

REMARKS BY TOM TRESSER AT LAUNCH RALLY – JANUARY 30, 2010

I am Tom Tresser, the Green Party Candidate for President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners.

I was the web master, co-leader and spokesperson for No Games Chicago. We organized opposition to a major project which we felt would be financially ruinous, environmentally disastrous and politically poisonous for the city and region. We took on “Da Machine” – the Mayor, the Governor, the Cook County President, the President of the United States AND Oprah – and won.

When I was a kid – I hated bullies – I hated people who used their power or strength to take advantage of people – to push them around. As an adult I have a passion for justice and excellence and making sure that everyone is treated fairly and that the system doesn’t push people around and that people can find their path to achieve their greatest accomplishments – to become the best people they can be – unencumbered by barriers placed before them – barriers unrelated to people’s own abilities and talents – barriers such as prejudice and corruption.

Now I seek high office in Cook County to in order deliver the kind of great service and that I feel we are all entitled to. I want to lead Cook County government because it is supposed to serve, protect and empower us – especially those of us who are most in need in this county.

I want to lead in order to serve.

Right now I see Cook County government as a functionary of “Da Machine” – that combine of political families that have run local government like their own private ATM – dispensing cash, contracts and jobs to friends, family and supporters for generations.

I call on all Illinois voters to reject the politics of nepotism and cronyism. No more passing of government positions on to sons and daughters like a pocket watch. If you recognize the name because their daddy had the job before or put them where they are – VOTE NO!

All my life I have pursued and studied creativity. I hold creativity to be a basic human trait and believe that creativity should be a value we all should share, nourish and celebrate. Creativity is an essential ingredient to a robust democracy because we first need to imagine a better world before we can move to shape it. Creativity is essential to our economy as we now live in a world where, increasingly, value is created from ideas. People with big brains get ahead. Nations with big brains will get ahead. And so I am passionate about the need for creative solutions and innovation in government. I have started or led eight nonprofit enterprises over the years and I can see how creative solutions to perplexing and persistent problems can work if you can invent, evaluate, organize and work hard. People are working hard in our communities right now solving some of the toughest problems around – but when I look at Cook County government I don’t see the passion to serve and the drive to innovate.

I see the bullies of my grade school days and the accumulated residue of scandal and corruption.

The news clippings in this pile are all stories of corruption in local politics over the past four years. Every story represents hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars of our taxes wasted on fraud, patronage or outright thievery. Every story is story of corruption and of missed opportunity for innovation and real service to the people.

Corruption is the enemy of excellence.

Corruption is the enemy of innovation.

Corruption is the enemy of great service to the people.

Corruption is the enemy of justice.

When you run your government for the benefit of your friends, family and supporters you must turn a blind eye to serving the people. You don’t care about research, innovation or what the academics say about this or that. You don’t care about being frugal or resourceful or seeking new solutions to old problems. And you certainly don’t care about giving new people a seat at the table of power or giving the unknown player an opportunity to shine.

If you want to end corruption and waste in Cook County government you are going to have to make a big change.

That change is voting for the Green Party candidate in this race and every other race you care about. The candidates from the other two parties cannot make change because they are supported by the vested interests that benefit from the system as it has always run. They take the money to run their campaigns from those vested interests.

I do not take campaign cash from corporations, PACs or unions. I will only take contributions from you – from individuals – and this means I will be beholden to you and to you alone. I defy my competitors for this office to take the same pledge. They can't. They won't. They all sup at the same table and will all be shackled to the same special interests that have dominated local government for decades. I will be unbought and unbossed – and so I will be able to call it like is and make the county work for the people – not for the insiders.

For real change in 2010 you must go Green!

So here's what I want to do in broad strokes:

(1) Health care – I want to extend health care to everyone in Cook County – I want to see if we can insure the uninsured and get them excellent services. There are approximately 785,000 uninsured people in Cook County. That's about 17% of the population. 46% are White, 34% Hispanic, 14% African-American. There's a program called Healthy San Francisco that can show us how to extend coverage to large numbers of people at a modest cost. I intend to cover any new expenses for such services by a combination of new revenue streams and cutting the rampant waste in Cook County – more on that in a minute.

(2) Justice – I want to de-institutionalize non-violent juvenile offenders and get them out of the penal system and into community programs and community settings for treatment service. Once a young person enters a jail, I feel like we are throwing them away. It costs about \$78,000 a year to incarcerate a juvenile in Illinois for one year, but alternative treatment methods cost around \$20,000 per year. We've got to re-tool our justice system to save kids not jail them.

