

# 2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire

## General

DATE January 2011

NAME Miguel del Valle

HOME PHONE (773) 637-2819 BUSINESS PHONE (312) 733-8083

CAMPAIGN ADDRESS 1325 W. Grand Avenue

CAMPAIGN PHONE (312) 733-8083 FAX (312) 733-2680

CAMPAIGNWEBSITE www.delvalleformayor.com EMAIL delvalleformayor@att.net

CAMPAIGN MANAGER Bruce Embrey

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

The ongoing work of the LGBT community to promote their own equal treatment in daily life and under the law is one of the most important civil rights efforts of our times. As a result, we live in a society that is more inclusive and fairer than ever before, although there is obviously much more to be done.

As a State Senator, I consistently supported issues that are important to the LGBT community, including the 2005 law that added protections against discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas based on sexual orientation to the Illinois Human Rights Act. I also voted in favor of legislation establishing hate crimes based on sexual orientation and worked to maintain funding for HIV/AIDS outreach in minority communities when cuts were proposed.

I applaud the recent passage of state law allowing for civil unions and I believe that government should respect the rights of same sex couples to marry.

## 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?

I understand that the new state law in favor of civil unions will help address some of these equity issues. However, the City already offers health benefits to same sex domestic partners of employees enrolled in a City of Chicago medical care plan for employees. I fully support this and as Mayor will see to it that access to these benefits is maintained. However, the process for enrolling in these benefits is a little complicated. As Mayor I will see to it that all Department of Personnel staff are thoroughly trained in the enrollment process and that all employees are

## 2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire

supplied with information regarding the enrollment process. Also, I would require all City vendors and contractors to provide spousal benefits for same-sex partners of their employees.

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 have long been a supporter of civil unions and gay marriage. And, as Mayor, I would actively seek benefits for LGBT employees and their partners that are equal to individuals who are able to marry.

### 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?

The Chicago Public Schools system faces numerous challenges and requires strong leadership to implement the necessary changes to improve our schools. As Mayor, I will appoint as superintendent an educator with strong executive and managerial skills to head the Chicago Public Schools.

This person must also value diversity and ensure a school system that provides a welcoming, safe learning environment for all children as well as diverse staff. This will require education and training across the CPS system around sensitivity to LGBT students, including specific attention to anti-bullying efforts as this problem reaches new heights and dimensions.

The new superintendent must also be held accountable for establishing and meeting high educational standards and for transforming low performing neighborhood schools into high performing schools. The ideal candidate must have a solid track record of producing results in collaboration with school administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. It will be especially important for anti-bullying strategies to be developed collaboratively among all stakeholders to promote broad buy-in and respect for the safety and dignity of all students.

The new superintendent must be a practitioner of educational best practices and capable of fostering innovative problem-solving throughout the educational system. The ability to handle fiscal matters is a high priority in these difficult economic times.

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

Yes, I commit to this per my statement above about the collaborative environment I will insist on. Additionally, as Mayor I will specifically appoint an individual to a senior management

## 2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire

position at CPS whose job is to oversee programs related to the LGBT community and also serve as its liaison.

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?

Through the appointed liaison and stakeholder input I would see to it that LGBTQ topics are included in the CPS curricula.

Sex education with a focus on safe sex in Chicago Public Schools is a necessity. There should be a proper balance between the role of the school and that of the parent when it comes to sex education. There are qualified health professionals and nonprofit organizations that offer expertise in communicating with young people on these important issues. As Mayor, I will support the use of these resources to develop and offer a responsible, age-appropriate curriculum to students, and to seek new resources, such as federal funding, to pay for it. For example, CPS recently received \$3.9 million from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for teen pregnancy prevention.

However, Illinois state law requires that abstinence must be emphasized if safe sex is to be taught in a public school. Although abstinence may be the most proven way to avoid pregnancy and STDs, I do not believe that it is realistic to expect abstinence from all young people, given the society our kids grow up in. For this reason I would like to see a change in state law that focuses on promoting practices that today's kids may be more receptive to, while still emphasizing the importance of abstinence and family conversations about values and safety. It is also important to understand that the role of the school is not to supplant the parent's role, but to support it by providing facts and information to the student and parent. I would also like to see an increase in some of the quality nonprofit organizations that are offering safe sex programming in schools, such as BEHIV.

