

**Greater Syracuse Labor Council, AFL-CIO
CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

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CANDIDATE FOR: 4th District Common Councilor, Syracuse

DISTRICT: 4th

Are you the Incumbent? No

If yes, year first elected?

Which Party Lines are you seeking?

Green Party (on ballot by independent nominating petition)

Please attach or mail examples of your campaign literature, if available. If you are an incumbent, please attach or mail examples of your campaign literature from previous campaigns.

Attached are pdf's of a leaflet, a palm card, and a banner.

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Should corporate applicants for public economic assistance or subsidies be judged on their existing record in terms of compliance with labor and civil rights laws as well as on their pledges in terms of job creation?

Yes

COMMENT:

In all economic development contracts, accountability should be built into enforceable performance goals as conditions to receive public subsidies, tax breaks, and other incentives. Performance goals should include:

- v a minimum number of jobs retained and created;
- v compliance with labor, civil rights, and environmental laws;
- v neutrality on union organizing;
- v 2-year early warning of intention to move or close;
- v worker/community right of first option to buy if the firm or plant is to be sold;
- v prevailing wages;
- v health insurance for all employees.

If companies renege on promised standards on job creation and retention, do you support requiring companies to pay back economic assistance money they've received?

Yes

COMMENT:

A clawback provision should be in all economic development contracts that provides for a surety bond to reimburse the public treasury if the company fails to meet the performance goals in the contract.

Will you support Legislation requiring representation by labor and community groups in all Economic Development Agencies?

Yes

COMMENT:

I favor public election of Industrial Development Agency boards, like school boards. Pending the changes in state law such elections would require, I support putting representatives of labor and community groups into seats that the City of Syracuse appoints.

Do you agree that creation of community and regional economic development strategies must include significant input from labor, community interests and academics?

Yes

COMMENT

If Syracuse is going to develop the businesses it needs, it needs a much more direct, pro-active way of developing them than trying to lure businesses here with tax breaks, which cost Syracuse \$2 billion over a recent five-year period, according to Forbes magazine.

It will take creative public enterprise—public power, municipal broadband, a municipal development bank with a business planning and development arm, a planning department to help neighborhood-directed development—to provide the economic infrastructure and services for the development of new community-owned enterprises whose ownership structures anchor them, and the wealth they create, to our community, unlike the absentee-owned corporations that abandoned Syracuse.

By community-owned enterprises I mean worker and consumer cooperatives, resident owner-operated small businesses, and community corporations where voting shares are restricted to residents (like the Green Bay Packers).

The people of Syracuse are ready to invest their labor and their savings in this community. What's missing are institutions designed to harness their labor, savings, and ideas. The specific new institutions needed are a Municipal Development Bank, Neighborhood Assemblies, and a City Planning Department.

Municipal Development Bank: The bank would have a consumer credit business. It would take deposits from local residents and businesses and make consumer and mortgage loans. This side of the bank would compensate for the underinvestment that working class and people of color neighborhoods in the city have suffered for decades due to discrimination and redlining.

The bank would also have an entrepreneurial development department staffed with business planners, engineers, and consulting academics and interns from area universities who would identify market opportunities, conduct feasibility studies, and incubate new businesses. It would plan businesses that meet community identified needs, arrange financing, hire and train the initial workers and management, and advise them as they got up and running. As the business generated revenues and its workers became capable of self-management, the business would pay off financing from the bank and that money would return to the bank for financing other businesses.

While particularly suitable for worker co-ops, this same process could be used to set up owner-operated small businesses, public enterprises, and community corporations.

The bank could start immediately developing the retail outlets Syracuse needs in its neighborhood business districts, perhaps starting with the longstanding need for grocery stores, which have abandoned the city in most neighborhoods. The bank would also play a key role in developing sophisticated green agricultural and manufacturing enterprises, one of the two manufacturing sectors (besides defense related firms) where a cluster of firms and university research institutes already exists in the area focused on renewable energy, environmental services, indoor air quality, and other environmental engineering.

The model here is the very successful co-op bank at the center of the Mondragon cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain, which has a record of successfully starting over 100 industrial and consumer co-ops over the last 50 years with only a few failures, compared to a 90 percent failure rate within two years for US business start ups. In Europe, there are approximately 50,000 worker co-ops with more than 1.4 million worker-owners.

