

= Gery Chico =

Gery J. Chico (/ ˈdʒɛrɪ ˈtʃɪkoʊ / GERR @-@ ee CHEE @-@ koh ; born August 24 , 1956) is a Chicago lawyer , public official , former Democratic primary candidate for United States Senate , and former candidate for Mayor of Chicago . Chico served as the Chief of Staff to Mayor Richard M. Daley from 1992 to 1995 , and board president of the Chicago Public Schools from 1995 to 2001 . He was named Outstanding School Board President by the Illinois State Board of Education in 1997 . From 2007 to 2010 , he was board president of the Chicago Park District , and in 2010 he was board president of the City Colleges of Chicago . On June 7 , 2011 , Chico was named Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education by Illinois Governor Pat Quinn .

= = Early life and education = =

Gery Chico was born on August 24 , 1956 , to a Mexican @-@ American father , Jesse , and a Greek @-@ Lithuanian mother , Jacqueline (née Kopulos) . With his two younger brothers , he grew up in Chicago 's McKinley Park neighborhood . His mother also worked as a secretary at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Dentistry . Chico attended a now @-@ closed parochial school , Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Elementary School at 35th and Hermitage , where he headed the altar boys and patrol boys , and also played baseball for two years . A hip injury kept him in a wheelchair during his freshman year at Thomas Kelly High School .

Chico pursued a pre @-@ medical degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana ? Champaign , but after his sophomore year he transferred to the University of Illinois at Chicago . A political science major , he volunteered in the 11th Ward . He later secured an externship in the city 's Department of Planning during his senior year , and he worked there from 1977 to 1980 . He received his bachelor 's degree in 1978 . From 1980 to 1987 , he worked for the City Council Finance Committee . Finance Committee chair Alderman Edward M. Burke promoted Chico to research manager , and he became senior research assistant for the Department of Planning and Economic Development . At that time , he took night classes at the Loyola University Chicago School of Law . He earned his law degree in 1985 and became a member of the Loyola Law Review .

Chico has been married twice ; his first wife was Jeryl Minow , with whom he had three daughters . He is currently married to Sunny Penedo Chico , who has a son and daughter from a previous marriage . A former U.S. Department of Education employee , Sunny runs a consulting firm that focuses on , among others , tutoring services and curriculum advice .

= = Legal career = =

= = = Sidley & Austin = = =

Chico began working as an associate of the Chicago @-@ based law firm Sidley Austin in 1987 , and served as General Counsel to the Chicago Development Council , a real estate development association . He left the firm in 1991 to become the Deputy Chief of Staff for Mayor Richard M. Daley , but he later returned as partner in 1995 and 1996 , leading the firm 's practice related to state and local government .

= = = Altheimer & Gray = = =

In 1996 Chico left Sidley & Austin to become a senior partner of Altheimer & Gray . Oscar D ? Angelo , a friend of Richard M. Daley and a former Altheimer partner , suggested to the firm ? s managing partner that the firm hire Chico . In 2000 , just four years later , at age 44 , Chico became chairman of Altheimer . In 2002 , the firm gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to Governor Rod Blagojevich and Attorney General Lisa Madigan 's campaigns . In 2003 , while Chico was chairman and simultaneously running for the US Senate , Altheimer became insolvent and dissolved . Some

partners blamed the bankruptcy on poor management by Chico , while an attorney who sat on two financial committees blamed an economic downturn .

Chico also served as Special Counsel to Arnstein & Lehr in 2003 and 2004 .

= = = Chico & Nunes = = =

In 2004 , Chico , along with Planning Department colleague Marcus Nunes , formed the general practice law firm Chico & Nunes , which lobbies for clients seeking government business .

