



## Unite 25 - Illinois State Representative Candidate Questionnaire

Unite 25 is an independent community organization building grassroots political power in and around Chicago's 25th Ward. We are dedicated to supporting local leaders who are committed to ensuring that government puts people before profit. To this end, we are committed to fully supporting those candidates who we believe will best support our communities. In order to be favorably considered for the Unite 25 endorsement, follow the below instructions carefully.

### Instructions:

- From within your Word processor, please answer all questions in Part I (Instructions and Candidate Details) and Part II (Issue Questions). In the Essay section, please answer the questions at the level you deem sufficient.
  - Y/N questions may also include a short answer if you deem it necessary. Please use as much space as necessary when answering each question. Please also feel free to include supporting documents as necessary.
- **Please email your completed Unite 25 questionnaire to [info@unite25.org](mailto:info@unite25.org) no later than 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup>. Candidates who fail to meet this deadline will not be able to be considered for endorsement.**
- All responding candidates will be invited to appear before an interviewing committee on Saturday, January 20. Unite 25 will then endorse candidates following a majority vote of its members. For each office, Unite 25 will endorse only one candidate or make no endorsement.
- Completed Unite 25 questionnaires will be posted on our website after the submission deadline has passed. For privacy purposes, your home address will be redacted from the questionnaire prior to posting.
- All candidates who submit their questionnaires by the deadline will be notified by email of the endorsement decision.
- **If you have any further questions, please contact us at [info@unite25.org](mailto:info@unite25.org).**

<b>NAME &amp; PARTY</b>	<b>AARON ORTIZ, DEMOCRAT</b>
<b>AFFILIATION</b>	
<b>OFFICE SOUGHT</b>	Illinois State Representative
<b>DISTRICT</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> District
<b>CAMPAIGN WEBSITE</b>	<a href="http://www.ortizforstaterep.com">www.ortizforstaterep.com</a>
<b>CAMPAIGN MANAGER</b>	Dion Miller-Perez
<b>NUMBER OF PETITION SIGNATURES FILED</b>	1500
<b>PROJECTED VOTES TO WIN?</b>	8000
<b>CAMPAIGN BUDGET AND FUNDS RAISED TO DATE?</b>	175,000/10,000



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HOW MANY PAID STAFFERS?	1 paid, 6 volunteer staff
HOW MANY VOLUNTEERS FOR CAMPAIGN?	50+

### Priorities

Please name your top 3 priorities as an elected official and explain your reasoning.

- 1. Education Funding.** I'm an educator and college counselor at Back of the Yards High School, and a proud member of the Chicago Teachers Union. A quarter of residents in the first district are under the age of 15, and every day I work with families in the community as they struggle to prepare their children's future. We need to fully invest in these young students. Illinois is currently last among all states for state share of funding for K-12 education and this needs to change. Finally, we also need to improve adult education for the 40% of adults in the first district who don't have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- 2. Bringing good jobs to the district.** In the first district, the unemployment rate is over 10%, and it is over 15% for young adults. Creating jobs and getting our economy growing is one of my top priorities.
- 3. Healthcare.** At Back of the Yards High School where I teach, the majority of young students I see and work with every day depend on public assistance for their healthcare. These are kids who have done nothing wrong other than have parents too poor to afford health insurance. If elected, I will fight to make sure every Illinois resident has healthcare by advocating for Medicare for All.

### Election Reform and Building a Movement (Essay)

- Unite25 is a progressive and working class organization dedicated to the cause of economic and racial justice for those in our community and beyond. Some of us have long been engaged in this work, while others are new to being involved. Many of us were inspired by the Chuy Garcia campaign to replace Rahm Emanuel as mayor, while others became active during Senator Bernie Sanders' 'Political Revolution.' A common concern amongst our group in the increasing influence big money and concentrated wealth has in influencing our political process. What do you believe needs to happen in order for our political process to better work for everyday people living in our communities? How can we work together towards that end? **I was inspired by Bernie Sanders and Chuy Garcia, helping on both of their campaigns, and I am proud to have been endorsed and supported by Chuy Garcia. We need a broad based movement. Together we can reduce wealth inequality, overturn Citizens United, and achieve campaign finance reform. Together we can ensure our community is engaged and achieve a political revolution with grassroots organizing.**

### A. Education (Essay)



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1. For years, community members and labor organizations have demanded an elected school board that would be accountable to the voters of Chicago. After over 50 Chicago Public Schools were closed in 2013 and with new talks of closings, do you believe Chicago should have an elected school board that will be directly accountable to the voters of Chicago and do you support state legislation to that effect? **Yes, I fully support having an elected school board accountable to the people.**
  