Neighborhood Assemblies: To empower the community in the development process, Neighborhood Assemblies with real powers should be established in each of the city's 25 or so real neighborhoods. Neighborhood Assemblies would be where residents could debate, decide, and instruct representatives on reviewing and updating the citywide Comprehensive Plan and determining their own Neighborhood Plans. These would be empowered neighborhood governments, not the advisory "input" TNT (Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today) sectors.

City Planning Department: The city needs its own planning capacity if it going to do more than just react to developers' proposals. It needs to re-establish a City Planning Department to do real urban and community design, not just administer zoning rules. It should be staffed with urban and community designers, architects, and engineers, as well as artists who can put design ideas in graphic form for the Neighborhood Assemblies and city officials to evaluate. The department should also recruit and facilitate the involvement of professors and students from area's universities in providing this expertise. The City Planning Department would not make planning decisions. Its role would be to provide expert consultation to the democratic planning process based in the Neighborhood Assemblies and to the evaluation of developers' proposals by the assemblies and city officials.

Would you, as an elected official, help to appoint representatives of organized labor to boards and commissions

to ensure working people have a full voice in public policy decisions?

Yes

COMMENT:

This should be the common practice, especially concerning boards and commission related to economic issues.

With respect to all the activity and proposals for a Green economy now being expressed across the political spectrum, I support strengthening the Living Wage Ordinance with, among other improvements, a Community Hiring Hall (what the AFL-CIO calls "Living Wage Plus"), in which unions would have a major role. The Community Hiring Hall would help contractors meet employment goals for ethnic minorities, who are underrepresented by more than 50% in jobs with city contractors, according to the data in the Onondaga County Human Rights Commission reports. The city now has no program or employment goals to increase jobs for city residents or ethnic minorities with city contractors or city departments, except for the police and fire departments pursuant to court settlements from the 1970s. The Community Hiring Hall would help city residents to qualify, get into, and stay in training programs and jobs with the city, its contractors, and other employers.

The Community Hiring Hall would also be a central part of a coordinated Green Jobs program to train and recruit city residents for the skilled workforce of the new Green Economy. It should be at the center of building a partnership among unions, community organizations, contractors, manufacturers, educational institutions, and the city to provide a skilled workforce for green tech sectors. The overall goal is to create unionized green jobs in both the private sector and in public works to restore Onondaga Creek and retrofit our energy, transportation, housing, water, sewage, and waste-recycling infrastructure for economic and ecological sustainability in an era of rising energy costs and global warming.

2. GOOD JOBS

Do you support the concept of using prevailing wage calculations on projects using public funding?

Yes

COMMENT

It ensures fair wages and makes the bids more accurate and easier to compare.

Would you support the use of Project Labor Agreements on projects funded by public funding?

Yes

COMMENT

I support Project Labor Agreements not only because they ensure fair wages and make bids more accurate and easier to compare, but also because they maximize jobs for local workers and minimize labor-management disputes that can delay project completion.

What is your position on the contracting out of services currently being provided by the public sector? Are there specific services or conditions under which you would favor or oppose outsourcing public services?

COMMENT:

I oppose privatization of public services and support expanding public services to areas where the private sector has failed, including energy and broadband utilities, child care and health care, affordable housing, and jobs for the unemployed.

The privatization kick of recent decades is based on a dogmatic belief in the efficiency of the market and private enterprise for all goods and services. Real world experience shows otherwise. Public power and health insurance are far more cost-efficient than investor-owned utilities and private insurance companies. The documented experience with privatization of public services shows it diminishes the access to services, lowers wages and benefits, increases discrimination against minorities, reduces worker productivity, increases worker turnover, increases the corruption of bribery and kick-backs, and reduces the quality and increases the cost of services.

Do you support efforts to privatize government functions and services?

No

COMMENT

Rather than privatizing public services, I support socializing more of them in Syracuse, including the electric and gas utility, broadband (internet, phone, and cable), and the development process through municipal development bank to finance home ownership and improvement and develop business plans for new community enterprises the city needs (such as inner city and downtown groceries and clean manufacturing in the industrial zones).