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.?

Yes, I believe that it is extremely important to not only document incidents of bullying and discrimination, but to act upon these reports. And such stakeholder involvement in this process is very consistent with my vision for the CPS educational environment.

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?

## 2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire

As a legislator in Springfield, I worked to advance and promote an agenda that was both inclusive and accepting of the LGBTQ community. As the Mayor of Chicago, I will continue to promote a discourse of acceptance that would embrace and treat all people with dignity and respect. More specifically, I recommend the following:

- Mandate the institution of anti-bullying, anti-harassment policies in all branches of city government, not just the public schools, and create an enforcement mechanism so the policies are executed with the utmost respect to all. This would also include all vendors doing business with the City of Chicago.
- Institute violence prevention funding opportunities for neighborhood nonprofit organizations to prevent the harm of their youth through strategies that are developed organically by neighborhood residents and youth themselves.

### Aging

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

Yes, I believe strongly in the provision of culturally competent services to all the city's vulnerable populations. That being said, an assessment of current service provision for LGBT seniors is necessary to determine if needs are being met. In light of the burgeoning number of seniors as Baby Boomers turn 65, the City and our society as a whole will need to rethink and restructure services to address the needs of all seniors, including LGBT seniors.

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

It is crucial that the City empower nonprofits and work with them to capture federal funding, like the grant that was recently awarded to the Center on Halsted for programming for LGBT seniors. I believe that it is the City's duty to assist and support nonprofits so that they are better positioned to land similar grants. Additionally, as Mayor I will express to City Delegate Agencies the City's expectation that all contracted organizations serving seniors commit in writing to ensure that their services will be provided equitably and in an LGBT friendly manner or they will not receive continued funding.

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

## **2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire**

Yes, I believe that LGBT seniors are a vulnerable population with a unique set of challenges and should be recognized as such by the City of Chicago.

### **Youth Homelessness**

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

A 2007 study found that between 1,448 and 3,000 homeless youth in Chicago are LGBT. That is nearly 20% of all estimated homeless youth in the City of Chicago. These statistics prove that homelessness is extremely prevalent among LGBT youth and we must better serve these youth. The numbers continue to grow as individuals come out at increasingly younger ages and run into conflict with their families, thus leading them to hit the homeless system at younger ages.

Unfortunately, there is not enough capacity in the City's youth homelessness system as it is. And not all of the funded Delegate Agency homeless youth shelters are LGBT friendly. Especially some of the faith-based organizations need training and education for staff and leadership to specifically understand the sub-population of LGBT youth. I will require City-funded agencies to train their staff and commit in writing to providing LGBT friendly services as a condition of continued funding.

Additionally, as Mayor I will implement a LGBT youth section of the City's LGBT advisory committee to the Mayor, so that the City is more aware of the challenges LGBT youth are facing. I will also work in collaboration with nonprofit organizations and the Chicago Police Department to develop programs and policies that will be more inclusive of and sensitive to LGBT youth. I look forward to incorporating LGBT homeless youth voices into creating unified solutions to making Chicago a safer, more open community for LGBT youth.

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

As I stated previously, I will mandate the institution of anti-bullying, anti-harassment policies in all branches of city government and create an enforcement mechanism so the policies are executed with the utmost respect to all. This would also include all Delegate Agencies and vendors doing business with the City of Chicago. This will also require training across city departments and Delegate Agencies, for which I will seek adequate funding.

### **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?

## **2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire**

As Mayor, I will lead by example by ensuring diversity in City hiring, including seeking out qualified LGBT and transgendered individuals. I will ensure that city government and its vendors and Delegate Agencies are open to and affirming of qualified LGBT and transgendered applicants and employees. Also, as per my policy stated above concerning LGBT-friendly youth homeless shelters, I will uphold similar standards in the service of transgendered clients.

