

ACTION
—St. Louis—

#WokeVoterSTL

BOARD OF ALDERMEN VOTER GUIDE

**WARD
26**

Paid for by Action St. Louis, Kayla Reed, President
Not coordinated with any candidate or any candidate's committee.
2859 Sidney St. St. Louis, MO 63104

ELECTION TIMELINE

FILING ENDS

01/04/19

**#WOKEVOTERSTL BOA
PRESIDENT DEBATE**

01/26/19

**LAST DAY TO REGISTER
FOR THIS ELECTION**

01/26/19

#WOKEVOTERSTL BRUNCH

02/23

**LAST DAY TO REQUEST
AN ABSENTEE BALLOT**

02/27/19

GOTV TEXT&TOAST

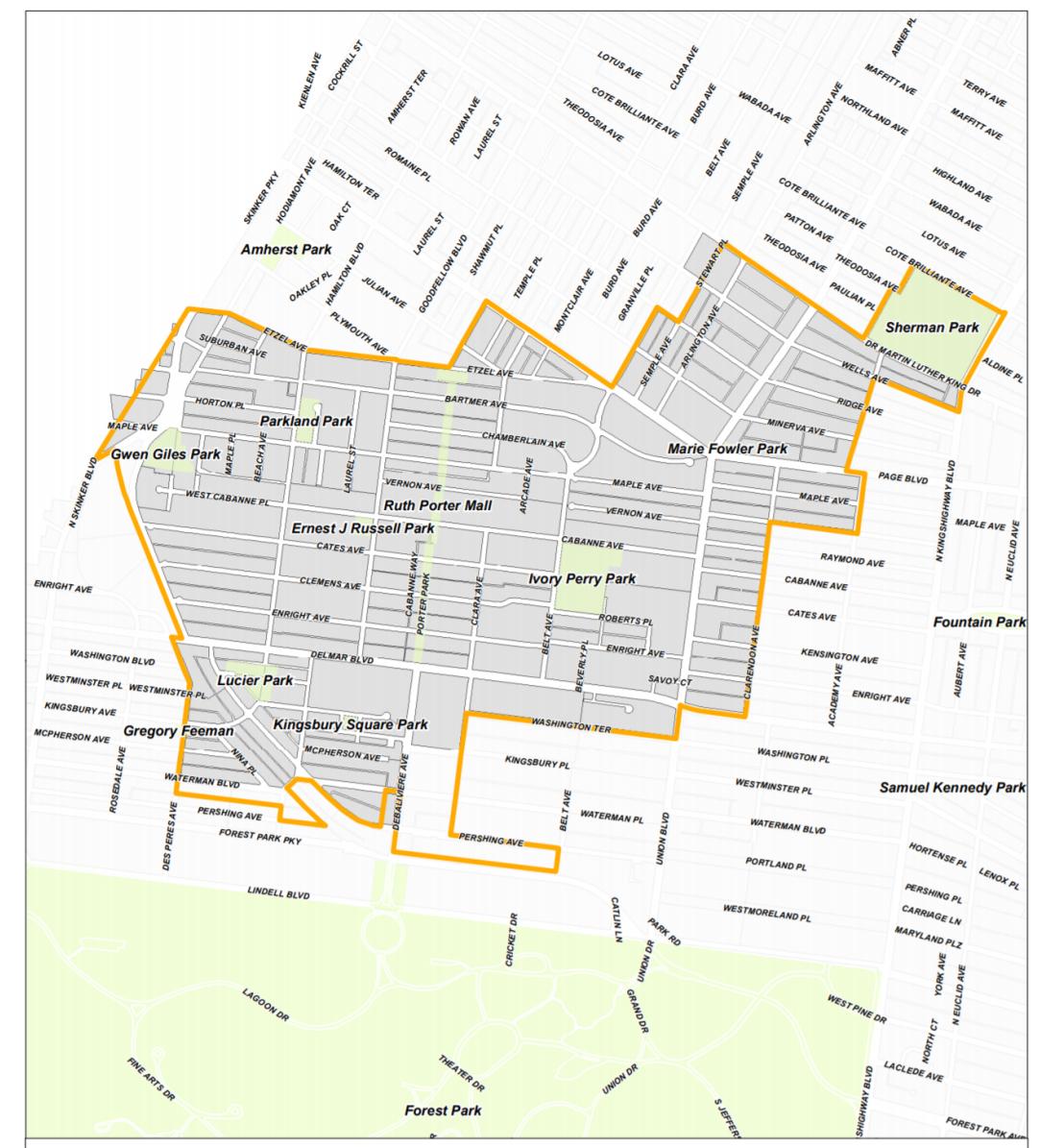
3/4/2019

ELECTION DAY

3/5/2019

WARD 26 CANDIDATES

LEATA C. PRICE-LAND
SHAMEEM CLARK HUBBARD
JAKE BANTON



Map of Ward 26
Candidates in bold are those that completed the questionnaire.

Question 1: What do you believe to be the most important role(s) of a member of the Board of Alderman?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

The most important roles are representing and being the biggest advocate for their community. Also, protecting the public's interest and assuring maximum transparency.

JAKE BANTON

The most important role for any elected official is to represent their constituents. The Alders role is to give residents a voice in city government and to make sure that their local government is serving them to the best of its ability. It is equally important that Aldermen have the ability to zoom out and have a city-wide and region-wide perspective on some issues. What is good for my neighbor is also often times good for me. Reducing poverty or crime in one area of the city benefits the whole city. Expanding transit in what part of the region benefits the entire region. You are still serving your constituents when you work toward regional goals.

Question 2: What are your top legislative priorities for the city of St. Louis?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

The top legislative priorities are improving public safety, creating economic opportunity and jobs. Improving access to quality housing, improving the cities economic stability.

JAKE BANTON

If I am elected I have a few priorities. The first is make sure the Prop NS money used to stabilize buildings is applied fairly across wards and that structures in the 26th ward that are most needing help get it. Retaining the great architecture of the city when possible is what makes these neighborhoods great and attractive to live in. The second is to see if there are ways to increase funding to the city's home repair grant program. The best way to stabilize a neighborhood is to help the people who already live there and who want to stay there, improve the property they have. Lastly I'd like to work with homebuilders and the city to try and get lots and developments that have sat vacant since the recession completed and back on the tax roles.

