

## **Pioneer Press General Election 2008**

**Amanda D. Howland, M.A., M.S., J.D.**

### **Candidate for the 51<sup>st</sup> District State House**

#### **Transportation issues:**

**1. Outline your transportation priorities to help ease the region's traffic congestion.**

We desperately need to pass a statewide capital infrastructure improvement plan to help us pay for repair and upgrades to existing roads and bridges. In addition, we need to appropriate more funds to increase and improve our passenger rail system. As a Lake County representative I would work to ensure that we bring a sufficient share of those dollars to our county.

**2. What is the best way to fund new road construction and repairs?**

The best way is through the state's existing road fund and by working to obtain additional tax dollars from the federal government.

**3. What area road projects should be given a priority?**

We have so many throughout Lake County. Our communities have already prioritized projects and work has begun on Route 120 improvements in addition to others. We need to continue to work toward the goals already in place. In addition, we need to improve and increase our commuter options. This will help alleviate some of the traffic congestion problems and will also help make Lake County a more desirable place to live and work.

**4. What should be done to ensure the CTA, Metra and Pace work together more effectively and efficiently?**

First, I think that state legislators should set goals and general standards for cooperation and service improvements that the three agencies must meet in order to get taxpayer support. I also believe that direct election of RTA board members by the public would help as elected officials are more accountable to the public and can be replaced if not performing adequately.

**5. How would you rate government spending priorities on highways or mass transit?**

Both are equally important to the economic future of our state and country. Currently, we are spending billions overseas when our own infrastructure is in disrepair. We can't afford more bridge disasters like the one in Minnesota. We need to focus our resources at home. As for mass transit, with higher gas prices and as we try to wean ourselves from oil dependency, we will need additional and more efficient mass transit systems. Other countries are already far ahead of us in this field.

## **Health Care**

### **1. What do you think government should do to bring down the individual cost of health care?**

First of all, we need to provide affordable preventive care. It is much less costly to take care of a problem before it develops into a serious illness. We also need to continue our national focus on educating people regarding exercise and nutrition. It is a proven fact that exercise and good eating habits provide significant health benefits

Next, we need to help our small business provide affordable health care options to employees. Many people are unable to work in the jobs for which they are qualified because of the lack of available health care. I am in favor of a small business health care tax credit to provide small businesses with a refundable tax credit of up to 50 percent on premiums paid on behalf of their employees. This would provide be a win/win situation because small businesses could offer high quality health care to their workers and better qualified workers would be willing to take jobs with small business employers.

### **2. What health-related issues, in your view, should be given priority for state/ federal funding?**

Living in a family with several physicians, I know that preventive medicine and basic health care are extremely important. We can save significant monies that are currently spent on medical costs if we can find the way to make sure people are able to see a doctor before they develop problems that require more expensive and/or long-term treatment and care.

### **3. What should government do to help people with the increasing costs of prescription medication?**

We need to reform the Medicare Part D program to eliminate the gaps in coverage that currently exist. We also need to provide help to people who reach a certain threshold in medication spending to ensure that they are not bankrupted in order to pay for their prescriptions.

### **4. What is your position on government spending or support of embryonic stem cell research?**

I have always supported stem cell research as I believe it has the potential to save millions of lives and prevent needless suffering. My opponent also recently voted to support such research.

### **5. Please outline your position on abortion, including parental notification laws, and the morning after pill?**

I believe we need to do everything possible to reduce the number of abortions (which, by the way, have declined steadily). We need to provide resources and access to information regarding birth control and family planning so that people can make informed decisions. Like my opponent, I support a woman's right to make her own health care decisions.

The "morning after" pill is also known as Emergency Contraception and is only used when there was no primary means of contraception. It acts before implantation and is medically and legally considered a "contraceptive." It is not an "abortion pill" like RU486. I believe our current laws regarding emergency contraception are sufficient.

