

The Chicago Tribune asked the candidates for DuPage County Board Chairman the following questions, and below are Debra's answers. The Tribune also held an endorsement session for this race with all four candidates and Tribune editors. The session was taped, and can be viewed at <http://www.chicagotribune.com/videobeta/watch/?watch=c8110f13-fbf1-45d7-961c-a9e6f9d153c8&src=front>. The Tribune website homepage is: <http://www.chicagotribune.com>. The election is February 2, 2010.

DEBRA OLSON'S ANSWERS TO TRIBUNE QUESTIONNAIRE
DuPage County Board Chairman Questionnaire

1) Please evaluate the performance of the office you seek and explain why you are qualified to hold the office.

As County Board Chairman, I will offer leadership committed to smaller, limited government, and long-term fiscal responsibility, restraint, and accountability, which I believe is essential for the future of DuPage. Of the roles of the County Board Chairman, working with the County Board members and Countywide Elected Officials to develop financial policy and initiatives is paramount. Dealing with the challenges ahead, the Chairman must be both a strong leader and a consensus-builder. She must have vision for local and regional issues, and be innovative and responsive to effectively do more with less. She must work collaboratively to build partnerships with other governmental leaders to provide better services at lower costs. I bring those qualities and more. I believe I am the most qualified to hold this office because I am already there doing the work others are promising to do. As the ONLY candidate in this race who currently serves on the County Board, I have dedicated my entire 12 year tenure of public service to County government, and have been recognized during my three terms on the Board as an independent voice for taxpayers. Unlike the other candidates in this race, two of whom are career Springfield politicians who have voted repeatedly to expand state government and increase taxes, I have been a leader in reducing the size of DuPage county government, bringing spending under control, and building collaborative partnerships with community and government leaders to more effectively deliver services. Today, DuPage county government is over 10% smaller, reducing the county's burden on property taxpayers by hundreds of millions of dollars since I was elected. Building a coalition of fellow county board members, I took the forefront on proposing and passing historic reforms to DuPage County government that have resulted in greater transparency, an open and honest budget process, long-term budgets and capital planning, and more accountability for the dollars we spend. Working with business, community, and other governmental leaders, I have led on the Strategic Plan process and implementation, thereby setting a course for the future of DuPage. I have the most thorough knowledge of the issues we face, understand the strengths and weaknesses of DuPage County government, and know the history of what has worked and what hasn't.

2) What three specific initiatives would you like to accomplish during the upcoming term in office?

Politicians promising to be all things to all people are what gets government in trouble. My most important "initiative" will be to keep the budget in check and county government under control. While the county's Strategic Plan guides us in prioritizing and setting goals for the many demands placed on county government, including stormwater management, transportation needs, public safety, and human services, common sense says that the greatest challenge to leaders is to keep government from crawling deeper into taxpayers' pockets.

As a current County Board Member, I am already actively working on a number of initiatives, including campaign and ethics reform, procurement reform, green technologies for the county campus, and bringing clean water to residents in unincorporated areas. Another important initiative underway is to work with surrounding counties to collaborate on juvenile detention services. Having already passed

landmark budget, transparency and accountability reforms to set the ship of County government on the right course, as Chairman I will continue to work with our IT and Finance staff, and Strategic Manager, to consolidate and upgrade IT functions. This will enhance reporting, budgeting and auditing, and help us to further implement meaningful measures of programs, activities and expenditures. County government can also be more effective by working more closely and cooperatively with our local and regional government peers to provide better services for less, which I will do. Most importantly, under the budget constraints we face for the foreseeable future, I will strive to keep us on a sound financial footing.

3) Do you see a need to consolidate functions, streamline processes, reduce headcount and lower expenses in the office you seek? If so, what do you propose?