Question 3: In what ways will you create ongoing feedback and collaboration structures between constituents and your office to ensure responsive policies, decisions and accountability?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

I will be accessible, attend community meetings including hosting ward meetings. Improving access to information through technology.

JAKE BANTON

In this day and age, connecting with people is easier than ever. Texting, social media, email, blogs and websites and telephone calls should all be ways to contact your elected officials and I intend to be actively engaged through all these mediums. In person, regular contact is important as well and I promise to attend neighborhood group meetings to the best of my ability as well as hold regular ward meetings where folks can get updates about what is happening in the ward and at city hall that they should be aware about and ask any questions they may have.

Question 4: Displacement has taken place in countless neighborhoods across the city, with the Black population decreasing by 60 percent in some of the most severe cases. What do you attribute to this decline and if elected how would you combat displacement?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

Public safety, increasing access to quality housing and creating stable neighborhoods.

JAKE BANTON

Displacement is a tough but important issue for cities to get their heads around. In some cases, especially in some of the neighborhoods in the 26th, the percentage of a certain demographic could decrease by virtue of a new diverse population moving in by filling in the vacant lots and abandoned homes with new development. The population of existing groups might stay the same, but the percentage could shrink. This is part of the equation in many neighborhoods, but certainly not the sole cause. The other reason is that rising property values and therefore higher property taxes pushes lower income residents out of their own neighborhoods or entices them to sell and move out. To combat this the city has certain tools like property tax abatement which could be used for existing homeowners. Also, I think it is important that there are a variety of housing types and choices in a neighborhood to allow for a diverse population to make a choice on where to live based on what's best for them.

Question 5: Do you support the upcoming city ward reduction? What will you do to ensure a just and equitable process?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

St. Louis has a challenged form of government and we must find ways to improve it. I will fight to make sure there is fair and equitable distribution of populations throughout the ward.

