



Cleaning Up City Government

Chicago city government must be a catalyst for uplifting the lives of all city residents. This is a solemn and essential obligation. City government cannot deliver on this basic compact with its citizens if it is a broken or corrupt bureaucracy which has lost sight of its core mission of public service. We must also recognize and address the deep-seeded mistrust that many residents have of government. Many Chicagoans have a cynical view of city government that is rooted in their experiences or perceptions that Chicago is a large, opaque and inefficient bureaucracy that responds to and works only for those with political clout.

We must restore confidence in city government and make it accessible for all. As mayor, I will ensure that the delivery of city services does not depend on politics and clout. We will start by bringing accountability, oversight and transparency to city government. Toward that important end, I will:

1. Impose a two-term limit on the mayor
2. Prohibit city employees and elected and appointed officials from profiting from public service
3. Shift responsibility for administering the city's workers' compensation program from the City Council's Committee on Finance to the city's executive branch
4. Centralize the Office of Inspector General to provide for unitary oversight of city government
5. Comply with the Freedom of Information Act to ensure transparency

6. Bring transparency to the process for creating, opening and closing tax increment finance districts
7. Merge the City of Chicago and Cook County boards of election and look for areas to cooperate with Cook County
8. Require separate counsel for the executive and legislative branches of city government
9. Hold multiple public town hall meetings during the annual budget season

My Plan

1. Impose a Two-Term Limit on the Mayor

Chicago is the largest city in the country without mayoral term limits. Our city had 47 mayors between 1837 and 1955. It has had eight mayors since 1955, two of whom served less than one full term and one of whom served approximately one week. Of the rest, three have served for 50 years combined, and counting. This has led to entrenched leaders, a lack of new ideas and creative thinking and city government that works for the few, not the many.

This will change when I am mayor and introduce an ordinance that brings Chicago into the mainstream by limiting mayors to serving two terms.

2. Prohibit City Employees and Elected and Appointed Officials from Profiting from Public Service

Chicago deserves a city government whose workforce and elected and appointed officials work exclusively to advance the city's interests. This cannot happen if we continue to allow city employees and elected and appointed officials to hold outside employment, or other responsibilities for which they receive compensation, that conflict with the city's interests. Therefore, I will propose an ordinance that bars city employees and elected and appointed officials from taking on any outside employment or other responsibility, for which they receive compensation, which conflicts with the city's interests. The city's interests must, and will, come first in my administration.

3. Shift Responsibility for the City's Workers' Compensation Program from the City Council's Committee on Finance to the City's Executive Branch

The City of Chicago's \$100 million-per-year workers' compensation program cannot continue to be controlled by a single member of City Council in the dark without any meaningful oversight. So little is known about this program that even some City Council members have said they do not know exactly how it operates.¹ According to a February 2016 resolution introduced in City Council, the workers' compensation program "creates cynicism among the taxpaying public, undermining trust in the government of the City of Chicago and in [City Council]."²

Editorial boards for years have called on elected officials to follow cities like New York and Los Angeles and move the workers' compensation program to the city's executive branch. And for years, certain elected officials, including the current mayor, have ignored these calls. I will not make the same mistake.

As mayor, I will introduce an ordinance that moves the workers' compensation program from City Council to the executive branch, where a board composed of members from the city's law department, chief financial officer's office, and human resources will be responsible for hearing and adjudicating claims. In my administration, the workers' compensation program, for the first time in decades, will be run in public view. Moreover, the workers' compensation board will be subject to oversight from both City Council and the city's Office of Inspector General.

4. Centralize the Office of Inspector General and Provide for Unitary Oversight of City Government

a. A unified Inspector General for city government

As mayor, I will introduce an ordinance to ensure a truly independent and unified Office of Inspector General with authority to oversee city departments, City Council and its committees, sister agencies, and contractors that do business with the city. In addition, the ordinance will give the new Inspector General's office the power to issue subpoenas as part of investigations into alleged violations of the city's ethics code.

Presently, the city and its sister agencies have multiple inspectors general with varying levels of authority, jurisdiction, rules and funding. Creating a unified office would give the Inspector General an unfettered view of city government and would allow a single office to investigate fraud, waste and abuse across all agencies and to make recommendations regarding best practices that could be applied across city government.

In addition, it would bring under one roof attorneys and investigators with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise who could be used more efficiently and effectively to conduct investigations, make recommended changes in government practices and work on matters that align with their professional backgrounds and experiences.

b. Strengthen Chicago Public Schools' Office of Inspector General

The Office of Inspector General for the Chicago Public Schools ("CPS") cannot be merged into the unified Office of Inspector General since CPS is a separate legal entity from the City of Chicago. Nevertheless, I will work with the CPS Inspector General and other stakeholders to expand the resources available to the office. For fiscal year 2018, the CPS Inspector General had a staff of 19 and a budget of approximately \$2.05 million to provide oversight of a school system with more than 36,000 employees and a \$5.46 billion budget. That is woefully insufficient and must be improved if the Inspector General is to provide meaningful oversight of CPS and take on the additional responsibility for investigating sex abuse claims.

c. Improve ethics enforcement and oversight

As part of these changes to the structure of the Office of Inspector General, my ordinance will give the new office primary responsibility for investigating alleged ethics violations, including the power to issue and enforce subpoenas in ethics investigations. This will provide a new, powerful tool for investigating alleged violations of the city's ethics and campaign finance ordinances.

