPS. We need to return to the discussion of the three sector approach for education, need to get honest about accountability in ALL of our schools, and need to focus on critical reforms in the areas of special education and post-secondary education. (UDC, community college, vocational education, etc);
- b) Reduce juvenile crime and assist in transitioning returning residents (ex-offenders): overall, crime rates are down, but we have more than 130 gangs and crews in the District, committing more than 60% of the violent crimes. There also are more than 4000 residents scheduled to return to the District from the federal prison system, with limited capacity or strategy to accommodate their successful return. Both will require collaborative engagement of key agencies, not-for-profits and the business sector to ensure these issues are systemically addressed.
- c) Put District residents to work: The unemployment rate in some parts of the District is double the city-wide average, while at the same time employment opportunities are readily available. This disparity is caused by our residents' lack of job readiness which can be solved by key skills training leading to a certificate of career readiness that will certify to potential employers that our residents are skills ready to assume available jobs. In addition, the partnership between DCPS, the business community and DOES should be reestablished to offer students career to work training and employment opportunities while they earn school credit.
- d) Use our resources wisely and reengage citizens in the budget priority setting: There is currently a disconnect between policy makers and the people. We need to work toward involving citizens and action groups in budget decisions, creating vision documents among all wards that will translate into my actions related to decisions on how we spend our money, and what's important to us as communities and as a city.

\*Please return .pdf format to [dcfordemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:dcfordemocracy@gmail.com) by Tuesday, June 1 at the latest\*



## DC for Democracy 2010 City Council Questionnaire

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

- a) Ensuring that education reform in K-12 works, and works systemically (not based on the Chancellor or Superintendent). We need a citywide plan with real buy-in to ensure that reforms that began three years ago are embraced and implemented regardless of who serves as Chancellor.
- b) Ensuring that our approach to crime isn't all punishment, but that efforts are taken to prevent crime, including greater recreational and out-of-school time options for children, as well as meaningful career-to-work and vocational training are widely available.
- c) Creating critical job training and career readiness skills to residents so that they may compete to take the jobs that are available. The Certificate of Career Readiness program will ensure a level field with Maryland and Virginia, which already provides such training and certificates to their residents.
- d) Unsustainable spending in critical areas and the ongoing lack of resources: The District is still plagued by incredible waste of resources. We have to repay the federal government millions of dollars each year because we haven't documented our provision of services (Medicaid, State Education grants, etc). In addition, we are paying exorbitant costs for enrollment in and transportation to out-of-state schools because we can't teach our neediest of students here in the District.

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

I have more than 25 years of successful senior level experience in the public and private sectors. I have not only developed public policy, but also have been responsible for creating and managing operational units and entities to implement policy, including managing multimillion dollar budgets and managing large staffs.

As Chief of Staff to former Mayor Anthony Williams, I understand the day-to-day operations of District agencies, which offers an advantage in my ability to offer better and more comprehensive oversight of District agencies. I not only have I lead the District's effort to enhance voting rights, budget and legislative autonomy, as well as to increase the level of engagement of District residents through citizen summits and community planning sessions, but also the District's

\*Please return .pdf format to [dcfordemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:dcfordemocracy@gmail.com) by Tuesday, June 1 at the latest\*



## DC for Democracy 2010 City Council Questionnaire

engagement with its federal, national and regional partners to create strategies to address national and cross border issues.

As an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner and Chair in Ward 6, I have a record of responsiveness to community interests, including health care and access to educational options.

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?

We talk a lot about eliminating waste, fraud and abuse. But eliminating waste, fraud and abuse won't get us to where we need to be in terms of balancing our resources and our spending. At a minimum, we should reestablish select oversight committees on Medicaid and Special Education to allow both the executive and legislative branches to work together to develop and monitor agency performance to capture federal Medicaid funding, as well as to reduce the spiraling costs of special education.

We also should avoid additional taxes and fees as a means to balance the budget. Much of what has been proposed, impacts those who can least afford to pay and threatens the fragile social safety-net.

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.

There is great concern in the private sector about the gap that exists between the skills required in today's workplace and those exhibited by potential and incumbent employees. Businesses have trouble finding and hiring people who have basic employable skills and who are therefore trainable for specific jobs. The Career Readiness Certificate is a portable skills credential, assuring employers that a job applicant actually has the basic skills they seek.

Employers know that the costs of hiring, training, and retention significantly affect their bottom line. For an employer who may be contemplating moving his/her business to a new state or expanding an existing company, the skill level of the available workforce is often a deciding factor. Hiring for entry-level positions is particularly difficult because the applicant often has little or no work history, and presents with only a brief resume and an educational credential such as a high school diploma or a two- or four- year degree. While these credentials

\*Please return .pdf format to [dcfordemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:dcfordemocracy@gmail.com) by Tuesday, June 1 at the latest\*



## DC for Democracy 2010 City Council Questionnaire

are beneficial, they do not always give a clear indication of the skills that the applicant possesses.