JAKE BANTON

I think the Public spoke clearly in 2012 when we voted heavily in favor of ward reduction and I don't think another vote is necessary. The Board of Alderman needs to respect the will of the people and work towards implementing the outcome of that vote. That being said, I think the process on how this is accomplished is critical on making the reduction a success. It needs to be a transparent with regular community input and public hearings. There are communities in our city that have been historically disenfranchised and they are worried – rightly so – that this process could be used as another tool to gerrymander their voices out of local government. We all know that lines on a map can have profound impacts on people's lives and we need to make sure that these new lines are drawn in an equitable way so that everyone can have a seat at the table.

Question 6: What is your stance on the privatization of Lambert Airport?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

I don't feel there is enough transparency for the public to make a decision.

JAKE BANTON

I believe the current effort to privatize the effort has been rigged from the very beginning. When the person who wants to privatize it is paying for the study to see if it is feasible – any person with a brain can figure out what the recommendation of the study is going to be. In general, I think cities (especially cash strapped cities like ours) are often too cavalier about privatizing public assets. What many city officials forget, as they fret about how they're going to pay for everything in next years budget, is that many of these assets and services aren't primarily about making money for the city. They're about providing a public good and when that's the case, that has to be the number one priority. I would like to see an unbiased study undertaken to see if our airport is performing to the best of its ability and serving the citizens of St. Louis as well as it possibly can, but this effort isn't it.

Question 7: What is your position on the use of TIFs and other tax incentives in the city of St. Louis?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

TIFs need to be judged on a case by case instance. I believe the city needs to do a better job at attempting to funnel developers to the more challenged areas.

JAKE BANTON

Incentives like TIFs and Tax Abatement are critical tools at the city's disposal to help with economic development projects. However, the use of these incentives is often abused by developers for projects in neighborhoods that don't really need public assistance. This misallocation of public assistance denies much needed money from going into city coffers and our public schools. The use of these tools needs to be reformed so that they are used where they are needed most, or where they can be leveraged by using Community Benefit Agreements to help tackle other pressing community issues. Neighborhoods struggling with high rates of vacancy where it may cost more to build a home than the amount it will sell for is an example of where we need public assistance. Or maybe there's a situation where citizens in a stable neighborhood are pushing for upgrades to their local park. Here public assistance might be used paired with a community benefits agreement so that development can be leveraged to help secure funding for those upgrades.

The truth is, we as a city are still often times too scared to say no because of the fear we will miss out. The reality is that by sometimes saying no, we'll stop getting pushed around.

Question 8: Do you support the demand to close the Medium Security Institute? Please explain.

LEATA PRICE-LAND

I think the city needs a plan for addressing the problems at MSI. I am concerned the lack of a plan will lead to more problems.

JAKE BANTON

I do. We have shown that we cannot treat people in that facility with dignity and I think the facility damages St. Louis' reputation and we should be looking at newer innovative ways to help these folks reintegrate into society that gives them a solid chance at gaining employment and avoiding falling back into the criminal justice system.

Question 9: What is your stance on the city/county reunification, specifically the plan released by Better Together?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

I am opposed to a statewide vote that would supersede the rights of the people that live in the St. Louis Region to self govern.

JAKE BANTON

I am heavily in favor of a merger of the city and county. It's no secret that St. Louis has been stagnating while our peer cities pass us by in almost every measured positive statistic. Much of that stagnation is the direct result of our fractured governmental structure that costs so much money to run that we literally prey on our own citizens through fees, taxes, and the courts to keep afloat. Not to mention the regional projects that become stalled because of our infighting and businesses that pass our communities up because they don't want to deal with such a convoluted system. It is high time we correct this mistake. Now just because the cause is good doesn't mean we shouldn't stay vigilant to make sure that this new government structure is fair, equitable and represents all of our communities in St. Louis. The devil is always in the details. A main concern in addition to equitable representation is the potential that the new government will be built to favor industry and traditional power players over everyday citizens. That must not happen. When a full proposal does come out, these details must be examined.

Question 10: Did you support Proposition P? Why or why not?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

We have a real problem with public safety in this town. We need to allocate to public safety including activities for our children, keeping our communities clean.

JAKE BANTON

I did not. I thought the process seemed rushed and not well thought through. It was simply in response to the county passing similar legislation. Yet another reason to support a city county merger so that these issues can be discussed regionally. I think the city missed a chance to really change the way we think about how we approach crime and I would have liked to see that discussed thoroughly before it was put to voters. I will say though, that while I may differ on the programs and tactics the police and city use to fight crime, I believe that our first responders have an incredibly hard and dangerous job and deserve to be compensated fairly for the work they do.