The best way to provide high-quality, affordable child care, health care, housing, and job training is through public funding financed by progressive wealth and income taxes, centrally collected at the state and federal levels and allocated to democratic, local administrative bodies on a per capita basis (with some simple adjustments to bring poor communities up to standard).

What a local elected official can do to help lay the basis for a revitalization of the public sector is to speak out against the reality-challenged dogmas that say private enterprise is more efficient than government in all things. That has obviously not been the case in such areas as health care and power utilities. Local elected officials should help build public support and pressure on state and federal officials to tax progressively and allocate the revenues to social needs, including:

- √ High-quality child care for all on the model of a universal Head Start program.
- √ A universal public health service.
- √ Free public education through the college and graduate levels, including post-secondary trade and technical job training.
- √ Public housing and affordable housing development grants to non-profit developers.
- √ Jobs for all through public works and services meeting community needs.

Do you support requiring companies to make commitments to provide good jobs (jobs that pay a living wage, provide benefits), and commitments to stay in the community for a certain period of time as a condition of receiving economic development assistance?

Yes

COMMENT

See my comments in answer to the first two questions regarding Economic Development above.

Will you support a living wage ordinance to ensure that all businesses which receive public funds pay their employees a living wage?

Yes

COMMENT:

The Living Wage Ordinance, a policy I first raised in the 1995 councilor at-large race, is being resisted and undermined by the city administration. In 1997, the council passed a resolution asking city contractors to pay living wages. But it took until 2005 to adopt a limited Living Wage law that required some city contractors to pay living wages—and it is still not fully implemented in 2009. The councilors are silent on the latest retreat, including the incumbent I am challenging whose signature issue is supposed to be the living wage.

My top policy priority is to strengthen the city's living wage policies. First, the existing Living Wage Ordinance must be enforced and the administration's efforts to evade it exposed and opposed. Second, the Living Wage law needs to be expanded it to cover all workers with the city and its contractors. Third, we should also seek to cover all workers in the city, private as well as public, through a citywide minimum wage, as Santa Fe, New Mexico has done. Finally, the reformed Living Wage law should include a Community Hiring Hall, as discussed above, to realize minority and city resident hiring goals for all jobs with the city and city contractors and in the new Green Jobs sectors.

If you are an incumbent or have been an elected official in any previous office, please list any specific issues you have voted on that may be related to any of the issues described in this questionnaire. Please list the issue and how you voted.

I've never been an elected official.

HEALTH CARE

Health Benefits: Do you support extending health benefits to any public employees who do not currently receive them?

Yes

COMMENT:

But we need to press for much more. The economic viability of the whole system of financing health care is threatened by escalating costs driven by for-profit insurance, pharmaceutical, medical supply, and hospital companies and the fee-for-service system of reimbursements.

If health care reform does not effectively control costs, the reaction to the unaffordability of both employer-provided private insurance and public insurance programs could result deep cutbacks in both, a contraction of the health care industry, and a two-tier system of decent care for the well off and minimal care for the working class.

The current thrust of national health care reform—including all four of the “public option” bills passed out of the committees of Congress and the Senate to date—is to maintain our inefficient, high-cost mixed system of public and private insurance that shuttles costly old, poor, and sick people to public insurance and publicly-subsidized private insurance and leaves profitable young, affluent, and healthy people to private insurance. This kind of reform will only exacerbate the cost crisis. That then sets the stage for a reactionary deep cuts in public insurance programs as the next “reform.”

The only kind of reform that can achieve quality care, cost control, and universal coverage is a public health service, a single public payer financed by progressive taxes to fund budgets for public and nonprofit multi-specialty facilities of salaried providers. Health care should be a public service, not a pay-or-die commodity. Health care providers should be paid salaries, perhaps with bonus payments for good health outcomes for their patients. They should not remain enmeshed in a piece-rate fee-for-service system where all the incentives encourage maximizing patients and procedures to maximize income.

The only bill introduced in Congress to meet these goals of quality care, cost control, and universal coverage is the Josephine Butler United States Health Service Act (HR 3000) (Barbara Lee), which goes beyond the single-payer insurance features of HR 676 (John Conyers) and HR 1200/S 703 (John McDermott/Bernie Sanders) to also establish a health service of salaried providers at public and non-profit facilities, directed by boards elected by health care consumers and providers. The Lee bill creates a more democratic, accountable system than the single-payer public insurance bills do. The Lee bill is also much more effective at controlling costs because it eliminates the major the cost drivers: fee-for-service and profit seeking throughout the system.

