

= Toni Preckwinkle =

Toni Preckwinkle (née Reed ; March 17 , 1947) is the current Cook County Board President and a former alderman in the Chicago City Council representing Chicago 's 4th ward in Cook County , Illinois , United States . She was elected on November 2 , 2010 , as President of the Cook County Board , the Executive Branch of Cook County government . Preckwinkle first sought office in 1983 and was defeated twice before securing election in 1991 and subsequently being re @-@ elected as alderman four times .

Preckwinkle had been an occasional critic of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley . In her first four terms in office she emerged as the council 's prominent defender of affordable housing . Among other issues , she is known for her sponsorship of living wage ordinances , her expressed concerns regarding the costs and benefits of the city 's Olympic bid , and her strong stance against police brutality and excessive force .

= = Early life , family , and career = =

Preckwinkle was born in St. Paul , Minnesota , moving to Chicago to study at the University of Chicago in the Hyde Park community area , where she earned her bachelor 's and master 's degrees . From 1969 to 2013 , she was married to Zeus Preckwinkle , a retired seventh- and eighth @-@ grade teacher at Ancona Montessori School . They have two children . Her former husband is Caucasian , which at times was a campaign issue .

After college , Preckwinkle spent ten years teaching history in several high schools in the Chicago metropolitan area , including Calumet High School , the Visitation School , and Aquinas . In 1985 and 1986 Preckwinkle was President of the Disabled Adult Residential Enterprises (DARE) . Preckwinkle has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence , Political Action Director of the Near South Chapter of the Independent Voters of Illinois (IVI @-@ IPO) . During and after her 1987 aldermanic election campaign , she worked as a planner for the Chicago Department of Economic Development . By 1990 , she had become executive director of the Chicago Jobs Council , and become allied with civil rights attorney R. Eugene Pincham .

= = The 4th Ward = =

Chicago 's fourth ward is on the South Side of Chicago , adjacent to the Lake Michigan lakefront . It includes all of the Kenwood and Oakland community areas , the northern portion of Hyde Park and the eastern portions of the Washington Park , Grand Boulevard and Douglas community areas . The northern part of the ward (North of 45th Street) is predominantly poor and African American , while the more racially diverse southern half is predominantly middle and upper middle @-@ class .

= = Unsuccessful campaigns for alderman = =

In her first two aldermanic election attempts for the 4th ward , in 1983 and 1987 , Preckwinkle lost to the incumbent , Timothy C. Evans . Evans was Chicago Mayor Harold Washington 's City Council floor leader and lieutenant . In 1983 , she gained enough support to force a runoff election . (Chicago Aldermen are elected without regard to political party affiliation , but must earn a majority of votes or the top two candidates have a runoff election .) In the runoff , Preckwinkle carried traditionally " independent " precincts in Hyde @-@ Park , but Evans was able to win by carrying the precincts in the north of the Ward .

In the 1987 elections , Evans defeated Preckwinkle by a 77 % to 21 % margin . In 1987 , although both the Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun @-@ Times endorsed Evans , they praised Preckwinkle for her numerous qualities , including intelligence and independence , and expressed hopes she would continue in politics . Preckwinkle was endorsed by state Rep. Carol Moseley Braun and also by the Independent Voters of Illinois @-@ Independent Precinct Organization , but not by Harold

Washington , who endorsed Evans .

= = Third campaign for alderman = =

In 1991 Preckwinkle and four others challenged Evans for the 4th ward alderman 's position . In the first round of voting on February 26 , 1991 , she won nearly one @-@ third popular vote in the ward by winning 20 of 58 precincts (all in the Hyde Park @-@ Kenwood community) . Evans and Preckwinkle again advanced to a runoff election , as they had in 1983 , but this time the majority of the eliminated candidates endorsed Preckwinkle . On April 2 , 1991 , Preckwinkle performed better in the northern part of the ward and was elected by a 109 @-@ vote margin , defeating the 17 @-@ year incumbent alderman Evans .

= = Alderman = =

On February 27 , 2007 , Preckwinkle was elected to her fifth four @-@ year term .

Preckwinkle has developed a reputation for progressiveness . On the City Council Preckwinkle was known as a progressive member , independent of then @-@ Mayor Richard M. Daley , with whom she dissented more often than any other alderman . Preckwinkle was one of the few aldermen on the City Council occasionally critical of the policies of former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley . In 2004 , she and Dorothy Tillman were the only aldermen to vote against the Mayor 's city budget , and in 2005 , Preckwinkle was the lone dissenter . Preckwinkle has supported the majority of legislation advanced by the mayor and his allies , including most of Daley ? s annual budget proposals ; his controversial use of tax increment financing , an economic development program in which tax revenues are funneled into accounts controlled almost exclusively by the mayor ; and , ultimately , his quest to host the 2016 Summer Olympics .