2. In 2016, out of the political margins, Senator Bernie Sanders became a major political force in American politics endorsing a political revolution to transform our society. A major rallying cry of this “revolution” was the call for tuition free college. In Illinois, due to budget impasse and intransigence on the Governor’s behalf, our state’s colleges have been weakened, marked by rising tuitions, falling enrollment and staff layoffs. The near closure of Chicago State University epitomized the state’s crisis in higher education. What role do you see the state playing in strengthening higher education, making college more affordable for working families and do you support and see a path towards tuition free college in Illinois? **In addition to teaching, I am a college counselor at Back of the Yards High School where I regularly see bright and talented students held back from fulfilling their potential because of the high costs of college. This should not happen in one of the wealthiest countries in the history of the world. I believe that every student should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and support state efforts to make college more affordable.**

A. Education			
Do You Support:			
	Y	N	
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Expansion of state funded school voucher programs?
2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Up to 67% of Illinois school districts report deficit spending, do you support measures to increase state education spending? <b>Yes, I believe the state should provide more funding. Right now Illinois is last in the U.S. for state support of K-12 education.</b>
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Do you support the increase in state funding for charter school expansion?
4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you support a state moratorium on the expansion of charter schools while the state resolves public school funding issues?
5.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In state tuition free college for Illinois residents?
6.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enacting a “millionaire tax” to strengthen public education?
7.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Student Access Bill, which would allow undocumented students to apply for scholarships to 4-year public universities in Illinois?

### B. Housing and Urban Development: (Essay)



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1. Median rents around the nation have risen at an unprecedented level with many municipalities seeing trends of rent increasing more than 5% annually while wages don't keep up. Chicago, Cook County and the State of Illinois have experienced similar trends, including communities in the 25th Ward, where community members have been especially stressed by rising rents and real estate speculation that has ultimately lead to displacement of a large number of community member. What policies, initiatives and work with community groups do you plan to do to reverse these trends? **There is an increasing need for affordable housing, and it should be a priority to rehab vacant, foreclosed housing. One example that has worked in Cook County has been the Land Bank which has bought vacant properties and resold them for redevelopment.**

### B. Housing and Urban Development

#### Do You Support:

	Y	N	
1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Increased state funding for project based section-8 affordable housing for low income, disabled, veterans and other constituents?
2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A state law requiring landlords to have "just cause" in order to evict a renter?
3.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Repeal of Illinois law prohibiting municipalities from enacting rent control?
4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Passage of state law protecting section 8 voucher holders against discrimination based on their source of income?
5.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Will you accept campaign contributions from real estate interest, including large landlords, developers and realtors? <b>I will not accept contributions from the largest developers, but might from a small realtor.</b>
6.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A state law enacting rent control?
7.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Laws that would protect those with criminal backgrounds and would define said group as a class, protecting rental applicants from housing discrimination due to issues with criminal background?
8.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A law prohibiting landlords from rejecting rental applications based on credit score?

### C. Taxes & Revenues (Essay)

1. Austerity politics has increasingly taken hold in Springfield, deeply cutting into funding for education, critical social services, and worker's pensions. Under Governor Rauner this problem has only worsened, causing generational harm to working people across Illinois. As a legislator, what would be your approach to overcoming intentional gridlock in Springfield to fully fund and expand critical social services for your constituents and all people across the state? **The Kansas experiment of cutting taxes and servies to the bone has clearly demonstrated the failure of austerity policies. The best way to get out of debt is to make investments that lead to increased economic growth. As a legislator, I will work to build coalitions to overcome the gridlock in Springfield and ensure that the most wealthy individuals pay their fair share.**

### C. Taxes & Revenues

#### Do You Support:



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	Y	N	
1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A progressive income tax?
2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A state financial transaction tax? (Robin Hood Tax) <b>A national financial transaction tax would be even better.</b>
3.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The state honoring its commitment to state workers by ensuring stable funding for pensions?
4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Closing corporate tax loop-holes in order to help stabilize the state budget?

### D. Labor and Community Organizations (Essay)

- In the past decade Midwestern states have experienced aggressive and well-funded campaigns backed by the Koch brothers and entities such as the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) aimed at weakening both public and private sector unions via “Right to Work” and other anti-union measures and legislation. Within this time, Midwestern states such as Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan and others have successfully passed Right to Work legislation. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court will likely decide on the landmark Janus V. AFSCME in the next year or 2, potentially rendering the entire public sector “Right to Work” in the near future. As a public official what role do you see unions playing in our communities and how do you plan to work and support unions as a public official? **Unions are critical to having a strong middle class and balanced democracy. If elected, I will support unions by supporting organizing efforts, pushing back on right-wing rhetoric attacking unions, and by supporting legislation that helps workers. I will also reach out to companies to encourage them to allow card check, not run anti-union campaigns, and after workers decide to form a union, to negotiate with them on a first contract.**
- In response to growing inequality, the shrinking of the middle class, concerns about public safety and rising cost in healthcare and education, Chicago and the region has seen a growth in community based electoral formations working to support political leadership that will be more responsive to the needs of working class people. There are Chicagoland groups such as Reclaim Chicago, United Working Families and the Democratic Socialist of America but also community based groups such as Unite25 that are looking to work with and both support public officials. What importance and role do you see these groups having and how do you plan to work with some of these formations, including Unite25? **These groups are critical to ensuring that our government is accountable to our communities and not just deep pocketed special interests. I am taking on a machine incumbent who is out of touch with the district and these groups are important to ensuring people in the community know what their elected officials are doing. Once elected, I will work closely with these groups to build a grassroots coalition movement to enact progressive policies to help Illinois families.**

### D. Labor and Community Organizations

#### Do You Support:

	Y	N	
1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A State \$15 Minimum Wage?



