



Candidate Name: Paul Vallas

Office Sought: Mayor

Ward: N/A

Campaign Committee Name: Vallas for Mayor

Campaign Website: <https://www.paulvallas2023.com/>

Campaign Finance

- 1. Running a political campaign is expensive, and candidates without deep pockets or wealthy connections often can't afford to compete. Would you support a public campaign financing program for Chicago city elections, such as a small donor matching or voucher "Democracy Dollars" program? Would you include the new elected school board and Police District Council in a public financing program?**

Yes. The devil is in the details but the ordinance recently introduced by Ald. Matt Martin is a terrific foundation for that discussion. It should exist as a matter of ordinance and regulation, but in order to assure it is not subject to the vicissitudes of politics going forward, it should be embodied in a municipal charter or constitution for the city, through the authorization of a citizen-informed, citizen involved charter commission, whose recommendations should go to referendum for citizen approval.

Unquestionably yes on Police District Council, and this may be even more critical than other city offices, as these two bodies for which the intention is true purpose is community/citizen voice and participation, are especially vulnerable to capture from moneyed special interests over time.

- 2. Currently, entities doing (or seeking to do) business with the City are limited to contributing \$1,500 to City officials' campaigns. But the limitation does not extend to officers or other high-level employees of those entities, who can still contribute thousands to officials making decisions about**



contracts with their companies. Would you support eliminating this loophole, as [cities like New York](#) have?

Yes. In Chicago, like Illinois, our reputation is too often driven by what is technically legal but not aligned with the public's moral and ethical sensibilities about what is right and what clean government should look and operate. This is one important way to align our campaign finance laws with our moral and ethical sensibilities.

- 3. Would you support reducing the City's campaign contribution limit from lobbyists and city vendors from \$1500 to \$750 or another number? Feel free to explain.**

This question speaks to an important issue but is a bit broadly cast for a simple yes or no. For example, we need to clean up the confusion of what organizations – such as Reform for Illinois – are “lobbyists.” Many small nonprofits seeking to pursue not city contracts but good government legislation, are unclear on whether they are lobbyists for purposes of these regulations. Among the ways to clarify this is to develop categories of activities falling in the “lobbyist” or “seeking to do business with the city” framework. If there is a money outcome to what is being pursued, then the limit should be lowered. If it was for good government, i.e., non-remunerative policy outcomes, I would be for a higher limit. Vendors are by definition in a remunerative relationship with the city so that should be limited operate at at the lower limit. Finally, and worthy of conversation, we could avoid ALL of this complication if we said a hard no to individual campaign donations for all such entities – lobbyists and vendors – but permitted them to make donations into the publicly financed small donor pools that benefit all campaigns equally, to remove it from the aura and reality of implied quid pro quos. Alternatively, we should ask all elected officials to take a public pledge to direct all donations received from such entities to a small donor campaign finance pool.

- 4. Do you support any other campaign finance or other reforms that could make the system more transparent and ethical, and make it easier for people of diverse backgrounds to run for office?**

Yes. Everything discussed above serves that objective among others, I believe.



Elections

- 1. Ranked-choice voting (RCV) has been adopted around the country as a way of eliminating low-turnout primaries and making elections more democratic. Do you support the adoption of ranked choice voting (RCV) for Chicago's mayoral elections?**

[Click here for more information about ranked-choice voting.](#)

Yes. This too should be embodied in both municipal ordinance and enshrined at a constitutional level in a voter-approved municipal charter.

- 2. Do you support the adoption of ranked choice voting (RCV) for aldermanic and other city offices?**

[Click here for more information about ranked-choice voting.](#)

Yes. This too should be embodied in both municipal ordinance and enshrined at a constitutional level in a voter-approved municipal charter.

- 3. The petition gathering and challenge process can make it hard for some good candidates to make it onto the ballot. Would you support state-level efforts to reform the system and, if so, what would you propose?**

Yes. The existing system has high and expensive barriers to entry for good grassroots level candidates. Among other things, the petition signature requirements need to be reset (i.e., lowered), with a re-examination of the criteria for what constitutes and the assessment of valid signatures. I would further support a pre-qualified pool of attorneys on such procedures and laws to represent candidates pro bono.

- 4. Proposals to reform the petition process include allowing [digital on-site signatures](#) (e.g. [HB 4966](#)), [online signatures](#), or instituting a maximum number of signatures per office. What are your thoughts on these ideas?**



If they are reliable and verifiable, I am very open to them for the reasons stated in my prior answer, i.e., lowering barriers and costs to entry to participation in the electoral process.

General

1. Have you had any past experience with good governance and reform efforts? If so, we're eager to hear about it.

Examples of good governance and reform efforts: government transparency and accessibility, ethics, voting and elections, campaign finance.

Yes, much of it from the vantage point of accountability, transparency and citizen involvement in the governance and administration of large complex school systems and budgeting. I have always supported a strong inspector general system, have long believed our budgeting systems are too opaque and compressed for true citizen input and participation, have advocated for a NYC-type model of budgeting set forth in that city's exemplary municipal charter that is a two-stage legislative review process supported by an Independent Budget Office akin to the Congressional Budget Office, with the executive branch obligated by charter and law to provide all information sought by the City Council and the IBO.