Preckwinkle has championed set @-@ asides for affordable housing as her signature issue , and the municipal ordinances she sponsored in 1993 and 1999 for affordable housing increased city expenditures on low and moderate income housing by 50 percent . In 2007 , she pushed for increases in the existing Affordable Requirements Ordinance . This mandates housing developers using land bought at a discount from the city to make at least 10 percent of their housing units " affordable " , or to contribute money to an affordable @-@ housing fund by increasing the percentage to 15 percent . The issue is considered a key element in the debate about ending homelessness in Chicago . Her detailed knowledge of public housing has been recognised in the national press , which has cited her defense of the maligned Vince Lane when the federal government took over Chicago 's public housing projects .

Preckwinkle was a co @-@ sponsor of the living wage ordinances that passed the city council in 1998 and 2002 . On July 26 , 2006 , Preckwinkle was one of 35 aldermen who voted to approve the 2006 Chicago Big Box Ordinance sponsored by Alderman Joe Moore (49th) which for 7 weeks made Chicago the largest United States city that required big @-@ box retailers to pay a " living wage . "

In October 2007 Preckwinkle opposed naming a landmark in the 4th ward for 1976 Nobel literature laureate Saul Bellow , reportedly on the grounds that Bellow had made remarks that Preckwinkle considered racist . She also opposed the renaming of a stretch of street near the original Playboy Club " Hugh Hefner Way . "

In 2006 , Preckwinkle decided to paint over two 36 @-@ year @-@ old , unmaintained and severely damaged public murals in the 47th Street Metra underpass . The murals had been created by graffiti artists , working with permission from the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs , and had represented themes that included Latin @-@ American , African , Mayan , Indian , and Native American spiritual practices . The walls were later covered with newly commissioned murals : one is made up of a series of ceramic tiles and the other is a traditional painted mural featuring the city and important historical South Side figures , including former Alderman Dorothy Tillman .

Preckwinkle has been outspoken in support of the city settling the Jon Burge torture case , rather than continuing to spend money in the litigation process . Preckwinkle has also been proactive in the

effort to pursue compensation for victims of police brutality in the Jon Burge cases and sought hearings on the initial special prosecutor 's report . She has been a critic of the decades @-@ long delay in settling the case , and she was a proponent of the settlement .

In 2007 , Preckwinkle pursued disclosure of Chicago Police Department officers who used excessive force . The United States District Court had ruled that the records be unsealed and made available to the public . However , on July 13 , 2007 , the city filed an emergency motion to stay the judge 's order . When the city argued in the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals to against disclosure , it made the point that aldermen would have access to the information . Preckwinkle 's August 23 , 2007 , request for disclosure was denied .

The unsuccessful Chicago 2016 Olympic bid placed the main site of the \$ 1 @.@ 1 billion residential complex , which would have accommodated athletes in an Olympic Village in the 4th Ward . Preckwinkle expressed her reservations about the initial plan , and was involved in plan revisions . Since the planned construction was almost entirely in her ward , she expressed concern that her constituents were not offered a chance to voice their concerns with the plan . She was an early advocate of moving what would have been the Olympic Village from the McCormick Place truck yard to the Michael Reese Hospital site . On March 14 , 2007 , Preckwinkle joined four other South Side aldermen in voting against a \$ 500 million public @-@ funded guarantee to back up Chicago 's Olympics bid . On September 9 , 2009 , Preckwinkle voted to authorize Mayor Richard Daley to sign the International Olympic Committee 's host city contract that included financial guarantees putting full responsibility for the Olympics and its proposed \$ 4 @.@ 8 billion operating budget on taxpayers .

= = Democratic Party Committeeman = =

Preckwinkle is also the Democratic Committeeman for the 4th Ward , a position within the Cook County Democratic Party . Each of the 50 wards of the city and the 30 townships of Cook County elect a Democratic Committeeman to the Cook County Central Committee . These committeemen form the official governing body of the Cook County Democratic Party which , among other purposes , endeavors to attract , endorse , and support qualified Democratic candidates for office .

Preckwinkle succeeded Evans as 4th Ward Democratic committeeman in 1992 , defeating former Evans administrative assistant Johnnie E. Hill by 6 @, @ 227 to 2 @, @ 327 votes in the March 17 , 1992 primary election ; Evans had filed nominating petitions to run for re @-@ election as committeeman and run for judge , but withdrew his name from the ballot for committeeman so his name would only appear once on the ballot , for the judgeship (to which he was elected) . Preckwinkle was re @-@ elected as 4th Ward Democratic committeeman on March 19 , 1996 , running unopposed on the ballot after her successful challenges to the nominating petitions of Charles S. Williams and her 1995 and 1999 aldermanic challenger Kwame Raoul , who were both just a few dozen signatures short of the number required to earn a place on the ballot . Preckwinkle was re @-@ elected , again running unopposed on the ballot , as 4th Ward Democratic committeeman in March 2000 , March 2004 and February 2008 .

On November 6 , 2004 , the 10 Democratic ward committeemen whose wards make up parts of the 13th Illinois legislative district voted to appoint Kwame Raoul to the state senate seat vacated two days earlier by then U.S. Senator @-@ elect Barack Obama ; 4th Ward Democratic committeeman Preckwinkle and 5th Ward Democratic committeeman Leslie Hairston had the largest says in the appointment with 29 % and 27 % , respectively , of the weighted @-@ vote based on the percentage of votes cast in each ward in the 13th legislative district for Obama in the November 5 , 2002 general election .