Question 11: Do you support the legalization of recreational marijuana? Explain your answer.

LEATA PRICE-LAND

I would like to see how well the state of Missouri does with the legalization does with medical marijuana. However, we can look to states that have engaged in recreational marijuana for guidance.

JAKE BANTON

I do. It's working for other states with the positives far outweighing any negatives. At this point, what more really needs to be said?

Question 12: Do you believe homelessness is an issue in St. Louis. If so, what concrete steps will you take to alleviate homelessness in the City of St. Louis?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

Yes homelessness is a major problem that the city has chosen to turn a blind eye to. We need to find permanent housing as opposed to transitional housing.

JAKE BANTON

Homelessness is an issue in every major city including ours. It's a shame that the city seems to be the only one at least somewhat seriously looking at the issue and bearing the brunt of the costs for doing so. This is another reason why I support a city-county merger. I support a housing-first policy to address homelessness. Partnering with our local non profits to get folks into permanent housing and then giving them job skills training or helping them find employment for those that already have the necessary skills. Unfortunately given the city's limited resources I think new funding will have to be secured to pay for a revamped program. I would look at things like the use tax to raise some initial funding for these programs.

Question 13: More than 60% of the City's General Fund budget is currently devoted to Public Safety, with the vast majority of those funds allotted to police, prosecution, and jails. Do you agree with this budget allocation? If not, how would your budget priorities differ?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

I would prefer a different funding distribution. The more funds we find to help people improve their quality of life, should mean less money we have to spend on public safety.

JAKE BANTON

I think it's unfortunate that so much of our budget is allocated to these uses. I believe it is a system of the top down approach we take towards crime and the criminal justice system. I would like to see the city allocate its resources towards programs that are focused on the root cause of poverty. We should be funding programs like youth jobs and nonprofits like better family life that strive to change the circumstances for many in our community so that they are less likely to end up in our criminal justice system.

Question 14: Given that safe, quality, affordable transit is a lifeline for so many city residents, as well as the mark of a world-class City, and given that federal funding for transit seems to be diminishing, how do you think funds from Prop 1 should be used?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

We should look for ways to increase access to public transportation for those communities that are dependent to get to work live and play.

JAKE BANTON

Quite frankly, it would be nice if the funds from Prop 1 were used on transit, but that was not what voters were told when they passed it last year. I think it's critically important that politicians uphold the will of voters and when legislators mess around by either blatantly overturning the will of the people; as has just happened in Jefferson City, or by allocating funds differently than what was voted on I think is a massive breach of trust. So I don't think that this would be an appropriate use of those dollars. I would like to see street/bridge infrastructure that is rebuilt to consider pedestrian/bicyclists as equal users of such facilities and design them to be safe for all users. St. Louis has shown in the past that it supports transit specific taxes/bonds and I would be supportive of new efforts to continue to build out our system here.

Question 15: How do you plan to address the issue of crime in the city of St. Louis?

LEATA PRICE-LAND

Best deterrent to crime is good education, good paying jobs and stable neighborhoods.

JAKE BANTON

In many ways St. Louis seems stuck in the past including our policing methods. We need to move towards a community policing model that helps tackle the root causes of crime and builds relationships and trust between the police and the communities they serve. Our police should not be viewed as a militarized or occupying force, but instead as assets that are in tune with the needs of the neighborhood. Unfortunately, in many of our communities, this is not the case. My goal as alderman is to work with the police department to help implement some of these strategies and allocate public safety dollars differently. We should be paying for mental health professionals, and treatment and de-escalation programs, not military body armor and weaponry. The best line of defense against crime is often a stable, well-paying job. For too many of our youth, this is a hard thing to come by. Working with nonprofit partners like Better Family Life, Youth Jobs, and our local companies, one of the city's top priorities should be to take care of our vulnerable youth and make sure that they have the support network to work and grow in a stable environment. As alderman, I will work hard to make sure that these groups are well funded and have strong connections with the local business community.

CANDIDATES ANSWERS ARE COPIED VERBATIM

**VOTE
MARCH
5TH!**