In the meantime—while campaigning for a single-payer universal health service at the state and national levels—for interim relief the city should study the feasibility of a city public option like Healthy San Francisco. In the San Francisco Health Plan, low-income workers are able to access subsidized health insurance while those with higher incomes are given an option to buy into a public health insurance option at reduced costs than they would face in the private market. Pending effective health care reform at the state or national level, this kind of interim relief should be studied to assess its feasibility at the city level, or perhaps jointly with the county if they are interested.

Do you support collective bargaining for physicians in dealing with health insurers?

Yes

COMMENT:

Doctors need collective bargaining now for dealing with insurance and hospital companies. Doctors will also need it if we move to a health service where they work for salaries, not fees for service, in multi-specialty public and non-profit facilities. Doctors unions go against the grain of physicians' traditional self-image as independent professionals, but the reality is that today they work within large institutionalized systems. Teachers and nurses made the same transition. Doctors unions can help bring the larger population of doctors to this realization and be a strong part of the movement for a universal health service to replace the unsustainable public/private insurance and fee-for service systems.

EDUCATION

Private school vouchers and other schemes like education tax credits for K-12 private school expenses undermine public education by taking scarce public funds away from public schools that are open to the public and shifting them to private schools.

Do you support Voucher programs, which use money from the public school budget to allow parents to pay tuition at private schools?

No

COMMENT:

I oppose private school vouchers. Public money should be used for public education.

Currently, charter schools are funded with tax dollars that would otherwise go to existing school districts. Do you support this funding mechanism?

No

COMMENT:

I oppose charter schools. Public money should be used for public schools that are accountable to the taxpayers through elected school boards. The innovations that charter schools supposedly offer can be achieved within the public schools through site-based management involving teachers and parents.

I oppose the incentives in the stimulus package being used by Obama administration to force states to pass laws to expand charter schools in order to qualify for grants and to deny grants to states like New York that bar basing teacher evaluations on student performance on standardized tests.

Private "education" corporations push charter schools and vouchers to capture public revenues for private profits. In several cities, including Chicago, DC, and New York City, these corporate interests have allied with real estate interests politicians to close public schools on valuable urban land in order to profit from their redevelopment. We must stop this kind of corruption before it reaches Syracuse.

The charters and vouchers are also being pushed by corporate-sponsored think tanks to legitimize and stabilize the status quo by co-opting a small cohort of the working class children into the professional/managerial class, while leaving the rest to under-resourced public schools for poor education that teaches them to resign themselves to being powerless, obedient worker-drones.

We should resist these trends and insist on schools that teach children to think critically for themselves, not just teach them to do standardized tests sold by testing companies.

Would you support a requirement that school districts contract only with unionized local companies, except where a given service is available only from non-union companies?

Yes

COMMENT:

I support making this a policy for all city contracts.

5. RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

America's current labor law system is broken. Corporations routinely intimidate, harass, coerce and even fire people who try to organize unions. Every day, employers deny working

people the freedom to make their own choice about whether to have a union. The Employee Free Choice Act would:

1. **Strengthens penalties for companies that illegally coerce or intimidate employees in an effort to prevent them from forming a union;**
2. **Brings in a neutral third party to settle a contract when a company and a newly certified union cannot agree on a contract after three months;**
3. **Establishes majority sign-up, meaning that if a majority of the employees sign union authorization cards, validated by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), a company must recognize the union.**

Do you support the Employee Free Choice Act?

Yes

COMMENT:

The Employee Free Choice Act should be just the first step in winning worker rights in the United States.

I also support:

Increased NLRB funding and staffing so complaints against employers are handled in a timely fashion and employers receive strong and speedy penalties for breaking labor laws.

Repealing Taft-Hartley and Other Repressive Labor Laws:

Repeal the Taft-Hartley Act, the Hatch Act, and other labor laws which have crippled labor's ability to organize by outlawing or severely restricting labor's basic organizing tools—strikes, boycotts, pickets, political action—while enabling employers to campaign against unions instead of remaining neutral and to establish open shop “right-to-work” laws in 22 states.