Preckwinkle chairs the ward organization , the Fourth Ward Democratic Organization , which was one of sixteen Chicago Democratic ward organizations named in a complaint filed on August 31 , 2005 with the Illinois State Board of Elections by the Cook County Republican Party charging that Democratic Party ward organizations are illegally housed in City @-@ funded neighborhood ward offices . Taxpayers fund aldermanic service centers , which are open to the public . State law prohibits the use of public funds by any candidate for political or campaign purposes . The complaint

against Preckwinkle 's ward organization was one of nine that a Hearing Officer appointed by the Board recommended proceed to the next step of the hearing process , an Open Preliminary Hearing . On October 17 , 2005 , at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Elections , the Board entered an executive session and voted , in a 4 ? 4 tie , along strict party lines , failing to adopt the recommendation of the Hearing Officer , and ordered the complaints dismissed . The complaint against Preckwinkle 's ward organization was one of eight that the Cook County Republican Party appealed all the way to the Supreme Court of Illinois . On January 23 , 2009 , the Illinois Supreme Court unanimously ordered the Illinois appellate court to conduct a judicial review of the Board 's dismissals of the complaints .

Preckwinkle nominated Joseph Berrios for re @-@ election as Chairman of the Democratic Party of Cook County at a meeting of the Cook County Democratic Central Committee on March 3 , 2010 . At the time Berrios was the incumbent chairman as well as a commissioner with the Cook County Board of Review and the Democratic candidate for Cook County Assessor . Berrios was re @-@ elected .

= = Relationship with Barack Obama = =

Preckwinkle 's views on Obama were prominently featured in a July 2008 New Yorker cover story on Barack Obama 's political origins . The article begins by recounting a 1995 meeting between Preckwinkle and Obama in which he discussed a possible run for the Illinois Senate seat then held by Alice Palmer . According to the New Yorker 's account , Preckwinkle " soon became an Obama loyalist , and she stuck with him in a State Senate campaign that strained or ruptured many friendships but was ultimately successful . " In 1995 , she successfully challenged the signatures of Obama 's opponents in the Democratic Primary for the Illinois Senate , allowing Obama to run unopposed .

Preckwinkle supported Barack Obama early in his political career , endorsing him in his campaigns for Illinois Senate in 1995 ? 6 , U.S. House in 1999 ? 2000 , and U.S. Senate in 2003 ? 4 . She was among those who encouraged Barack Obama to make his first run for the United States Congress in 2000 , and she was an early supporter when he ran in 2004 . When Obama later became a United States Senator following the 2004 United States Senate election in Illinois , Preckwinkle had a large say in his Illinois State Senate replacement . She became Obama 's Alderman when he moved from Hyde Park to South Kenwood in June , 2005 .

According to the New Yorker article , Preckwinkle had since become " disenchanted " with Obama . The article 's author suggested that Preckwinkle 's " grievances " against Obama were motivated by Preckwinkle 's perception that Obama was disloyal . Notwithstanding any such concerns , Preckwinkle was an Obama delegate at the 2008 Democratic National Convention .

= = Cook County Board President = =

Preckwinkle announced that she would run for President of the Cook County Board in January 2009 . She launched her campaign website on June 18 , 2009 . On February 2 , 2010 she won the Democratic Primary , defeating the incumbent Board President Todd Stroger , among others . Preckwinkle faced Roger Keats , the Republican nominee , in the November general election . On November 2 , Preckwinkle became the first woman elected as Cook County President by capturing over two @-@ thirds of the vote . Her Republican opponent received only 26 % of the vote , and then moved out of Illinois . She recommended that Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley appoint Will Burns to succeed her as Fourth Ward Alderman , but Burns preferred to run in an open primary . Mayor Daley appointed Shirley Newsome as a " caretaker " alderman on January 12 , 2011 . Burns handily won the special election for the seat a month later .

In August 2012 , Dr. Nancy Jones , former head of the Cook County Morgue , declared " This woman is evil " regarding Preckwinkle 's handling of the management and budgeting of the Morgue , which had led to alleged bodies piling up and filthy conditions . Also in August 2012 , Preckwinkle stated at a conference hosted by former Governor Jim Edgar that former President Ronald Reagan

deserved a " special place in hell " for his involvement in " making drug use political " . Preckwinkle was defending Chicago 's move to decriminalize possession of small amounts of cannabis by allowing police to write tickets , asserting that drug laws unfairly lead to more minorities behind bars . She later stated her regret for her " inflammatory " remark .

On March 22 , 2016 , Preckwinkle announced that Brian Hamer , who served as the state 's revenue director under Gov. Rod Blagojevich and then Quinn , would replace Tasha Green Cruzat as chief of staff .

Some political observers considered Preckwinkle a potentially viable candidate in the 2015 Chicago mayoral election .