5. Comply with the Freedom of Information Act to Ensure Transparency

My administration will comply with the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) and ensure the public has access to information to which it is legally entitled. The current administration flouts its obligations under FOIA in an effort to keep people from gaining access to important information about how city government functions. This abuse has financial costs to taxpayers, and it will end when I am mayor.

Mayor Emanuel proclaimed in 2011 that he would run “the most open, accountable and transparent government that the City of Chicago has ever seen.”³ He has not fulfilled that promise. Since at least 2013, the city has faced 54 lawsuits alleging FOIA violations.⁴ In 2016 alone, the city paid \$670,000 to plaintiffs in 27 cases who had filed FOIA-related suits against the city—nearly five times the amount the city had paid in the prior eight years combined.⁵ And since 2016, the city’s FOIA abuse has cost taxpayers at least \$1.5 million, enough to hire and train 10 new police officers. This waste of taxpayer dollars stems from Mayor Emanuel’s failure to be transparent with citizens, the media and public watchdogs seeking access to public records to which they are entitled under FOIA. This will all change under my administration.

Public bodies sometimes abuse the FOIA process to avoid disclosing embarrassing or harmful records. This happened recently with this administration and CPS, which for months ignored, delayed and denied requests from the *Chicago Tribune* for documents that proved instrumental in uncovering sexual abuse in Chicago public schools.

CPS attempted to thwart the *Tribune*’s requests even though CPS lacked any legal basis for withholding most documents. The school district relented and produced documents only after the *Tribune* threatened to sue. Fortunately, the *Tribune* had the resources to fight CPS’ repeated attempts to avoid its statutory obligations.

Other public bodies, like the Chicago Police Department (“CPD”), simply ignore FOIA requests. CPD can avoid complying with its FOIA obligations because it knows requestors typically lack the time and resources to hold CPD accountable. My administration will follow and comply with the FOIA statute and will not seek to shift the burden of enforcing compliance onto the requestor.

Lack of transparency is also a problem. FOIA requests are a matter of public record and public bodies typically maintain online logs showing all requests they have received. While some public agencies take this responsibility seriously, others do not. For instance, Mayor Emanuel’s online log has not been updated since September 12, 2016, which was nearly two years ago.⁶

About this Dataset

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Updated September 12, 2016 | | Metadata | |
| Data Last Updated September 12, 2016 | Metadata Last Updated September 12, 2016 | Data Owner Office of the Mayor | Time Period May 2010 - present |
| Date Created April 16, 2010 | | Frequency Data is updated as needed | |
| Views 13.2K | Downloads 5,260 | Topics | |
| Data Provided by City of Chicago | Dataset Owner cocadmin | Category FOIA | Tags <i>This dataset does not have any tags</i> |
| Contact Dataset Owner | | Licensing and Attribution | |
| | | License <i>The license for this dataset is unspecified</i> | Source Link http://www.cityofchicago.org |

The city treasurer's FOIA log has not been updated since January 12, 2015.⁷

| About this Dataset | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Updated January 12, 2015 | |
| Data Last Updated | January 12, 2015 |
| Metadata Last Updated | January 12, 2015 |
| Date Created | September 30, 2011 |
| Views | Downloads |
| 1,473 | 1,555 |
| Data Provided by | Dataset Owner |
| City of Chicago | cocadmin |
| Contact Dataset Owner | |
| Metadata | |
| Data Owner | Office of the Treasurer |
| Time Period | May 2010 - present |
| Frequency | Data is updated as needed |
| Topics | |
| Category | FOIA |
| Tags | <i>This dataset does not have any tags</i> |
| Licensing and Attribution | |
| License | <i>The license for this dataset is unspecified</i> |
| Source Link | http://www.cityofchicago.org |

As a result, the public cannot see what types of information have been requested, and by whom and what public records have and have not been produced.

I will take immediate steps to bring greater transparency to city government. One of my first priorities will be to make more information and records publicly available on city websites so that citizens, the media and watchdogs do not have to file FOIA requests to get information to which they are entitled by law.

I will sign an executive order which directs all agencies to minimize the use of exemptions to the FOIA statutes to avoid costly and unnecessary litigation. I will also hold agencies and personnel accountable for failure to respond to FOIA requests.

I also intend to convene a panel of journalists, attorneys, public watchdogs and other stakeholders that frequently file FOIA requests to make recommendations for increasing transparency and access to information, and improving the city's compliance with the FOIA statute.

6. Bring Transparency to the Process for Creating, Opening and Closing Tax Increment Financing Districts

Chicago must bring real transparency to all aspects of tax increment financing ("TIF"), an economic development tool that diverts more than \$650 million in property taxes annually.

