

Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO Unions

CITY CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE -- 2011

I think that organized labor can revitalize itself by abandoning the tired old methods of forcing people to do what labor unions want. Organized labor could grow and be strong in a true free market sense by persuading, by strengthening and creating training for young people, ranging from using the wealth of unions to create schools and scholarships that would ensure proficiency in basic reading and writing skills, and then provide training in the

Candidate Questionnaire
Baltimore City 2011

trades that can make young people independent and able to provide for themselves, their families and their communities. Why should organized labor support me? Simple – I represent a kernel of positive growth and leaving behind the tired old ways that can only produce more failure.

2. Have you ever been a member of union? If yes, please give union name and number.

No, I haven't.

3. What experience or training do you have that qualifies you for the position you are seeking?

In the almost 20 years that I have been involved in alternative party politics, this question is the biggest red herring of all. I am running for Baltimore City Council President. Your question taken literally means that I should have been City Council President somewhere else in order to be the most qualified for this position. Of course, the legal qualifications to run for this position have nothing to do with that. What qualifies me is that I represent an alternative for the voters, who are tired of same-old. After all, incumbent Jack Young proclaimed on television as his great accomplishment that he showed up every day. Perfect attendance, and probably a lot of going along to get along. . Baltimore City Council presidency is not like being Vice President of the United States or Lieutenant Governor, where the office holder has to keep his mouth zipped and let the top dog tell him what to say and do. It is an independent position.

4. In your opinion what are the three most crucial issues facing your constituents?

The three most crucial issues facing my constituents are the impending bankruptcy of the (1) local, (3) state and (3) federal government, fueled by profound corruption and corporate welfare.

5. Under a Labor Peace Agreement, the company agrees to a fair and democratic process (neutrality/card check) for its employees to use to achieve union representation, should said employees choose to unionize. Would you sponsor or support legislation that would make private companies, such as hotels, that receive public assistance in the form of tax breaks, payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT), or other forms of public subsidy, be required to agree to a Labor Peace Agreement?

As I mentioned before, our local, state and federal governments are facing bankruptcy. To even think about public subsidies during this crisis is the height of irresponsibility.

6. Would you sponsor and/or support legislation that would require final and binding arbitration of all labor disputes by public employees?

FDR, the father of the New Deal, knew that giving public employees the ability to negotiate as unions was unworkable. FDR was right. Public employee unions are not negotiating with a private corporation; they're ultimately negotiating

Candidate Questionnaire
Baltimore City 2011

with taxpayers, and ultimately, it means higher taxes to pay better wages and benefits to public employees. In these hard times, when people are unemployed, the unemployed and those tottering on the brink of unemployment would have to pay more taxes? To keep other people employed? Hello. What part of “unfair” and “unjust” don’t we understand here?

7. Would you sponsor and/or support legislation for pay and benefit parity between fire and police?

Fire and police take enormous risks. I can’t imagine anybody trying to parse which risks are greater or less. They should receive the same pay and benefits.

8. What can the city do to improve economic development to attract and/or retain businesses?

Lower the property tax and the piggy back tax – which would require some wrangling with Annapolis. Eliminate regulations, licenses and fees that make it impossible for small community start-ups to get going. We need a vibrant, entrepreneurial city, not one that just cuts sweetheart deals with large corporations.

9. How would you address the increasing health care cost for active and retired city employees?

Well, the very sad and criminal part of all this is that well-meaning people were sold a bill of goods by jabbering, self-serving politicians. Well, we’re all Americans; we’re all in this together, and the public employees’ difficulties with their health care costs and pensions, are all part of what all of us are going through. When nest eggs were destroyed, a lot of people found themselves without jobs or pensions. We are all feeling the pain of an economic tsunami. Those in the public sector are going to have to bite the same bullet bitten by those in the private sector. We’re all Americans and we’re all in this together. The rank and file in the public sector are no more privileged than the rank and file in the private sector.

10. Do you believe that government often looks to privatization as a way to save money or increase efficiency? When do you believe public services should be privatized?

To the first part of the question – they claim they do. To the second part – local governments have a responsibility for public safety: police, fire and ambulance/first response services. Almost any other so-called public services that local governments try to provide are a stretch. Most work well in the short term, but eventually fail, due to the inherent potential for corruption in government through its virtual absolute power.

11. Would you support the elimination of the current practice of rotational closure of fire suppression units as a budgeting mechanism?

I would eliminate this practice. It’s a cynical, pretentious approach to appearing to be fiscally responsible, when there is so much garbage the rulers

Candidate Questionnaire
Baltimore City 2011

of this city can cut without endangering the lives of our citizens. Before doing something as horrible as that, the Mayor, City Council President and Councilmen and women should all take pay cuts and slash their benefits before they even dream of reducing a legitimate function of government.