I know that about 85% of voters favor parental notification laws. My opponent recently voted **against** a parental notification bill. I believe the passage of such a bill is possible but there must be a system in place to help those young women who are the victims of incest or whose parents are unfit or not in the household to get the guidance and assistance of some other responsible adult.

## **Education**

### **1. What should be the state's role in funding education? At what level?**

Our State constitution provides that the state has the primary responsibility of funding education. Illinois is not currently living up to that responsibility. The state needs to provide funding at a level that ensures that every child is able to receive a quality education and is prepared for a lifetime of learning. We currently rank 48<sup>th</sup> in education. With the resources and standard of living enjoyed by our state, we should be doing much better!

### **2. Would you favor an income tax or sales tax to provide more funding for education?**

As I talk with voters I find very little support for a sales tax increase. Some have mentioned a graduated income tax, but even they are in the minority. I believe we need tax fairness for our middle-class. I want to work toward a system that ensures the middle-class does not continue to face an excessive tax burden, while meeting our responsibilities to adequately fund our schools. .

### **3. What steps should be taken to resolve the inequality in funding between property rich districts and poor districts?**

This has always been a problem. We need to help underperforming and underfunded schools to bring themselves up without reducing the quality of the higher performing schools and without sacrificing local control. Continuing to provide additional support for schools, as we've done for the last several state budgets, is part of the solution. We also need to demand that the federal government provide the funding to support its mandates in the No Child Left Behind Act.

### **4. Would you favor an expansion of gambling to provide more money for schools?**

Before taking a specific stance, I would need to see the proposed legislation. Most voters I talk to are not currently concerned about gambling. I recognize that there are pros and cons to expansion. It is

very difficult to prevent the social ills that are associated with gambling. If any increase is passed, I would want to insure that provisions were included to restrict who gets licenses and to monitor gaming facilities to prevent the growth of organized crime. We also need to be sure we have provision to deal with gambling addiction problems.

**5. Should the state provide more funding to higher education to make state universities more affordable?**

Absolutely. The economic competitiveness of our state depends on maintaining a strong public university system. In addition, we need to make sure that our young people have the education needed to compete in today's global economy and it is unfair to ask them to take on enormous sums of debt in order to achieve a college or professional degree.

**Economy**

**1. What measures do you advocate to ease the spiraling costs of energy?**

First, we need to reduce the gasoline taxes. In addition, the country needs to make a serious commitment to investing in the basic research needed to make alternative, renewable energy sources commercially viable, affordable and available on a mass scale. We have to reduce our dependence on petroleum.

**2. Ethanol production is driving up the cost of food? Do you favor it as an alternative energy form or is it time to seek another alternative?**

I strongly support the development of bio-fuels; however, I don't believe that ethanol is the best alternative because it competes directly with crops needed for food products. We need to explore a wider range of fuel alternatives, including other plants such as switch grass or other prairie grasses.

**3. What measures do you support to stimulate the economy? Tax reductions for business or individuals? Rebates?**

I believe we need relief for our shrinking middle-class. They have always been the backbone of our economy and have carried a disproportionate share of the tax burden in this country for too long. I am open to the idea of tax cuts and/or rebates for our middle-class. Past experience shows that typically some of the money individuals receive in tax cuts or rebates is plowed back into the economy by additional spending. This produces a win/win situation because the additional spending provides a stimulus for businesses.

**4. Is it time to allow for domestic oil drilling? If not, why not? If so, where?**

I am unsure as to why this question is asked in a survey for State Representative as this an issue that is decided at the federal level, not by the General Assembly. I will note, however, that in Illinois, particularly in the southern part of the state, we already allow domestic oil drilling.

## **5. What measures do you support to create good jobs and keep jobs in the U.S./State?**

One important thing we can do is to end tax subsidies and tax breaks to companies that outsource American jobs overseas. We should reward those companies who remain here, who move to our state and/or who expand their businesses. We also need to provide quality re-training programs to help those who have lost jobs.

Improving transportation systems and our infrastructure will encourage businesses to remain in Lake County and will also encourage workers to live here.