When I am mayor, the city will not create new TIF districts until we have fully analyzed the performance of existing districts to ensure that they are meeting their intended objectives and that private recipients of TIF funds are satisfying their contractual obligations. The city will set performance thresholds for each TIF district, and each district will be reviewed at least every five years to determine whether those thresholds are being met. If they are not being met, then the city will, after soliciting public input, determine whether to close a district, revise its objectives or make other changes. In addition, the city will impose penalties on private recipients of TIF funds that do not meet their contractual obligations.

Before any new TIF is created, the city must strengthen the standards for determining whether a district qualifies for TIF. The city will no longer loosely apply the test for determining whether an area is “blighted,” and it will raise the bar for clearing the “but for” test, which requires one to show that private projects and investment would not happen without TIF investment. Only then will the city consider creating new TIF districts that meet these more rigorous standards.

For any new TIF district, the city will clearly describe the justifications for creating the TIF, and it will do so in publicly available documents and in town hall meetings in the proposed district where citizens can provide input. In addition, the city will closely monitor private developers to ensure they are meeting their obligations under redevelopment agreements, including those related to job creation and minority and women business enterprise requirements. If a private developer fails to meet its obligations, the city will enforce penalty provisions contained in the redevelopment agreement, including clawing back TIF funds.

I will address additional TIF-related reforms as the campaign progresses.

7. Merge City of Chicago and Cook County Election Board Functions and Look for Areas to Cooperate with Cook County

As mayor, I will work to introduce a bill in Springfield to merge the city and county election board functions. In addition, I will foster relationships with Cook County so the combined governments can more effectively and efficiently deliver services to the public.

Merging the election board functions would create more efficient services for voters and could produce annual savings of \$10 million or more. A joint committee on city and county collaboration recommended in 2011 that the functions be combined and that doing so would eventually result in annual savings of \$5 million to \$10 million.⁸

The non-partisan Civic Federation endorsed the merger, but the city and county never moved forward with their joint recommendation. More recently, the City Council’s Progressive Reform Caucus estimated that the merger could save the city and county up to \$13 million per year. These savings could be redeployed to pay down debt, fund pensions and spur neighborhood economic development.

My administration will work with Cook County officials to identify additional areas where we can collaborate to more effectively and efficiently deliver services to Chicagoans. Eliminating overlapping government services and thinking creatively about how to better deliver services will improve the public’s interaction and experience with government.

8. Require Separate Counsel for the Executive and Legislative Branches of City Government

City Council must obtain its own independent counsel. Presently, the corporation counsel acts as counsel to both the executive and legislative branches of city government. This presents obvious conflicts of interest and precludes City Council from receiving the independent advice it needs to make informed decisions on behalf of Chicagoans. Moreover, it prevents City Council from providing real oversight of the executive branch. To resolve this conflict, I will introduce an ordinance giving City Council its own counsel.

9. Hold Public Town Halls Before Adopting the City's Annual Budget

The city's fiscal year 2018 budget totaled approximately \$8.6 billion dollars — yet most Chicagoans do not know how the city generates revenue or where and how it spends taxpayer dollars. In an effort to increase transparency and give the public an opportunity to weigh in on the budget, during the fall of each year my administration will hold at least four town hall meetings throughout the city before City Council votes on the budget. These town halls, which will be livestreamed, will allow the public to better understand municipal finances and will provide them an avenue for sharing their views about how and where their money is spent.

A final note:

Chicago does not lack for areas that require reform. I hope that this initial plan can be an important part of moving our city in the right direction and also that it can spark an ongoing conversation on government reform. Please send additional reform thoughts and ideas to info@lightfootforchicago.com and we will build on this plan together.

¹ See Paris Schutz, *Ald. Ed Burke's workers' compensation program under increased scrutiny* (February 25, 2016) available at: <https://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2016/02/25/ald-ed-burke-s-workers-compensation-program-under-increased-scrutiny>

² See *The Chicago aldermen who chumped you* (February 12, 2016) available at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/editorials/ct-inspector-general-chicago-burke-edit-0214-20160212-story.html>

³ See Mick Dumke, *The most transparent government Chicago has ever seen, Part 1* (December 1, 2011) available at: <https://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2011/12/01/the-most-transparent-government-chicago-has-ever-seen-part-1>

⁴ See Gregory Pratt, *Chicago paid \$670,000 in 2016 over lawsuits alleging open records violations* (January 2, 2017) available at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-chicago-foia-violation-lawsuits-met-20170101-story.html>

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ See FOIA Request Log – Office of the Mayor at: <https://data.cityofchicago.org/FOIA/FOIA-Request-Log-Office-of-the-Mayor/srzw-dcvq> (last viewed August 20, 2018).

⁷ See FOIA Request Log – Chicago Treasurer's Office at: <https://data.cityofchicago.org/FOIA/FOIA-Request-Log-Chicago-Treasurer-s-Office/8gyi-fawp> (last viewed August 20, 2018)

⁸ See Joint Committee on City-County Collaboration (February 2012) available at: https://www.ccachicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/120206_FinalReport_0.pdf