= = Chief of Staff to Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley = =

In 1991 Chico was a Deputy Chief of Staff for Mayor Richard M. Daley . He coordinated efforts to drain freight tunnels that were flooded with water from the Chicago River . Chico was later promoted to Chief of Staff , a position he held from 1992 to 1995 . As part of his duties , he oversaw the completion of the International Terminal of O 'Hare International Airport , preparations for the 1994 FIFA World Cup , and the construction of new schools . Along with Budget Director Paul Vallas , Chico helped add 1 @, @ 000 officers to the police force and improved neighborhoods throughout the city through a program called Neighborhoods Alive .

= = Chicago Public Schools board = =

In 1995 , the Illinois state legislature passed the Chicago School Reform Act , which gave the Mayor of Chicago unprecedented new control over Chicago Public Schools . Daley asked Chico to become the CEO , but Chico declined because he was resuming his law career . Chico instead recommended that Daley appoint colleague Paul Vallas as CEO , and Chico was named chairman of the School Reform Board of Trustees . In 1997 Chico was named Outstanding School Board President by the Illinois State Board of Education for his reforms in education and fiscal policies .

Chico was responsible for efforts to preserve and restore hundreds of murals in the public schools , which had been commissioned by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Progressive and New Deal eras . They had since been hidden under layers of dirt and paint . Under his administration , CPS appointed an Arts Education Task Force and a Bureau of Cultural Arts .

= = 2004 campaign for U.S. Senate = =

In 2004 , Chico ran for the Democratic nomination to succeed retiring Republican U.S. Senator Peter Fitzgerald . He was the first Democrat to declare his candidacy , doing so on July 30 , 2002 , during a rally with Hispanic leaders . His Senate committee preferences included education , transportation , and foreign relations . He also criticized the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and the No Child Left Behind Act , but supported gay marriage , abortion rights , stem cell research , the death penalty , and universal healthcare . Chico was the only candidate who supported gay marriage out of all seven Democrats and eight Republicans . Then @-@ State Senator Barack Obama ultimately won the nomination over six other candidates including Chico .

= = Chicago Park District board = =

In October 2007 , Mayor Daley appointed Chico as president of the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners . Chico supported the construction of a new soccer field in Lincoln Park despite opposition from local residents . In 2010 , he stepped down .

= = City Colleges of Chicago board = =

In March 2010 , Mayor Daley nominated Chico as chairman of the board of trustees of the City Colleges of Chicago and the board elected Chico chairman . Along with Chancellor Cheryl Hyman ,

Chico reformed the City Colleges budget by laying off 225 employees , removing unfilled jobs , and reducing executive spending to increase spending on technology and training for students . Furthermore , Chico and Hyman reduced taxation on property for two straight years , and cancelled nursing programs . He resigned 8 months later to run for Mayor of Chicago .

= = 2011 campaign for Mayor of Chicago = =

On September 27 , 2010 , Chico announced that he would run for mayor of Chicago in 2011 . He was one of six candidates on the ballot . Chico raised \$ 4 @. @ 4 million in campaign funds .

Chico pledged to hire 2 @, @ 000 police officers but did not offer specifics on how he would raise the funds . He opposed making the school board an elected body , and he favored extending the school day and school year . Chico picked up endorsements from unions that represented , among others , police officers , firefighters , laborers , painters , operating engineers , iron workers , roofers , and sheet metal workers .

Rahm Emanuel was considered to be the leading candidate before the election . Chico was considered " the rival with the best chance of forcing him into a runoff " . During the election on February 22 , Emanuel 's 55 % support dwarfed Chico 's 24 % support . Chico won in 10 of Chicago 's 50 wards , while Emanuel won 40 . The campaign 's communications director claimed that controversy over Emanuel 's eligibility to run for mayor may have diverted the focus of the press away from the other candidates . After the election , Chico remained involved in the runoff elections for other city offices , endorsing a candidate for 25th Ward alderman .

= = State Board of Education = =

Chico was named chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education in June , 2011 . His confirmation was delayed as a result of questions regarding his ties to the Save @-@ A @-@ Life Foundation , a failed charity that was undergoing investigation by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan 's office .