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

I will ensure that this issue is appropriately on the radar of and followed through on by the City's Commission on Human Relations which investigates discrimination complaints. I will also insist that the Chicago Police Department train beat officers to recognize and be empathetic to issues in the LGBT community and to avoid discrimination and prejudicial assumptions. These include but are not limited to not assuming that transgendered individuals are sex workers and taking seriously domestic violence within LGBT couples. Instances of discrimination will continue to go underreported if transgendered individuals do not believe that their concerns or issues will be taken seriously by the authorities or, worse, that they will be harassed. These issues will probably be even harder to overcome amongst transgendered people of color in communities that have traditionally not had collegial relationships with police and may have encountered a lot of societal prejudice. It will require a significant new commitment to cultural sensitivity and intentionality of relationship-building among police, other authorities, and transgendered individuals and their advocates.

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

Yes, I will actively promote a diverse City workforce that reflects the diversity of Chicago.

### **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 and yes. I have been and will continue to be an advocate for equal marriage rights for same sex couples at all levels of government.

### **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?

## 2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire

Currently, Chicago provides \$4.6 million for community-based HIV prevention services through City corporate funding. As Mayor, I will see to it that this funding is maintained and that increases in funding are considered based on unmet service needs found through the analysis and research of the Division of STI/HIV/AIDS, HIV Prevention Program, and the HIV Prevention Planning Group.

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, the Chicago Department of Public Health Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Health offers much needed services to an often misrepresented population. As Mayor, I would see to it that this office receives funding so that it can continue offering quality services.

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

As Mayor I would support the continuation of City corporate funding for entities such as the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus to address HIV prevention in communities of color. The statistics of HIV infection among communities of color are alarming and there needs to be a continued effort to raise awareness and slow the rapid rate of infection.

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

As I stated previously, I will mandate the institution of anti-bullying, anti-harassment policies in all branches of city government and create an enforcement mechanism so the policies are executed with the utmost respect to all. This would also include all vendors doing business with the City of Chicago. As I have mentioned, I will ensure cultural competency trainings for City staff and will require that Delegate Agencies ensure LGBT-friendly services. I will ensure the City takes the lead in seeking funding to ensure such training for City departments and its nonprofit partners.

5. What criteria would you use to determine a more equitable way to distribute funding for HIV prevention and services?

I am in full support of maintaining the current amount of City corporate funding for HIV services. These services are vital to slowing the spread of this epidemic. An increase in this funding and/or an alteration in the distribution of funding would be based on unmet service needs found through the analysis and research of the Division of STI/HIV/AIDS, HIV Prevention Program, and the HIV Prevention Planning Group. I also am convinced that it is important to invest in capacity building of organizations in communities of color to ensure that services reach underserved neighborhoods and populations.

# 2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire

## Public Safety

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

Yes, I believe that all City departments and functions should reflect the diversity of Chicago's population.

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

I would support allocating funds to promote cultural competency through trainings for both departments.

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

Increasing the number of LGBT liaisons within the Chicago Police Department is a point of consideration. However, I feel that this is a decision that should be made jointly with the newly appointed 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 support standardized guidelines for humane treatment of transgendered individuals while in the custody of the Chicago Police Department that would be created by transgendered community members in collaboration with the Chicago Police Department. I believe that the Town Hall Meeting with Superintendent Jody Weis that was held in May by the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations' Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues is a solid step in creating dialogue around this issue. In an effort to create standardized guidelines for the humane treatment of transgendered individuals by Chicago Police I will advocate to increase the amount of these types of interactions.

## 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?

## **2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire**

In my Administration, the Advisory Council on LGBT Issues would continue in its role as liaison between city government and the LGBT communities, improving services for LGBT individuals, identifying discrimination and proposing solutions, ensuring equal treatment for LGBT individuals seeking justice, and designing educational programs in conjunction with the Commission on Human Rights.

The Advisory Council on LGBT Issues has played a key role in advocating for the LGBT community. I would like to see this role become more prominent.