



September 5, 2018

After Rahm – And Our Next Mayor

After Mayor Rahm Emanuel's announcement that he will not be running for a third term as mayor of the city of Chicago, Chicagoans started to talk and to dream. What should our next mayor look like? What should our next mayor's policies be?

Coincidentally, on the same day that Mayor Emanuel announced he was stepping down, we had two great community meetings at Austin Town Hall. Our first meeting was a meeting of the West Side Community Development Task Force, and at the second meeting we learned more about the Chicago Police Consent Decree from staff from the office of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan. At both meetings, we discussed ideas that can make our city better.

And that is what this time is all about. With Mayor Emanuel pushing away from the table, we have a real opportunity to think about what leadership should look like in Chicago.

As I see it, the next mayor of Chicago should show that they are a mayor for ALL of Chicago. For much too long, resources and opportunities have been concentrated in a few areas, while the West and South Sides have been passed over.

Our next mayor should work hard to bring new jobs, including new manufacturing jobs, to the West and South Sides of the city. We need to see construction cranes and economic development on the West and South sides, just like we see in other parts of Chicago and the suburbs. We need to move beyond the idea of TIF districts and implement incentives for large businesses to move in to employ people who are looking for good jobs. But, as these companies move in, we need to make sure that there is not discrimination or segregation in employment. We need to reform our criminal justice system to ensure that people who have done their time have a true second chance and are able to get good jobs.

Our next mayor should work to strengthen public education and make sure that our students have the resources and extracurricular activities they need to develop their full potential.

Our next mayor needs to work harder to shut off the flow of guns and drugs into our West Side and South Side communities. Our mayor needs to improve access to treatment for drug addiction and needs to help families who are suffering from the ravages of gun and other forms of violence – mental health care that really works needs to be provided just as it is provided in other emergency situations like school shootings in other parts of the country.

Our next mayor has to address the feelings that many Chicagoans have regarding the Chicago Police Department, especially since the death of Laquan McDonald. The Consent Decree is only a first step and must be monitored to make sure that real change occurs. The Chicago Police Department must be given the needed resources to improve its clearance rate of solving murder cases – in 2017, only 17.5% of murder cases were solved, and only 5% of all shooting cases not resulting in death were solved in 2016. And, citizens must be given a mechanism to report and comment on police misconduct when they encounter it. We have many good and hard-working police, but some police are not upholding their oath to Serve and Protect. The next mayor has to honestly address the mistrust between many citizens and our police.

Finally, though there are many other policies that we could discuss that should be on the plate for our next mayor, our next mayor needs to be of and from our city, and really love our great city. Our next mayor needs to have the traits of compassion and understanding for all people who live in Chicago. We have a great opportunity to move forward, to build on our greatness, to increase opportunities for all, and to have a mayor for ALL of the residents of Chicago.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LSK', written in a cursive style.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District