I also want to create a blue ribbon commission to recommend the best way to take the judicial system out of politics. I want to see if can move to a system of merit selection of judges. Our judicial system is also in the hands of the Democratic Machine and Alderman Ed Burke, I have been told, controls the selection process of most of county judges. Without a fair, competent and impartial justice system – our society truly is broken and lost. And now – with the recent disastrous Supreme Court decision giving unions and corporations the right to spend unlimited amounts of cash on elections, – I fear that companies will simply buy judges on the open market and completely subvert and overturn every piece of legislation that protects the consumers and block those lawsuits that seek remedy from corporate malfeasance, insider deals and the overt corruption corporate America has displayed so brazenly over the past few years – the S&L scandal, Enron, corporate pollution, Bernie Madoff, and the giant ponzi schemes perpetrated by the banks and investment houses – all of which we, the taxpayers, had to clean up.

(3) Eliminating Waste in Cook County – The Better Government Association says 10% of the cost of government in Illinois is lost to corruption. Since the Cook County budget is over \$3 billion, we're looking at wasting \$300 million EVERY YEAR due to the malfeasance documented in these articles. I pledge to eliminate that waste – and will start with a forensic accounting of all lines of business in the county, including reviewing all contracts – especially all non-bid contracts. I will undertake a desk audit of all employees – matching the strategic needs of the county with the functions needed to perform them and the qualifications of the employees in those slots. I will start with the top administrators in the first year, then examine all middle management positions in year two and in the third year look at all line staff. In addition, I will implement as many of the "Re-Inventing Cook County" recommendations made by former Mike Quigley in his 2003 report – which outlines some \$50 million in organizational savings and efficiencies.

(4) Regional Planning – I want to work with the mayors or managers of the 128 municipalities inside the county to fashion common approaches to regional issues such as land use, mass transportation, sustainable development and energy. I want to start a pilot project using unused county land for organic farming and see if can grow our way out of a number of problems – including low employment in many of our communities, the presence of food deserts and the appalling rise of obesity in young people. I also will establish a Cook County Arts Council to promote and support the arts county-wide with special emphasis on those parts of the county where there is no arts council and where the population is art-starved.

So what do you say? Does sound like a plan?

Let's end cronyism, corruption and one-party rule of our government. Let's start a political revolution here in Cook County - let's take our government back!

OK – in order for this to happen I'm going to need you to do two things.

The first thing – please sign up at the tables for work on the campaign. In a few minutes we'll ask you to go to the table or tables that interest you and tell the volunteer coordinator about yourself and what you'd like to do. Your choices are:

- Come To My House – house parties
- Let's Get Creative – Arts 4 Tresser Project
- Community Organizers Needed – We're looking for coordinators for each ward and township
- Dollars & Cents – Fun-raising – we need to raise a boat load of money – and REMEMBER, I DO NOT take contributions from businesses, PACs or unions!
- We Need TO Be Heard – Media, communications, street theater, online media, YouTube video production
- Building Green – Help us build the Green Party and a new politics for Illinois – Phil will do a session on "Green Party 101" at about 1pm.
- Policy Wonks Needed – If you are passionate about policy and excellent service, then sign up for one of the four policy themes I mentioned and help us design programs to serve the people of Cook County. We also need researchers.

NOW THE SECOND THING I NEED FROM YOU – is – can you guess – money. I'm going to ask you do something perhaps no other candidate has asked you do to. I want you to subscribe to Tom Tresser's campaign like you would a magazine, or the way you support public television or Chicago Public Radio. What is good, honest, excellent government worth to you? \$10 a month. \$50 a month? How much do you spend on fancy caffeinated beverages each month? Now I sound like Ira Glass from WBEZ at pledge time – but seriously, don't make me beg you and repeatedly beg – the less time I spend begging, the more time I can build relationships, meet people and craft the programming that will transform county government.

So – PLEASE – go to one of the computers and sign up to donate the most you can from now through November – 11 payments – to get me through the general election. Big money from the special interests is already pouring into all the Democratic candidate's coffers – millions of dollars with more to come. The only way I have a fighting chance is if we match their big bucks with LOTS AND LOTS of modest donations from citizens who want to be served.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting a different outcome. You cannot complain about corruption and incompetence in Cook County government if you pull a Democratic or Republican ballot in November.

You all look eminently sane. PROVE IT by supporting Tom Tresser for Cook County Board President.

Are you with me? Are you ready to put public service back into the public sector?

Then, repeat after me "I'm mad as hell and I'm NOT going to take it any more!"

What did you say?

OK. Thank you for listening and now it's time to get busy. Please go now to these tables and sign up.

Let the revolution begin!

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