

PHILADELPHIA 3.0

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

General

Name:

David Oh

Office sought and party affiliation:

City Council At-Large / Republican

Campaign website and/or Facebook page:

www.DavidOh.com / [www.facebook/DavidOhPhilly](https://www.facebook.com/DavidOhPhilly)

Current neighborhood and total years of residence in Philadelphia:

I live in the Cobbs Creek section of Southwest Philadelphia where I've lived for the past 52 years.

Age:

55 years

Children (if any, and if so do/did they attend public or private schools):

My wife, Heesun, and I have four children. Two of them are school age and they both attend public school in Philadelphia.

Professional

Education (college/grad school/certificate; degree & year earned in each):

Dickinson College, BA, 1982

Rutgers University School of Law – Camden, JD, 1985

Admitted to practice law in Pennsylvania, 1985-present

Current occupation:

Philadelphia City Councilman At-Large

Leadership positions include: Minority Whip, Chairman of Global Opportunities and the Creative/Innovative Economy

Previous occupations:

Zarwin, Baum, DeVito, Kaplan, Schaer, Toddy, P.C., Chairman, International Practice Group

The Law Firm David Oh, P.C., Chairman and President

Law Offices of David Oh, P.C., Principal

Asian Law Center (free legal services program), Attorney

U.S. Army, 2LT, C Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne)

Office of the District Attorney of Philadelphia, Assistant D.A.

Civic

Previous/current elected position held and years served (if any):

Councilman At-Large, 4 years

Leadership positions in civic or community groups:

3rd Ward Republican Committee RCO, Ward Leader

Boards and Commissions:

Present: Greater Philadelphia Metro Export Plan Steering Committee, Mayor's Manufacturing Task Force, Philadelphia Cultural Fund, Nazareth Hospital, The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, Monte Jade Science and Technology Assn.: Mid-Atlantic Chapter, Tribune Newspaper Charities, and Friends of the Korean War Memorial at Penn's Landing.

Past: Community College of Philadelphia, Nazareth Academy High School, First Commercial Bank of Philadelphia, Walnut Street Theater, WYBE Public Television, Crime Prevention Assn., Mayor's Commission on Literacy, Philadelphia Police Advisory Commission, Federal Judicial Nominating Committee for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition, Workers' Compensation Reform Advisory Committee for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Philadelphia Health and Education Committee for Hahnemann University and Christian Street YMCA.

Memberships: 82nd Airborne Division Assn.: Hadjak-Mokan Chapter (Past Chairman, Life member), Special Forces Association (Life member), American Legion Rhawnhurst-Castor Post 754, and NAACP, Philadelphia Chapter.

Open Ended

In your opinion, what are the core responsibilities of the office you are seeking?

The core responsibilities of a Councilman At-Large are to represent the city's interest as a whole, within City Council. That is primarily done through legislation, appropriations, the budget, initiatives and constituent service. In addition, it is important to address critical issues such as job creation, business growth, civil rights, quality of life, technology, pension debt, tax reform, public safety, public transportation and public education. It is also important to identify specific areas of need, where I as a Councilman, can make a contribution to the city. Since the effectiveness of a Council member greatly depends on the quality of his or her staff, I believe it is also an important responsibility to hire knowledgeable, hardworking and responsive staff members.

How are you uniquely qualified to meet those responsibilities?

I am an experienced Councilman At-Large. I have served almost four years of my first term. I have accomplished a lot despite being a freshman Councilman from the minority party. This includes new laws such as the veterans hiring business tax credit, a reasonable accommodation for mothers and protection from being fired or harassed at work simply for pumping breast milk, increased penalties for vandalizing public art and memorials, and authorization to tow away abandoned vehicles that have false or unaccounted for license plates. I also introduced a bill which overrode the Mayor's veto to appropriate \$64 million for the firefighters as a result of the city's violation of its contract.

I successfully advocated against raising U&O taxes by an additional \$20 million. I fought against over-taxation by introducing amendments that cut the proposed budget by \$48 million in 2013, \$74 million in 2014 and an amendment in 2015 that would provide \$105 million to the School District without raising taxes or cutting programs by using over-appropriations in the proposed budget.

I introduced bills that would create a Philadelphia International Trade and Investment Fund, cut the wage tax by \$100 million, collect outstanding and delinquent taxes efficiently (collecting the remaining portion of the estimated \$160 million in long term delinquent taxes and increasing annual tax collection by \$26-\$39 million), reform the city pension, improve public education and improve government efficiency through a legislative budget office.

I introduced new companies to Philadelphia such as TIS (subway screen door system and parking guidance system), LG Chemical (battery storage technology for rail power stations), Hyundai Motor Company (airplane boarding bridges), Korean Airlines and Asiana Airlines (direct flights from Philadelphia to Asia), and various investors through trade organizations and missions, such as the visit by the Mayor of Incheon, South Korea. I also visit embassies and consulates on a periodic basis to generate new jobs and investment in Philadelphia.