12. What would you do to encourage people to move to the city?

As I said before, the city needs to lower its property and piggy back tax – which will require some wrangling with the State Assembly. Property tax should only reflect the value of the land, not the structures. Doing the latter punishes people for doing the right things. Licensing fees and regulations that make it difficult for small businesses to start should be eliminated. The city government has always been enamored with giving huge incentives to the big guys, while the entrepreneurial potential in the inner city is squashed.

13. What are your views on the role of labor unions in society?

Labor unions should be vehicles for encouraging entrepreneurial activity, especially among the poor. The old adversarial model of labor vs. business had its time and its place, and it's now archaic, counter-productive and downright stupid. As I said, unions should be promoters of entrepreneurial activity among the neediest of society—what a beautiful thing that would be!

14. Would you sponsor and/or support the continuation of fully funding education at the level designated by the Thornton Commission? Why?

The Thornton Commission and its legislative follow-up without funding provisions is a farce made up by cowardly legislators in Annapolis who want to look good without feeling the pain. In fact, Thornton has nothing to do with better education. We need charter schools, we need vouchers, we need to promote privately funded scholarships to put pressure on the so-called educational establishment to provide adequate educational services to the children and young people of Baltimore City – and that does not include cheating on the standardized tests. What part of “Thou shalt not steal” do these folks not understand?

15. Do you support the Race to the Top and its effect on the education systems in Maryland?

The Race to the Top is a different name for “No Child Left Behind.” One piece of garbage replaces another. Bravo. It, like “No Child Left Behind,” encourages ethically challenged “educators” to cheat on tests – and we wonder why our young people don't behave as well as we would like! All we need to do is look at the role models that they have in their schools.

16. Explain any ideas about raising revenues to fund services for the public. Are you willing to partner with public sector unions in these efforts?

Look, the purpose of local government is to provide public safety and infrastructure. Once it goes beyond that, it works in the short term and fails in the long term due to the corruption fostered by a virtual absolute system. Some

Candidate Questionnaire
Baltimore City 2011

truths are very hard to swallow, but the fact is that by allowing the citizens of Baltimore to keep the most money that they can in their pockets and encouraging them to do more for their communities we can do more than by pumping more taxes into so-called public services. As I mentioned before, public sector unions were considered folly by FDR, the father of the New Deal, and in my opinion today, public sector unions, by and large, are an oxymoron. You can't suck the public dry to provide services – it's killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

17. Is there a pension crisis? How would you address structural issues in the Baltimore City Pension system?

The first part of your question reminds me of a GEICO insurance commercial. "Is there a pension crisis?" Is the Pope Catholic? Do cows moo? Do fish swim? Etc., etc. How would I address structural issues in the Baltimore City Pension system? The answer is very simple. Public employees will have to face up to the same economic realities that the rest of us face. The people that pay with their taxes for the wages and benefits of public employees while they are unemployed or tottering on the brink of unemployment, cannot be pushed. So public as well as private employees will have to bite the same bullet. We're all in this together – no special groups.

18. Explain your position on Baltimore City's Maintenance of Effort requirements and your position's affect on public employees and education employees.

First of all, in your question, you state "your position's affect on public employees and education employees." Please speak English; it should be "effect." English is my second language, and I've worked very hard to master it. To see something like this in a questionnaire of this caliber is pretty sickening. Regarding your question, if indeed it has anything to do with *effect*, you make a divide between public employees and education employees. Well, sorry, education employees are on the public payroll, so they're public employees – no need to differentiate. At any level, government employees (proper name for public employees) need to reflect the prosperity or hardship of everyone else. Aspiring for better deals in wages, health care and pensions than the people who pay the taxes that pay the salaries is unconscionable, and if anybody does not understand this, what part or "right and wrong" do they not understand?

19. Do you feel the Mayor and City Council should stop rotating closures in the Baltimore City Fire Department and keep all units open 24-7--365 days a year as budgeted?

Baltimore City Fire Department units should be available 24-7--365 days a year as budgeted. And again, before the rulers of the city touch this fundamental service, they could cut their pay and benefits to at least have a basis for saying that they are leaders, not rulers and nincompoops.

Candidate Questionnaire
Baltimore City 2011

20. *In a democracy, the citizens are given the right to elect their representatives.*

The Baltimore City School Board of Commissioners currently is comprised of all appointed members. What are your thoughts on giving citizens the right to elect, if not all, a percentage of the representatives to that Board?

There is no need to ask to have a percentage of the members elected. We need to demand that all members of the Board of Commissioners be elected.

21. *Would you support reduced class sizes in Baltimore City Public Schools?*

Yes, I support reduced class size in Baltimore City Public Schools, which is why I support vouchers, charter schools, privately funded scholarships and encouraging small community schools where children can be taught the basics of reading and writing. Our public school establishment is not concerned about this, as it is filled with people who are more interested in talking about "the children," usually meaning the children of teachers and school administrators, most of whom attend private schools.

May we make this questionnaire public? Yes ✓ No

Signature

Return questionnaire to:

Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO COPE
2701 W. Patapsco Avenue #110
Baltimore, Maryland 21230

opeiu2, afl-cio
June 2011