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2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A State law requiring all employers have a Earned Sick Time policy that would allow workers to accrue up to 9 sick days a year?
3.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A state policy on maternity and paternity leave?
4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you support legislation that would prioritize workers wage liens having priority over bank liens, mortgages and other debts in the event of a business closing? (#workersfirst legislation)
5.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The elimination of the tiered minimum wage for tipped workers and creating a single minimum wage (1 Fair Wage)?
6.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A law requiring employee notice of schedule changes and a minimum of four hours of pay when an employee reports to work and is sent home during the first four hours of his/her shift?
7.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A just cause standard for employee terminations?
8.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies that restrict the use of temp agencies to replace permanent workers?

### E. Public Safety (Essay)

- Public safety is a growing and serious concern for many residents in the 25th ward. Unfortunately, many residents have been affected by the increasing violence and crime in our community and we are all extremely concerned by violent shootings especially. How do you plan to work with the community, police and social service agencies in alleviating violence and crime in our communities? **I believe it is better to invest in young people than in more prisons. I am a teacher and when I talk with principals at schools in my district, I hear time and time again about the need for more after-school programs. After-school programs keep young people off the streets and give them opportunities that might otherwise not be available for them.**

### F. Healthcare (Essay)

- Healthcare has been a major crisis for many working families of Illinois. Our current system is the most expensive in the entire world and medical debt is the number 1 cause of bankruptcy in the nation. Are there things you think the state can do to relieve this crisis and what policies would support toward this end? **The U.S. pays more for healthcare than any other industrialized nation in the world, yet we still have millions of people without health insurance. I support efforts for a single payer system or adding a public option to help control health care costs. At Back of the Yards High School where I teach, the majority of young students I see and work with every day depend on public assistance for their healthcare. These are kids who have done nothing wrong other than have parents too poor to afford health insurance. If elected, I will make it a top priority to fully fund**



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**Medicaid and the All Kids program that help so many of our students. I will also push for additional resources for community health centers and safety net hospitals.**

<b>F. Healthcare</b>			
<b>Do You Support:</b>			
	Y	N	
1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Patient to staffing ratio legislation for nurses in Illinois hospitals (Safe Staffing Levels)?
2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	State-level single payer healthcare?
3.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Increased state funding for mental health services?
4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintaining support and strengthening the All Kids program?
5.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Making health services at the University of Illinois health system and other state medical facilities free for those unable to afford payments, including undocumented people?
6.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing state level consumer protections for all in Illinois against predatory practices by both insurers and healthcare providers to ensure a high level of care and fair access?

**G. Immigration (Essay)**

1. The Trump administration has notoriously demonized and made attacks on immigrant populations and people of color in our country. More than ever, immigrants are scrutinized and made to live in fear by the administration's actions and rhetoric. How will you lead in protecting immigrant populations and working with community organizations working to defend immigrant's rights? **I am a son of immigrants and running in a district where 40% of the residents are immigrants. I will do everything possible to fight the destructive Trump deportation machine.**

<b>G. Immigration</b>			
<b>Do You Support:</b>			
	Y	N	
1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The state of Illinois become a "Sanctuary State?"
2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you in favor of allowing undocumented immigrants to acquire state identification?
3.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Illinois state medical facilities being available to care for low income undocumented immigrants?
4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prohibiting the state of Illinois Police from collaborating with or assisting ICE in any way?
5.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mandating a non-cooperation policy with the Federal immigration authorities by the IL Dept of Corrections?

**H. Environment (Essay)**



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1. Climate change, global warming and quality of local environment are increasingly concerning everyday working people. In spite of overwhelming evidence that man-made climate change is increasingly a problem, President Trump has derided and undermined efforts to protect the environment and has taken a position of being a climate change denier. What actions locally and as a state can we take to minimize the administration's damage and how will you lead in efforts to protect the environment? **We need to promote renewable energies, sustainable development and public transportation. If elected, I would call for a moratorium on fracking in the state. Finally, I think its important that our decisions are based on science. I would like to increase funding for our universities so we can be leaders on identifying threats and coming up with solutions to our energy and environmental problems. We need to look at increasing funding for the Illinois EPA in light of cutbacks to the Federal EPA.**

### H. Environment

#### Do You Support:

	Y	N	
1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A ban on fracking in Illinois?
2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Increasing funding and support for green energy and jobs?
3.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Illinois increasing support for public transportation, including bike and pedestrian infrastructure?
4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Increased efforts to test for lead and more resources toward remediation?
5.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The state "greening" government buildings, vehicles and other infrastructure by prioritizing green spending?