I held hearings to pinpoint what our city needs in economic development and public education from the perspective of experts here in our city and around the world. I started new initiatives such as PHL LIVE Center Stage, Black Film Advisory Committee and Youth Non-Profit Symposium. Currently, I am pursuing "Smart Cities, Smart Aging".

I serve neighborhoods and communities all over Philadelphia and my staff can speak Spanish, Korean and Portuguese. I have provided public service information in Russian, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese and Cambodian. As the first Asian American on City Council, I provide a voice for our Asian American community. I hold annual flag raising ceremonies for the Korean and Vietnamese communities, as well as, an annual city-wide Asian American Voter Registration Drive. As the only veteran on City Council, I advocate for our city's 88,000 veterans. I am proud to be the only candidate in this race that is endorsed by the United Veterans Council of Philadelphia.

There are seventeen members on City Council and only three members are Republicans. Fortunately, I am able to work well with my colleagues because I focus on issues and solutions, rather than partisan opposition. While different political perspectives bring plenty of disagreements, it is the ability to work together that produces the best outcomes for the people. I find the best way to do that is by being upfront about position on issues with my colleagues and open to hearing their perspectives. In addition, I had had clear goals that I campaigned on in 2003, 2007 and 2011. When I won in 2011, I was able to propose the creation of Council's Committee on Global Opportunities and the Creative/Innovative Economy. The committee was created and I was appointed Chairman. From there, I have worked hard to help build the city's efforts in International commerce, investment, tourism, exchange, science, technology, innovation, startup businesses, and the creative arts economy. I bring a broad range of experiences that are important to representing our city, including international business development, banking, healthcare, secondary and post-secondary education, and running a business in Philadelphia.

SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM

There are a limited number of ways City Council can increase the funding that the City provides to the School District of Philadelphia. Should Council legislate a funding increase to the School District? If so, what specific school funding legislation would you introduce?

Yes. I believe we can increase the portion of future tax revenues that funds our schools. Currently, I have been working on additional funding for our schools that will not increase the existing tax burden. It will require a waiver of the "maintenance of effort" clause. I understand that this question seeks specific legislation. I am working on them now so I prefer not to write about them but I will discuss them during the interview. This year, I amended the proposed budget to provide the school district with \$105 million in over-appropriations. It would have met the School District's request without increasing taxes or reducing funds for existing programs or services.

The best way City Council can increase funding for the School District is by working with Harrisburg to transition from the current and temporary SRC operated District to a locally School Board operated District. In order to do that, Council must introduce a governance change to the City Charter for a "best practices" governance model.** If that referendum passes, it will not take effect because of the SRC, but it will initiate the transition from state to local control. That transition requires additional state funding and then a funding source to adequately fund the schools locally.

The city has provided funding for the School District each year I have been in Council. The total is \$327 million in additional, annual funding from the city. This year, City Council has approved an additional \$70 million in reoccurring funds for the School District. The City cannot afford to continue to provide funds in this manner.

** I should note that the Controller is not authorized to audit the school district. Under the City Charter, the Controller can do a post-audit. But the Charter has not been in effect for the School District since 2001 when Act 14 established the SRC. As a result, the Controller has no power to audit the School District and a third party auditor must be established through charter change. Accountability and transparency is one of many reforms that needs to be implemented.

BUSINESS TAX REFORM

City Council has authority over many of the tax types and tax rates paid by Philadelphia's businesses and workers. Should Council legislate a change to the business or wage tax structure? If so, what specific business tax reform legislation would you introduce?

Yes. I introduced a bill to cut the Wage and Net Profits Tax by \$100 million over 11 years. The tax rate would drop from 3.92% to 2.09%. Multiple studies and expert testimonies have shown that reducing the wage tax will make Philadelphia more globally competitive, which will allow the city to attract more businesses and high skill jobs. I plan to introduce a bill to reduce Philadelphia's business taxes so that we are competitive with surrounding counties and cities that we compete against. I also intend to introduce legislation that will encourage investment where we need it.

I also introduced a bill to collect outstanding taxes in a more efficient manner. In Philadelphia, the average delinquent file sits untouched for 10 years. As a result, the collection rate is under par compared to cities and counties that refer delinquent files after one or two years. My bill requires the Revenue Department to refer tax delinquent files to its third-party collector one year from the date of delinquency if no action other sending notices has been taken. The amended bill will have a poverty threshold to protect senior citizens and low-income households. The intent of the bill is to target those who are able to pay the taxes, but simply choose not to. According to a 2013 Pew Charitable Trusts study, every one percentage point cut in the delinquency rate would potentially raise \$13 million annually. I expect better collection will improve voluntary compliance by 2% of \$26 million per year.