Although the District was part of the initial states that came together to advance this idea, it has yet to be implemented and our residents continue to remain at a competitive disadvantage with our neighbors.

In addition, the District's Child Care Subsidy Program is a great example of leveraging government funding. The program, funded jointly through both local and federal dollars, offers a subsidy to providers of high quality pre-school programs to enroll the child of a low-income working family. This not only supports a bright educational start for the child, but also allows the parents, particularly single caregivers, opportunities to work without paying for costly childcare.

The program currently and usually has a waiting list of approximately 5,000 children, despite steady increased funding from the government over the past years. This could amount to at least equal that amount of working parents who are struggling between their job and their commitment to their child. Though we may never be able to drive this waiting list down without significantly expanding the program, we can take immediate steps to ensure that the program is aligned with workforce strategies.

Finally, the District should reinstate the Summer Youth Program. The last year that the DC Chamber of Commerce was able to partner with the Department of Employment Services was in 2008 in which they provided 300 area youth with a minimum of ten (10) weeks employment in private sector jobs, including paid pre-employment training prior to job placement.

The Summer Youth Employment Program was a successful public private partnership that allowed the District's business community to partner with the Government and District schools to provide meaningful employment experiences for District youth and allowed participating youth the opportunity to contribute to their achieving success in the marketplace as working adults.

This program provided pre-employment training for selected youth between 17-21 years of age, who met DOES economic guidelines. These interns were pre-screened by the Department of Employment Services (DOES) and DC Chamber of Commerce

\*Please return .pdf format to [dcfordemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:dcfordemocracy@gmail.com) by Tuesday, June 1 at the latest\*



## DC for Democracy 2010 City Council Questionnaire

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

Continue to work with developers to mandate the inclusion of affordable units as part of any city funded projects, including the continued funding of the Affordable Housing Trust fund.

To address homelessness, I would continue the Homeless No More blueprint that identifies the following strategies:

- a. Increase homeless prevention efforts within local and federal government.
- b. Develop and/or subsidize at least 6,000 net additional units of affordable, supportive permanent housing to meet the needs of the city's homeless and other very low-income persons at risk of homelessness.
- c. Provide wraparound mainstream supportive services fully coordinated with Continuum of Care programs and special needs housing.

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

Yes, but I don't think we've gone far enough. We haven't included parents and stakeholders in the work that we're doing, and their input and buy-in is critical to long-term reform. I also think that we need to turn our attention to the other 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of our public school students attending public charter schools, which was the first public school reform initiative that really took root in our city. What's happening in that movement, what's working, what isn't? Has anyone heard? We need to mine that resource to find model programs, find the best and most promising schools, and replicate and expand them, either in conjunction or as a compliment, to the DCPS system. We further need to look at strengthening their ability to self-govern, and ensure that schools that aren't working don't continue to stay in business, period.

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

\*Please return .pdf format to [dcfordemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:dcfordemocracy@gmail.com) by Tuesday, June 1 at the latest\*



## DC for Democracy 2010 City Council Questionnaire

There also are more than 4000 residents scheduled to return to the District from the federal prison system, with limited capacity or strategy to accommodate their successful return. Both will require collaborative engagement of key agencies, not-for-profits and the business sector to ensure these issues are systemically addressed.

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

- a) Dedicated funding source from the federal government, with a moderate growth rate.
- b) Capital funding for infrastructure and equipment upgrades.
- c) Equitable distribution of resource allocation: Make riders coming into the District from the suburbs pay a higher portion of fees than those riding within District boundaries, imposes a "commuter tax" to increase WMATA resources, and reduce the overall subsidy provided by the District.

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

Attempt to broaden the level of support among our regional and national partners.

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?

It is important to help our community organizations, who are providing real resources to our neighborhoods, through the District's budget. But it isn't fair to steer resources to get around competition, which often inspires the best and brightest ideas to solve our local issues.

The Children and Youth Investment Trust Fund was established as a public-private grant-making institution that receives an allotment from the District each year to run competitive grant programs, and I think that, overall, it's a good model. I would like to improve on that model by creating an inter-agency coordinating body, which may receive a direct allocation for District-provided

\*Please return .pdf format to [dcfordemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:dcfordemocracy@gmail.com) by Tuesday, June 1 at the latest\*



## DC for Democracy 2010 City Council Questionnaire

grants each year, earmarked for various TYPES of grants. That coordinating council would work most closely with a related agency (DOH, OSSE, MPD) to determine the parameters of a grant program, but be responsible for ensuring a competitive process and overseeing the use of funds with real accountability measures and reporting requirements for recipients.

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?

Yes, I believe that the new law should have been put before the voters and that, at a minimum, adequate religious exemptions provided.

Thank you!!

\*Please return .pdf format to [dcfordemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:dcfordemocracy@gmail.com) by Tuesday, June 1 at the latest\*