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**Quigley renews call for sweeping changes in Cook County hiring practices  
Complete employee audit, decentralized hiring and outside oversight among key reforms**

*Commissioner Mike Quigley states, "My plan will end the 'patronage tax' we all pay to support unqualified and unused employees."*

Chicago – Cook County Commissioner Mike Quigley detailed plans today to completely revamp Cook County hiring practices, saying that dramatic changes in personnel policies would be a key element of reform measures he would enact as Cook County Board President.

Quigley released a series of sweeping changes designed to guarantee that "qualifications, not clout" are the determining factor for employment with Cook County. Quigley, who has led opposition to tax increases and calls for reform as a Commissioner, announced his candidacy for County Board President last month.

Quigley's plan combines reform elements he has already introduced as a Commissioner and additional steps specifically designed to eliminate the widespread abuses in government hiring practices detailed by U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald's investigation of the City of Chicago.

"How hard you will work for the people of Cook County, not how hard you work to re-elect your political patron, should determine whether you are qualified to work in a taxpayer supported job. My hiring reform plan will demand fundamental changes in how employees are hired, regular reviews of their work, outside scrutiny of the process and real penalties for those who try to cheat the taxpayers," Quigley said.

Quigley said the County hiring system is currently lacking both organization and accountability. He pointed to an analysis by Governing magazine that gave the County a grade of "D" in the human resources category that specifically criticized the County for "lack of consistent HR practices in hiring, recruitment, classification and performance appraisal, with elected officials independent of central HR office."

"As County Board President, I won't wait for law enforcement to uncover abuses. I'll demand review of every job category and I will take hiring decisions completely out of the President's office. I will mandate the hiring of human resources professionals and punish anyone who abuses the system," Quigley said. "Recent headlines prove that business as usual gives taxpayers the usual results – unqualified employees, wasted resources and growing cynicism about government. County hiring practices need a complete overhaul that demand qualifications, not clout determine who is worthy of a public job."

Quigley's hiring reform plan would initiate fundamental changes.

**Complete employee audit.** Contract with an outside, independent firm to conduct a complete employee/payroll audit. The analysis would include whether employees are doing work specified by their job classification, appropriate staffing levels for each department and whether employees are qualified for their jobs.

**Strengthen the Offices of Inspector General and the Auditor.** Empower both figures with greater independence and the authority to initiate investigations. Absolve the County Board President's absolute jurisdiction over these offices and require a majority County Board vote to appoint and remove the IG and Auditor.

**Thorough, independent audit of current hiring procedures.** The County will perform a thorough, independent analysis of current hiring procedures to ensure all staffing is compliant with the *Shakman* Decree. The independent auditor will have the authority to use subpoena power, where necessary.

**New, uniform hiring system.** Implement a major reform of the County's job classification system based on the outcome of the audit. Demand county-wide, strict, consistently applied job criteria for each job code.

**Streamline and decentralize the County's hiring and employment practices.** Separate the screening and evaluation of job applicants from the hiring process. Hiring would not be done by individuals with political ties to elected officials, but by professionals located within each county department who have direct knowledge of staffing needs and requirements. The Bureau of Human Resources should train department managers in evaluation and interviewing protocols and monitor the departments for compliance with hiring regulations.

**Reform the County's job classification system and salary schedules.** Review the current job classification system for a greater understanding of each department and elected official's staffing needs. Consolidate the County's thirty different salary schedules to eliminate waste, and create greater equity in compensation and job responsibilities across the county payroll.

**Tough penalties for abuses of new hiring system.** Quigley has already called for new ethics standards with stiff penalties for abuse of the system. Inspector General will have the ability to investigate and recommend disciplinary action for abuses.

Citing the importance of uncovering corruption before taxpayers are stuck with a costly clean-up bill, Quigley stated, "The Cook County tax payers need a strong IG, uninhibited and not intimidated to seek out and penalize corrupt behavior wherever it may be."

"That is why I am renewing my proposal to empower the IG and Auditor and to strip the President of the Board's authority over these two offices. Our County Residents deserve an Inspector General who has the authority and the ability to determine when an investigation is necessary, and that is exactly what my proposal will give them. "

Quigley has issued a series of reports that detail how he would implement top-to-bottom reforms of Cook County Government, emphasizing that more efficiency and accountability will save taxpayers millions of dollars. He is opposed to any County tax increases.

"Our current County leadership would rather ask the taxpayers for more money than ask their employees to be more effective and efficient. Fair hiring practices will do more than restore confidence in government, they will save us money and make government more efficient. Right now, we're paying a patronage tax to support unqualified and unnecessary employees. My reforms will eliminate the patronage tax and help give Cook Country residents the efficient services they deserve," Quigley said.

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