A Workers' Bill of Rights: Litigation and legislation using the First and Thirteenth Amendments to the US Constitution to establish the civil rights of workers. The goal is to win a set of legally enforceable civil rights, independent of collective bargaining, which (1) extend the Bill of Rights protections of free speech, association, and assembly into all workplaces, (2) establish workers' rights to living wages, portable pensions, information about chemicals used, report labor and environmental violations, refuse unsafe work, and participate in enterprise governance, and (3) establish workers' rights to freedom from discharge at will, employer search and seizure in the workplace, sexual harassment, and unequal pay for work of comparable worth.

Expanding Workers' Rights to Organize and Enjoy Free Time:

- v Ban striker replacements.

- ✓ Triple back pay for illegally locked-out workers.
- ✓ Unemployment compensation for striking or locked out workers.
- ✓ Binding contract arbitration at union request.
- ✓ Full rights for farm workers, public employees, immigrants, and "workfare" workers under the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- ✓ Ban prison slave labor: End the use of US prisoners to produce goods and services for sale to the public.
- ✓ Require employers who purchase or merge with other companies to honor all existing collective bargaining agreements and contracts.
- ✓ Double-time pay for all overtime.
- ✓ Prohibit mandatory overtime.
- ✓ 6 weeks paid vacation annually in addition to federal holidays.
- ✓ 1 year paid educational leave for every 7 years worked.
- ✓ 1 year parental leave for each child born with no loss of seniority.
- ✓ Right to work shorter hours: No discrimination in pay and promotion against workers who choose to work short hours; no two-tier wage systems between part-timers and full-timers.

What role should local governments play in ensuring that workers who wish to join unions are able to do so?

Support card-check and neutrality agreements for city employees and projects receiving public incentives.

Bar companies guilty of labor law violations for a number of years from receiving municipal contracts and economic development benefits.

Give all public employees who fall under the Taylor Law the same rights to binding arbitration that the Police and Fire unions enjoy.

Oppose the privatization of public services.

If it is brought to your attention that workers interested in forming a union are being harassed, abused, fired, demoted, financially penalized, threatened, intimidated or degraded during the process of organizing would you be willing to speak out against those acts?

Yes

COMMENT:

I would join picket lines and take other actions to support the organizing campaign.

How have you supported workers right to organize in the past?

Yes. I was active supporting the UFW grape and lettuce boycotts in late 1960s and early 1970s, ACTWU's J.P. Stevens Campaign in the late 1970s, and USWA's Phelps Dodge Copper Strike in the 1980s. Since moving to Syracuse in 1991, I have walked picket lines and leafleted in support of organizing, contract, and worker safety campaigns and strikes at Landis Plastics, Crucible, UPS, University Sheraton, Coyne Laundry, New Process Gear, and others.

Will you send a letter to workers voting in a union recognition election in support of a Yes vote?

Yes

Will you publicly call on any employer facing a union organizing drive to voluntarily recognize the union?

Yes

Will you pledge not to oppose unionization of any public employees in your jurisdiction?

Yes

Will you use all legal means to deny public funding to businesses or agencies, which have opposed efforts by their workers to organize?

Yes

Will you support legislation requiring businesses to grant union organizers access to parking lots and other public areas of their property?

Yes

Will you support legislation to ensure that workers are not penalized for asserting their legally-protected rights (minimum wage, overtime, and so on) in the workplace or for informing other workers of those rights?

Yes

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

Please describe your community involvement. List specific organizations.

Supporter, South Side Newsstand
Board member, South Side Coalition, and active in its Community
Grocery Store Project
Member, Public Power Coalition of Central New York
Member, Syracuse Municipal Broadband Initiative

Have you, or anyone from your family, ever been a union member? If so, what union?

International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local 317, 2001-present
Industrial Workers of the World:
Building Construction Workers Union IU 330, 1975-1991
General, Legal, Public Interest and Financial Office Workers IU 650,
1991-2001
Motor Transport Workers IU 530, 2001-present
American Serviceman's Union, 1972-1978

Who has endorsed your candidacy?

Green Party of Onondaga County
Socialist Party of Central New York

Signature: Howie Hawkins

Date: September 6, 2009

Print name: Howie Hawkins

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