2. Would you support an effort to reduce the size of the Chicago City Council? If so, what is your ideal number of wards/alderpeople? If not, please explain.

The literally century long discussion about the optimal size of the city council is important but I believe has diverted attention from the more important question of the powers and structural integrity and efficacy of the council. A smaller Council is less democratic in one sense, but if that more democratically representative Council is elected in a gerrymandered process, as has long been the case, we end up with wards that are in essence segregated and compartmentalized representative jurisdictions that allow alderman to maintain office by (i) securing a tiny number of votes and (ii) legislating and serving through through the service of a narrow set of monocultural, i.e., non-diverse and competing – interests, which does not yield good policy outcomes that best serve the city as a whole.



Ultimately I feel the current council is too large, and should be reset at a number and through a districting process that both (i) provides for diverse representation, but (ii) orients alders and the Council as a whole to approaching issues that serve diverse constituencies and the best interests of the city. That said, no Council will be effective without a properly staffed and resourced, independent committee structure that provides policy and oversight expertise to the Council as a whole, with its own properly and expertly staffed Independent Budget Office and its own expertly and sufficiently staffed Administrative Officer and Legislative Research Bureau. Ultimately, the “right” or best size of the Council is a decision that should be made by the people based on the work of a municipal character commission process. I support the work being done by the former Inspector General and his organization (re)Chicago in elevating and promoting the creation of such a commission and as mayor would support its creation and the provision of resources needed for it.

- 3. Recent news reports assert that some Chicago City Council committees rarely meet and may function more as remnants of a patronage system than as effective governing bodies. In your opinion, should the number of committees be reduced from nineteen? Are there any other reforms to the committee system you would propose?**

Any Committee not meeting should be sunsetted. Those that do the core work of the body should be resourced and staffed appropriately, as determined by annual work and staffing analysis which as the City Inspector General found was best practice that was not being done. And the law should be amended to provide for the immediate removal from committee chair positions any alderman who diverts committee personnel for individual aldermanic ward and constituent work.

As far as other reforms, see #s 1, 2, and 3 above. In addition, the core standing committees of the Council should align with city operations and should include a requirement that they hold a regular percentage and cycle of committee meetings and hearings in the community to facilitate public participation.

- 4. Do you believe that Chicago’s mayor and city council must do more to limit “aldermanic prerogative”? Why or why not? If so, what steps do you think should be taken to limit it?**



Aldermanic input should absolutely be allowed. Aldermanic control should not. The power of the Council is the Council's as a collective body, not as individual fiefdoms. That said, steps should be taken to assure localized community voice is projected and amplified through their representative – the alderman. For that balance to be struck, we must have mechanisms of full documentation and public disclosure of all aldermanic inputs into the regulatory and legislative decision-making processes. Any attempt to influence a regulatory or operational decision or outcome in the operation of the executive branch should be documented and made part of the file in that matter, with the relevant agency compiling them in a log that is available for public inspection if not periodic publication. The worst form of aldermanic prerogative is old school individual fiat. The best form of it, which tends more to be practiced by younger and more junior alders is to proactively solicit in public session the input of community on legislative actions that affect the community and to then be the voice and amplifier of the resulting community consensus.

Ethics

1. How will you work to ensure city leaders elevate the needs of the public over personal or special interests?

A number of the things discussed above, right-sizing the City Council, independent districting to prevent gerrymandering, small donor public financing of elections, a rigorous and resourced Council committee structure and operation with public periodic hearings in community, routine Council hearings on Inspector General audits and evaluations will all work towards that outcome. But two other things are needed as a matter of mechanism and philosophy. Pro-active transparency in all operations of government where possible. (I have spoken elsewhere about making permanent public and published materials provided by FOIA requests to a single requester so that what is made public not just to one, but to all). Expansion of user-friendly, interactive data portals like those of the Office of Inspector General will enable an informed citizenry to inform engagement and will bring sunlight to the bases of government decisions and actions that will over time trend toward service of the general public in equitable fashion rather than personal or private interests.



2. Should candidates for mayor have to disclose their tax returns for the past two years?

Yes. And those of their spouse if they do not file jointly. Full stop.

3. Do you believe the Chicago City Council should become more independent of the mayor? If so, please explain the specific changes you'd like to see.

I have outlined quite a lot above. But in snapshot overview, A municipal charter that resets the powers of the Council to co-equal alignment with the mayor; express investigative powers (which are impliedly granted under state law but never perfected and implemented in a more specific municipal charter and ordinance) which should include subpoena and compel power for materials and witnesses; resourcing of Committees based on work and staffing analysis; the same for ward level staffing and resources; an Independent Budget Office; a properly resourced Legislative Research Bureau; its own leader or Speaker – the current arrangement with the Corporation Council being the attorney for the City, the Mayor, the Departments and the City Council is rife with inherent conflicts that need to be unpacked; its own Administrative Office so that alderman do not, as is shockingly the case, have to figure make all administrative and transactional arrangements to secure and insure and set up their own official City offices with separate time-keeping and benefits tracking and systems.

This and so much more needs to be embodied in a city constitution – a municipal charter fashioned and approved by a charter commission as is done in our peer cities nationally and internationally. To be a global city must have a global-standard government which requires a best practice, municipal charter based model of governance.