SOCIAL WELFARE REFORM

City Council can approve the use of financial instruments, such as minimum wages and tax rebates, to aid the poorest working Philadelphians. Should Council legislate a change to the wages paid to or taxes paid by low-wage workers? If so, what specific legislation would you introduce?

Yes. I believe that legislation such as employment/workforce development tax incentives can be helpful in providing job opportunities and career pathways for entry-level, unskilled and low-wage workers. I believe that improvements to public education and workforce development programs should be a priority for assisting low-wage workers. We want them on a path to developing job skills that will allow them to secure higher wage jobs. Additionally, better access to assistances for childcare, housing and job training would be a more effective way to aid the poorest working Philadelphians than increasing the minimum wage. I am concerned that an arbitrary increase in minimum wage in Philadelphia may result in businesses laying off the very workers it is trying to assist. I would support exempting low wage workers from wage tax.

PENSION REFORM

The city's pension funds are approximately 47.4% funded and cost the General Fund almost \$700 million a year. What specific approach would you advocate to put the pension funds on the path to solvency?

I introduced a bill to reform the pension system. The proposed legislation aims to fix the inherent flaw in our pension system which allows the city to continue to pay only the MMO (Minimum Municipal Obligation). The bill imposes greater financial discipline tied to a more conservative index, ARC (Annual Required Contribution), in the management of the city's pension system so that the city will begin to pay down the pension debt and stop using funds that should be contributed to the pension fund for other purposes.

Once this flaw in the pension system has been fixed, the city will benefit from responsible annual payments to the pension fund that will help reduce the deficit continuously over time. These larger contributions will be appropriated from the unidentified, over-appropriations found in the budget. My office has analyzed the budgets from previous fiscal years to identify patterns where less money was spent than budgeted. Based on the findings, I introduced the following budget reduction amendments: Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Reduction Amendments (\$48 Million); Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Reduction Amendments (\$74 Million); and Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Reduction Amendments (\$105 Million)

I believe we can raise additional funds to pay down the pension debt based on economic growth and greater efficiency. For example, I am exploring LNG (liquefied natural gas) exports. If successful, it may generate over \$150 million in annual tolling fees for PGW. A portion of this money could be used to help pay down the pension debt. A typical 20-year contract would generate over \$3 billion for the city. Otherwise, there are viable opportunities on a smaller scale that would bring in millions of dollars in new revenues.

As mentioned, we can raise an additional \$26 million in annual funds without raising taxes by improving the efficiency of local tax collection. Furthermore, I introduced and passed a bill to close loopholes for vehicle owners who do not register with the Department of Transportation and who intentionally collect license plates to evade boot and tow. The implementation of this bill would raise approximately \$2 million annually without raising taxes.

I am working with state legislators to create an International Trade and Investment Fund to capture overseas investment for water front development, infrastructure, startups, innovation and other projects. A portion of the funds generated for the city can be used to pay down the pension debt.

GOVERNANCE REFORM

City Council has considered legislation that would institute a three-term limit for incoming Councilmembers. Should Council approve this or similar legislation, thereby creating a Charter change ballot initiative that would set term limits for the office of City Council?

No. I believe the voters are able to decide for themselves who should be elected. I also think it is beneficial to have legislators who are able to take on large, long term projects.

City Council has the authority to change the law that allows sitting Councilmembers to raise in excess of funding limits for "non-campaign" or "pre-campaign" activities. Should Council legislate to close the campaign finance loophole?

No. That would make it more difficult for the average citizen to challenge incumbents and it would make it more difficult for *independent minded* incumbents to withstand challenges by political power brokers.

On average, only 10% of eligible Philadelphians vote in off-year elections. Should Council create a Charter change ballot initiative that would stagger City Council elections so that At-Large City Council races are decided along with the other citywide offices of Controller and District Attorney?

No. I don't think it would increase voter participation for these specific races. However, I am open to information that would demonstrate a likelihood that it would.

City Council's convention of Councilmanic Prerogative is not law and grants authority over land use decisions to a single elected official. As a City Councilmember, when land use ordinances are up for full Council consideration will you vote on the merits of the ordinance?

Yes, if the matter affects the entire city. For example, the Daily News reported that I was one of six Council members who stated we would not vote in favor of a bill to purchased land to build a new prison. As a result, the District Councilman held his bill. Unless the bill ensures unencumbered access to the river, guarantees the demolition of the House of Corrections, and implements alternative sentencing and pretrial detention for non-violent offenders, where appropriate, I will not vote for the bill.