Since first elected, my record consistently demonstrates my leadership and collaborative efforts on streamlining processes, reducing duplications, finding greater efficiencies, and teaming up with community and government partners to cut costs, reduce the size of county government, and put our revenues to the best use possible. This was accomplished across all departments and in cooperation with the countywide officers. We then sent the tools to the Health Department to do the same. I will continue my commitment and vigilance in those efforts, working with our countywide officers and local elected officials to determine ways to further streamline and consolidate functions. Illinois has more levels of government than every other state but one. However, county government does not have the authority to eliminate other levels of government or usurp their functions. So efforts to consolidate or combine functions must be undertaken with the full respect, cooperation and participation of all entities involved. As County Board Chairman, I will facilitate those discussions, and where consolidations are possible and prudent, will work with those leaders and affected service recipients to accomplish what is mutually agreed to be best. In terms of the employee and service costs county government bears, it's important to note that Springfield's promises to reform the pension system county governments are required to participate in have gone unfulfilled, and the state fails to pay for their mandated responsibilities such as probation officers and adequate Medicaid reimbursements, thereby increasing the costs to county government unabated. As County Board Chairman, I will continue to advocate county governments be properly and promptly reimbursed and counties be allowed to provide alternative pension plans to the state pension system.

4) What is the best way or county government to advance economic development and create jobs?

Government does not create jobs, the private sector does. I am not a lawyer (1/2 of the County Board members are lawyers), but am a small business owner with my husband, so I bring that understanding and perspective. And as a mom with four young adult children, I am doubly aware of how difficult it is for people to find employment today. Unfortunately our state government's policies have forced businesses to move out of Illinois and have hindered job growth. However, DuPage is blessed with a strong base of employers of all sizes and types, and county government has a solid commitment to attracting, retaining, and assisting businesses to provide well-paying jobs and meaningful employment. DuPage is also home to several colleges, including College of DuPage which has 30,000 commuters enrolled each year. For the past several years, DuPage has brought more people into the county for work each day than leave the county to go to their job. The best way to advance economic development is a three-pronged approach: 1) Taking care of Basic County Functions - keeping taxes and crime low, maintaining and improving infrastructure to keep traffic flowing; 2) Building Partnerships – working with our Regional Superintendent of Schools and our local universities to promote excellent education for students ready to enter the workforce or going to college; working with municipalities, PACE and METRA on public transit options; working with business leaders through public/private partnership

organizations such as Choose DuPage to attract and retain businesses; supporting workforce training through our partnership with the Workforce Investment Board; working with our local chambers of commerce to support small business creation and success; and 3) Promoting regional projects such as Western Access to O'Hare and the I-355 Corridor Bus Rapid Transit System.

5) In an essay of no more than 500 words, tell us why voters should choose you for this office and your goals if elected.

The choice in this election is clear: One candidate who has 12 years of dedication to and accomplishment in DuPage County government, or other candidates who have spent the majority of their years in municipal or state government... One candidate with proven leadership in bringing government under control, or bringing the Springfield tax and spend policies into DuPage County government. I am the only candidate who has demonstrated the leadership, conviction, and collaboration; dealt with the breadth of issues and achieved real results in county government that matter most in the position of County Board Chairman.

Together with the County Board, the Chairman provides vision and leadership, but also is in charge of the purse strings. I am committed to smaller, limited government, long-term fiscal responsibility, restraint, and accountability, and have the record to prove it. I have stood strong as an independent voice against expansion of taxing powers. In my three terms on the County Board, I have worked to: reduce the size of government, lower the county's portion of the property tax rate and tax levy, and fight for and achieve good government principles.

Others will promise to produce good things for DuPage, but to achieve anything, the Chairman must also have the votes of the County Board. I have worked with my fellow County Board Members, built coalitions and consensus, and together have reformed the way we do business in DuPage.

Better than any other candidate, I know the issues we face, the strengths and weaknesses of County government, and the challenges ahead. As County Board Chairman I will build upon the good government reforms and successes I've already achieved. I will prioritize our short and long-term goals for appropriate budgeting and planning. I will continue to improve transparency and accountability. I will further build the partnerships necessary to be innovative in providing essential services for less. I will remain committed to strong law enforcement, maintaining our quality of life and working with our community partners to provide a safety net for those most in need. And perhaps most importantly, I ask voters to choose me, because as your County Board Chairman, I will continue to be accessible and responsive to the needs of constituents, and listen to your concerns.