

# WSU Voters Guide | 2009 Detroit Elections

## Detroit Mayoral Special General Election

**Get the Facts. Use the Power. Vote.**

### How to Use the 2009 WSU Voters Guide

Here's how this Voters Guide works. Wayne State University (WSU) asked key questions of each major candidate for this race about issues important to the future of Detroit. Each candidate was allowed up to 150 words to answer each question. WSU did not edit or modify those answers. Below each question you will see each candidate's response.

- ◆ **Pass this guide on to friends and family.**
- ◆ **Share your views with the candidates.**
- ◆ **Ask for clarification from any candidate whose answer seems unclear.**
- ◆ **Vote May 5th.**

*Wayne State University (WSU) does not endorse political candidates or contribute money to political parties or political candidates' campaigns. WSU seeks to educate the public through voters guides, issue workshops and candidate forums.*

### Register to Vote

The City Clerk is the Chief Elections Officer of the city and is responsible for voter registration in Detroit.

To be qualified to register and vote in the City of Detroit persons must be citizens of the United States, at least 18 years of age, residents of the City and the state for at least 30 days on or before the 20th day prior to primary or election day. Registrations may be accepted in the Department of Elections Office any secular day of the year except election days. Persons who will become 18 years of age between the close of registration and the day following an ensuing primary or election and otherwise have the necessary qualifications, should enroll during the period registrations are in progress.

For more information, please visit the Michigan Secretary of State web site at [www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos) and click on *Elections in Michigan*.



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**QUESTION: As Mayor, what are the three most important problems you will address in your first term to revitalize Detroit?**

**Ken Cockrel, Jr.**

As Mayor I have taken steps to clean up city government. We have found many problems in our city's budget and move to close the holes in the process we inherited. We have replaced political appointees with respected professionals and we are restoring integrity to the way in which our city manages its finances.

Public safety is a top priority and I have directed our Police Chief to prepare a plan of action for crime reduction and improved police response time. We opened four new police mini-stations and re-opened the Tenth Precinct. We have also expanded the size of the police department's metal theft task force. We have made high profile busts throughout the city.

We are successfully working with President Obama to secure dollars for infrastructure projects in Detroit that will create jobs and affect overdue improvements. We will finish the work that started on behalf of Detroit.

**Dave Bing**

I will concentrate on crime, jobs, and restoring integrity to City government, and improving the education system in Detroit. The first priority will be getting a handle of the City's budget situation which is out of control.

I will prioritize getting more officers on the streets to improve dismal response times and create safe communities for our residents as well as those who visit our city. Additionally, I will utilize my job creating experience to grow the City's job base, as well as train and retrain as many of our residents as possible.

I will have a zero tolerance for anyone who is ethically challenged in my administration. Although you requested three problems we cannot move the city forward without improving the educational system and I will engage improving our education system also as a top priority.

**QUESTION: Do you support changing the city charter to require council elections by neighborhood-based districts? If not, why not? If yes, what specific actions will you take to promote this change?**

**Ken Cockrel, Jr.**

The City Charter needs to be revised and I support a proposal that calls for a committee to reevaluate and suggest changes to the existing charter. As for Council by Districts, I support the idea but ultimately believe this needs to be led by Detroit voters. In the meantime, I believe that what is most important is that each voter do their research and elect competent and well-intentioned people to the City Council and all elected positions.

**Dave Bing**

Critics of the current system believe that the council members are not directly accountable to the voters. I agree with these critics and support a city council by districts.

A district system would allow each area of the city to have some representation and advocacy. Aside from accountability, a council elected by districts would provide an opportunity for new, vibrant leadership to serve who would otherwise be hampered by the tremendous burden of running a city-wide election campaign, which takes remarkable resources or built-in name recognition.

If elected, I would use my office as a bully pulpit to advocate how modifying the city charter would help families and the business citizens of Detroit.

**QUESTION:** *The quality of the city's public education system is critical to the economic and civic vitality of the city and region. As Mayor, should Detroit Public Schools be under your control, and why?*

**Ken Cockrel, Jr.**

I believe in our public schools. I am sending my four school-age children to them. As mayor, I have moved to strengthen the bonds between city government and the public schools. We have regular meetings between DPS and the city's law enforcement. I prioritized to our new police chief the need to improve safety in and around the public schools. An educated workforce will be essential to the economic future of Detroit.

Putting the finances of the DPS system in order is critical to its future. The City of Detroit is facing a similar challenge, with a current deficit that approaches \$300 million. I am determined to put the city's financial house in order. Once we accomplish that difficult task, I would consider taking on the added financial burdens of the DPS. I remain open to exploring ways to improve the DPS system educating the next generation of Detroiters.