In the case of the prison, the issue is a citywide. However, in most cases the issues are neighborhood issues and the District Council member is most knowledgeable regarding the specific desires of those residents and the future development of the community. District Council members are elected by the voters of their District. District Council members do not extend themselves into the other nine districts. Therefore, they are the best representatives of the voters in their respective districts on matters that are local.

TECHNOLOGY REFORM

The city's technological infrastructure is outdated but the resources to update it are limited. What specific technology project or upgrade should the city prioritize in order to increase the efficiency of municipal operations?

Yes. The city's priority should be to ensure efficient access to and delivery of municipal services. The city has taken a positive step by making available \$120 million for capital investment projects aimed at upgrading the city's technology infrastructure. A key outcome has been the implementation of the new 311 system. In addition, the city is in the process of providing online services which will allow constituents to handle many issues from their homes or businesses at any time. The system is making available the mobile application to make service requests (eg. reporting a pothole, requesting property information, etc.). The use of mobile devices is an effective tool since 80% of citizens have access to mobile devices in Philadelphia.

VISION

You are running for a four-year term in City Council. What do you hope to accomplish during these four years?

During the past four years of my first term, I worked hard to lay the ground work for my vision of Philadelphia as a world class city. I started various initiatives, introduced several important bills that address our city's most pressing problems and established a new role for Council in growing our city's economy, improving public education, enhancing quality of life and advancing the innovative/creative economy.

Part of laying the ground work is educating the public about the issues, engaging key stakeholders and opinion makers in the discussion, working out a set of priorities, holding hearings to obtain expert testimony and public opinion, establishing a working group to draft bills, seeking political support for the bills, introducing bills, organizing witnesses for committee hearings, making amendments if necessary, seeking votes to pass bills, voting on the bills and then seeking the Mayor's support or overriding his veto. This is challenging work, especially for a Republican Councilman in a city that is overwhelmingly registered Democrat by a margin of seven to one. Council that has fourteen Democrats and only three Republicans. But I have been able to accomplish these tasks, repeatedly. Recently, I concluded a hearing on developing the music industry in Philadelphia and immediately thereafter, introduced a bill to establish a committee on the music industry. This came after years of work and an initiative called PHL LIVE Center Stage. Over the past few months, I have visited approximately twenty senior locations to speak with seniors and administrators regarding "smart cities, smart aging".

If re-elected to Council, I will continue to push my agenda forward. Here is a list of some of the things I hope to accomplish in my second term based on the work I've done in my first term:

1. Obtain support in Harrisburg regarding public school funding and transition to local control based on global best practices. Pass a Charter change regarding the governance of the School District. Begin transition to local control with additional funding from our state to ensure quality education on an equitable basis throughout Philadelphia. Increase the city's funding of our schools while decreasing overall taxes. Expand our city's economy and devote new tax revenues to public education with support from state legislators.
2. Pass my bill to dramatically reduce Philadelphia's wage and net profits tax.
3. Pass my bill to increase tax collection efficiency which will provide more revenues for our city on an annual basis, without raising taxes.
4. Pass my bill to address our city's pension debt by adopting Government Accounting Office standards for the city's pension.
5. Pass my bill to establish a Commission on the Music Industry.
6. Pass my bill to create an International Trade and Investment Fund.
7. Pass my bills which improve Philadelphia's creative/innovative economy by providing free temporary parking for musicians to load and unload their vehicles and requiring consideration of local artists for city funded events such as Wawa Welcome America.
8. Pass my bill regarding privately owned roads and bridges that impact on the safety of Philadelphians.
9. Based on my Resolution, hold a hearing on establishing a 24-hour, creative/innovative section in our city and introduce a bill.
10. Based on my Resolution, hold a hearing on "smart cities" and introduce a bill.
11. Based on my Resolution, hold a hearing on "Smart cities, smart aging" and establish a pilot program in conjunction with the state and federal government.
12. Expand Philadelphia's economic opportunity by increasing the number of Consulate and Trade offices.
13. Establish global partnerships with various cities and companies around the world.
14. Introduce a bill on comprehensive tax reform.
15. Pass a bill in Harrisburg authorizing Philadelphia to sell another 300 taxi medallions for modern, green, wheelchair accessible taxis with bike racks. The funds to be placed in a state account and provided to the city over five years for each year to reduce the wage and net profits tax.
16. Introduce bills which will provide new revenues to the school district from existing revenue sources.
17. Introduce a bill on "smart policing" to improve public safety that provides an additional layer of safety for our police officers.

Of course, my efforts on behalf of our city cannot be reduced to a list. I will continue to work hard and work smart to grow our economy, improve education and training, increase opportunities, especially for those who do not have a college or a high school degree, provide realistic employment pathways for those with criminal records and limited skills, expand our skilled workforce to retain and grow jobs for Philadelphians, improve public safety, enhance public spaces, and transform our city into a truly world class city that every Philadelphian benefits from and can enjoy.