



TOM 2010

**TOM TRESSER FOR COOK
COUNTY BOARD PRESIDENT**
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A fresh start for Cook County.

PREPARED REMARKS OF TOM TRESSER FOR THE IVI-IPO COOK
COUNTY BOARD PRESIDENT ENDORSEMENT SESSION – July 31, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Tom Tresser and I'm the Green Party candidate for Cook County Board President.

As I look around the room I see many familiar faces.

That's because we've worked together – side by side for over 20 years. I was on the IVI-IPO State Board for two years in the mid-1990's.

Let's take a look at the word "Independent" – it's so important to this organization that it's in your name TWICE.

What does it mean to be independent?

One test is your record.

I saw the Democratic Machine up close and personal in my first campaign work for Hank Rubin running against Bernie Stone in 1991 and for Dick Simpson against Rostenkowski in 1992 and 1994.

I have spent years fighting the crooked schemes of the Daley Administration – often taking the unpopular side of a policy issue. I formed 42nd Ward Citizens for Chicago's Future in 1994 to be part of the state-wide coalition fighting the expansion of gambling into Cook County. I organized in the Gold Coast and wrote op-eds and stood on Miracle Mile gathering petitions. A few years later I was doing cultural organizing work in Douglas Park for the Park District as a part-timer and when a job opened up doing that work I was told there was no way I was going to be hired because (in the words of my boss's boss) – "You are a known Daley-basher."

It's a label I wear with pride.

In the mid-1990's I was one of the founding volunteer organizers of United Action for Power and Justice – the local affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF)

founded in Chicago over 60 years by Saul Alinsky. I helped bring the Jewish community solidly into UPAJ and had the privilege of speaking in front of 10,000 people at our founding convention at the UIC Center in 1997.

I spent the years before and after that organizing in the cultural community – doing countless speeches, training sessions and op-eds on the need for artists and creative professionals to enter public life, to lead and to run for local office. I founded Greater Chicago Citizens for the Arts in 1991 and The Creative America Project in 2004.

In 1993 IVI-IPO recognized me for this work, awarding me the Edwin Astrin Special Service Award for my arts and politics work.

Another good test of independence is your consistent stand on progressive issues that set you apart from the Machine-controlled City Council. I have advocated and organized consistently around two block busters – fighting privatization and fighting TIFs.

First by fighting the Latin School Lincoln Park Land Grab (private soccer field deal with the Chicago Park District) and then organizing an effort to educate the public around Tax Increment Financing (along with an IVI-IPO board member). I should mention that my current platform calls for the elimination of the TIF Program entirely from Cook County.

This work was a prelude to what became the hardest social change and civic engagement work of my life and that was opposing the bid for the 2016 Olympics.

Everyone in this room knows what a supposedly hopeless fight that was. I joined with a tireless group of concerned citizens called No Games Chicago and together we took on Da Mayor, Da County Board President, Da Governor (Blago and then Quinn), Da President and even Oprah!

I went to Lausanne, Switzerland in June to deliver the No Games Chicago message directly to the International Olympic Committee and went to Copenhagen Denmark in October to deliver more materials in advance of the 2016 vote. IVI-IPO, itself, joined this fight in July. I and the other No Games organizers did this work because we felt the 2016 bid was a lie and a scam and would've enriched the Democratic Machine beyond measure – and we believe that the Olympic kick-back cash would've been in the tens of millions of dollars – after all. Millionaire Eddie Burke would've been placed on the 2016 Operating Committee's board and would've served as the gateway for ALL Chicago's Olympic cash and contracts. As difficult as it is now to run independent candidates in the Chicago region, it would've become impossible as the Machine's allies would've been flush with an

almost limitless political action funding base. In short – the coming of the 2016 games would've spelled the end of independent politics for a generation. Fighting the bid was – we felt – required work for any progressive and independent citizen's group. Unfortunately only a handful dared join us – and in July IVI-IPO officially took a No Games stand.