**Dave Bing**

Four years ago, the citizens stated that they did not want the mayor to have oversight of its public schools. That decision was at a different time and under different circumstances with different school and city leaders. I would not shy away from taking control of the schools.

Mayors across the country have become frustrated by the failures of their school districts. They are being held accountable by the electorate for the weaknesses of their school systems, while at the same time having little authority or influence over urban school boards and administrators.

I am and have been an advocate of the best education opportunities for our children. That could be public or private schools, or home schooling within or outside the city. There is a direct relationship between the process of a city and the process of its public schools.

**QUESTION:** *The city currently is designed to sustain a population of two million people. Today Detroit's population is less than 800,000. The city encompasses 149 square miles of which 44 square miles are unused or underutilized. What policies and/or programs would you introduce to manage unused or underutilized land in Detroit?*

**Ken Cockrel, Jr.**

Through our newly created Office of Energy & Sustainability and our new Clean 365 initiative, we will take advantage of Detroit's vast vacant property to create more green spaces, urban farms and community gardens. We will seek out corporations and other organizations to adopt-a-park and work with a variety of creative organizations to expand Detroit's creative class and bring more public art to our city.

This has been a difficult issue for our city to address in part because the scope and depth of this problem continues to shift. However, I am convinced that with enough innovation and new ideas we have the ability to convert what is now a problem into a tremendous resource for our city.

**Dave Bing**

This is one of the many challenges that we have to face if we are going to truly turn around our City. I believe that the answer will be to aggressively prioritize which areas of the City are suited for residential development versus commercial and industrial development. Some areas of the city have been so depopulated you have only one or two residents on a block; however you still have to provide the same level of service to these areas. We need to identify these areas and consider them for redevelopment either as new residential centers or open them up to commercial development. We want to assertively recruit new industries and jobs to Detroit and hope the response will require us to put those unused and underutilized areas to use.

**QUESTION:** *As Mayor, what will you say to young people to keep them in Detroit after graduation?*

**Ken Cockrel, Jr.**

Detroit offers a great quality of life in terms of access to cultural opportunities, including the DIA, Michigan Opera Theater, Heidelberg Project. We have great restaurants, sports and entertainment venues and recreational opportunities.

Detroit represents limitless opportunities for creative, hard-working, and innovative people to make their mark on the world. To retain and attract the talented young people we need I am focused on the following priorities:

(1) I have led the city's efforts toward a regional transit system and set the plans in place to make it happen. I will see this project to its conclusion and for the first time in decades, bring regional transit back to Detroit.

(2) We will work to grow our existing creative class through partnerships with CCS, WSU and various community arts organizations and find creative ways to keep residents in our city and rebuild our neighborhoods.

**Dave Bing**

First of all I would congratulate them on their accomplishment. I would then simply remind them that the city needs them. The city needs their energy and ideas. The City needs them to hold us accountable for making it the place in which they truly want to reside.

I will hope to say that we can offer them a job in a sustainable industry with growth possibilities. I will promise them a safe city where they can enjoy the best of culture, night-life, dining, and state of the art sports arenas, in other words a "cool city". I will promise them housing opportunities from lofts to condos suited for the newly graduated. Finally, it is my hope that by the time they are ready to start families they choose to stay, educate, and build vibrant communities. With your help we can make this vision a reality.

**QUESTION:** *As Mayor, what will you do to improve Detroit's relationship with surrounding suburbs?*

**Ken Cockrel, Jr.**

I have a history of working with regional leaders on a number of issues. I chaired the Tri-County Summit, the organization of legislators meets to discuss issues affecting the region. I am an active member of SEMCOG and otherwise work across regional barriers. We are creating a regional transit system and I will only support something that is regional.

We recently worked together as evidenced by the success of the NCAA Final Four; we jointly promote the region to attract new films to be made in Detroit and we work together as a region to protect our people and the chiefs of police from throughout the region meet on a regular basis.

Success is based on our collective strength and working together to protect industries and jobs. We must also attract new economic development and new jobs and find ways to help government and constituents save money.

**Dave Bing**

Everyone in the region, elected, community, private sector leaders and suburban residents have a vested interest in the well being of Detroit. As the city rises or falls, so do the region and the state. We can no longer afford to be a region divided.

I am a member of many boards of directors of non-profit and quasi governmental entities. In that capacity, I have built valuable relationships with state and regional leaders. If elected, I would utilize these bonds to foster open and honest dialogue with perceived adversities, outside of the city.

There is a lot of misunderstanding between city and suburban residents is based on our past race relations. To stick our heads in the sand and ignore this underlying concern is not productive. Open, honest dialogue is the key.

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