### **Public Safety**

#### **1. What should be done to help fight gang crime and gang violence in the region?**

Currently, our schools, the "AfterSchool Coalition and other community groups are trying to provide alternatives for our young people to keep them away from gangs and violence. In addition, refunding and restarting the successful CeaseFire program would help with reducing violence. Also, enforcing our current gun laws and passing other common sense gun legislation, like an assault weapons ban, could help as well.

#### **2. What type of legislation would you support to regulate the sale and use of guns? If none, why not?**

I support common-sense gun legislation. I believe that laws such as criminal background checks on gun purchases at gun shows have been effective and that we need to enforce the laws we already have. Other common sense regulations include, an assault weapons ban, a ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines, and a limit on the number of firearms an individual may purchase in a month to prevent gunrunning. I do not favor restricting the rights of legitimate hunters and law abiding citizens.

#### **3. Do we need more law enforcement on the street and would you support funding for it?**

Absolutely. We need more police on the streets and I would support additional funding for training and maintaining them.

#### **4. What needs to be done in the area of disaster preparedness?**

Illinois needs to work closely with the Department of Homeland Security as well as with our local municipal governments to make sure that mutual-assistance compacts are in place in the event of a major emergency. One of the most important components of disaster response program is to ensure that emergency responders from different agencies and departments have compatible communications equipment so that they can effectively coordinate response activities.

Better public education so that the average person knows where to go and what to do in case of a disaster is also important. I am currently part of the Citizen's Action Corps that is coordinated through the Lake Zurich fire department. This community based program provides basic FEMA and other

training to a group of citizen first responders so that we can assist in time of any major emergency. The Citizen's Corp sets up shelters, helps with search and rescue, dispenses medication at pre-arranged emergency response locations and assists in many other ways. These types of programs are critical.

**5. Do we need to scale back some of the laws passed in the aftermath of Sept. 11 to protect the rights and privacy of U.S. citizens?**

This question is also mostly a federal issue. I believe we have to balance the need to protect our civil liberties against the need to keep Americans safe from terrorist threats. I cannot say if there are laws that currently need to be changed, but believe it is the responsibility of lawmakers to listen and take direction from their constituents as to what the proper balance is.

**Environment**

**1. Do you view global warming as a serious threat that needs action or a theory that needs study? What should be done about it?**

I believe that climate change is real and is a serious concern that needs both action and additional study. We need to work together with other countries to reduce greenhouse gasses. The United States should be a leader in developing alternative, non-polluting energy sources.

**2. What should be done to address the growing needs for water consumption vs. the need to conserve water?**

More public education is needed to help people understand the impact their water use decisions have on our region and to help them to identify ways that they may be able to reduce their usage. In addition, we need to invest in upgrading old and inefficient infrastructure. Leaking pipes cause a significant waste. Old and inefficient wells also waste water.

**3. What measures do you support to protect the Great Lakes and the state's waterways from invasive species?**

I support the development of inter-state compacts among the Great Lakes states and efforts by the United States and Canada to keep out invasive species. We've had good results from using electric barriers in Lake Michigan. These might be effective in other waterways that feed the Great Lakes. I also believe that state conservation departments should work with the Coast Guard to conduct regular checks of international ships bilge compartments before they enter our waterways to ensure that they haven't brought invasive species with them.

**4. Do you favor laws to force people to conserve, i.e., tax on water bottles, or purchase of low energy light bulbs?**

No. I believe that people will choose to conserve the more they understand the benefits and the importance of conservation. Look how far we have come with voluntary recycling. A majority of people are already changing their behavior in favor of a more environmentally sensitive lifestyle. With

continued education, continued availability of environmentally friendly products, the expansion of recycling options and so on, I believe that trend toward an environmentally sensitive lifestyle will only grow stronger in coming years.

**5. What is your position on extending tax credits for developers of alternative sources of energy, such as wind and solar power?**

I believe that developing alternative energy sources is essential for our future quality of life as well as for our national and economic security. We need to support companies who develop these and tax credits are one way of providing an incentive for development.