After our year-long fight to stop the 2016 Olympics from bankrupting the region, despoiling public parks and displacing thousands from their neighborhoods, I was in the City Council chamber on September 9, 2009 to witness the 49-0 vote for the Olympic Blank Check – Alderman Preckwinkle being present and voting AYE.

The true story of the 2016 bid and what No Games Chicago did and why has not been told to this day. Despite the fact that the Vancouver games stuck the taxpayers there with a \$1.5 BILLION bill and the London games are now \$10 BILLION over budget – and despite the fact that all the BS that the organizers told the citizens there BEFORE the games – which was the SAME BS told to us here – all proved to be lies and worse – despite all this – I believe Chicago's civic organizations – the IVI-IPO included – has NOT LEARNED THE LESSONS available to us from the failed Olympic bid. The next big TIF-powered scam is already in the wings and it has been approved by the Mayor's lap-dog City Council – Alderman Preckwinkle included – and that is the Central Area Plan. You didn't ask about it in your questionnaire – but I'll tell you anyway that I oppose it.

Fighting the bid was a special fight and it was lonely and dangerous. I've talked to dozens of community leaders who privately told me they opposed the bid but were afraid to do anything about it. I hope some day we can convene a forum to review what happened in Chicago when our region's future was at stake and so few people spoke out.

Now - all along the journey I have described I have seen the rampant corruption and arrogance in Illinois politics that resulted in the conviction of a former Governor and which will likely lead to the conviction of his successor – as well as the jailing of literally dozens of Chicago Aldermen, judges, county officials and crooked Democratic-connected contractors.

This cumulative experience caused me to seek the office of President of the Cook County Board in order to bring independent, progressive and innovative government to the citizens of Cook County. The county has been a bastard step-child to the Democratic Machine for decades (if not generations) and people have lost sight that it can be an instrument of excellence, reform, justice and economic development – regardless of who runs the city of Chicago. I've abandoned the Democratic Party as hopelessly corrupt and run by a cadre of political families who

treat local government as a private family business – family names like Daley, Madigan, Berrios, Burke, and Stroger – to name a few – dominate Illinois politics and I don't believe reform is possible inside the Democratic Party.

Perhaps the strongest evidence of political independence is to place restrictions and limits on your fundraising so you are not beholden to the special interests that dominate Cook County politics as I've described.

Green Party candidates do not take money from PACs or big business. I will not accept cash from any organization that does business with the county. Alderman Preckwinkle has already taken over \$200,000 from unions that represent thousands of county employees. I consider this a major conflict of interest. Alderman Preckwinkle's former campaign manager went to work for Joe Berrios (in his capacity as head of the Cook County Democratic Party). I believe the Alderman is simply the new face of the Democratic Machine and will be incapable of making the hard choices necessary to get this county under control and delivering excellent service.

Bottom line – my career in public life has been about promoting the common good via innovative and ground breaking tactics. I have built coalitions and programs that attracted major resources and grassroots support. I do deep research on policy matters and take consistent, principled stands regardless of political popularity and FIGHT EFFECTIVELY for those principles. If INDEPENDENCE means anything then I have embodied the spirit and practice of independent politics. My opponent has voiced support for casino gambling, voted for dozens and dozens of TIFs and backed the Olympics despite initial reservations – by what measure can that record be judged independent? And most recently she has backed down from her pledge to swiftly repeal the remaining half-cent Stroger sales tax hike. She is repeating the Machine's script when she asserts that no tax cuts can be made at this time because there is no waste or corruption in the county budget that would be cut first.

SO - After a life time of organizing in the progressive community I have joined the Green Party and am seeking to build a real, INDEPENDENT alternative to the entrenched two parties in Illinois and Cook County.

I seek and deserve the endorsement of the IVI-IPO.

Tom Tresser
312-276-54320
tom@tom2010.us
www.tom2010.us