

## CHICAGO TRIBUNE QUESTIONNAIRE - 2008

**Q: Submit a brief essay that explains why you are qualified to hold this office.**

I am a life-long public servant. I began my career teaching emotionally disturbed and behavior disordered children. I then spent five years as an elementary school administrator in a building of 1400 students. In 1993 I went to law school full-time. During that time I worked with the pro-bono and public service groups on campus. I also was the President of the entire student body, met regularly with faculty, and helped develop student group programs.

Since graduating from law school I have worked with all types of people in all situations. I have significant expertise in mediating and problem-solving that will serve me well in the legislature.

I am running for this office because we can do better! I am not a career politician and believe that new voices are needed in Springfield. I am tired of the bickering and lack of action. I want to offer a voice of compromise and work on bi-partisan agreements instead of getting involved in personal power struggles.

I can use my expertise as an educator and administrator to work toward real solution for our educational problems. We rank 49th in the country and that is totally unacceptable! I also want to work toward more extensive ethics reform and elimination of our "pay to play" system. Illinois currently ranks as one of the most corrupt in the country. With the resources we have, we should be a leader, not a laughingstock. I want to work to pass a capital bill that will appropriate funds fairly, bring more funding to Lake County and my district (we are often overlooked) and that will focus on long-term goals rather than a short-term fix.

**Q: List your three most significant accomplishments**

1. I was the first in my family to complete a four year degree. I then went on and earned two Master's degrees and a law degree. I did this while attending school full-time, working part-time and earning scholarships. I did not have the financial support of family but had the drive to work hard and achieve goals.

2. Working for almost five years as a law clerk to a Federal District Judge. These jobs are highly sought after by law school graduates. The position enabled me to deal with all aspects of the law, legal system and court system and gave me significant experience in research, writing and mediation.

3. Teaching emotionally disturbed and behavior disordered children. The greatest reward came from those in my classes who learned to deal with their difficulties, control their behavior and transfer out of special education. I still receive letters from families and former students who had success after spending one or two years in my class.

**Q: List your three most significant post-election goals.**

First I want to establish a more visible presence than my opponent has. Considering that the incumbent has been my representative for almost three terms, I never receive his e-mail legislative updates. In off elections years I never see him or even hear his name. During election years he is only visible right before the Primary and again beginning about September 1. He'll send out a legislative update and a follow-up letter to voters.

Others in the legislature regularly send letters, e-mails and otherwise keep their constituents informed. They hold "town hall" meetings and occasional events at their in-district headquarters. I plan to be this type of representative. I believe effective legislators must have frequent contact with constituents.

Next, I want to work with both sides of the aisle to help get back to common-sense dealing. The bickering, in-fighting and power struggles have to stop. Our state is in trouble and we need to work together to solve the problems facing us.

Finally, I want to work toward a new capital construction bill with specific line-item guarantees that a fair amount of money would be spent in the 51st District and in Lake County.

**Q: Do you think Illinois should hold a Constitutional Convention? What would you change in the state constitution?**

I regularly walk door to door and almost never hear the issue brought up by voters. If I mention it, most don't have any idea that it will even be on the ballot. I've concluded that this isn't an important issue to my voters. That said, I've attended several conferences and sessions regarding the Constitutional Convention and have listened to the pros and cons. We already have a provision in our State constitution that allows for amendments. I am very concerned that if we convened a Constitutional Convention the numerous special interest groups could have too great an influence on re-writing the constitution and as a result we could end up with a document that leaves the state in a worse position than we are in now. Furthermore, I am not sure now is the best time to begin this process. I believe that the current gridlock, bickering and inability to work together will only get worse under the pressure of a Constitutional Convention. It will be a costly and time consuming process that is certain to create many more problems than we can predict.

**Q: Would you support the appointment of an independent group to set priorities for capital spending projects in the state so spending would not be based on political decisions? Why or why not?**

Yes. Creating an independent group to set priorities for capital spending projects could be a very effective way to take politics out of critical decisions and to ensure that funds are allocated for the repair/replacement of our suffering infrastructure without all the political infighting. Another component of this should be to pass extensive ethics reform that bans "pay-to-play" politics.

However, this doesn't mean that legislators have no role in helping to set priorities. Constituents expect their elected officials to advocate on behalf of their districts and want to see that their tax dollars are returned to the district. Legislators

**Q: Describe your views on expanded gambling in Illinois. Should a casino be located in Chicago? Should it be owned by the**

**government or a private entity? Should all casino licenses be awarded through competitive bidding?**

Most voters I talk to are not currently concerned about gambling. I recognize that there are pros and cons to any new casinos or increase. I am still open to considering expansion but cannot make a blanket decision without evaluating the complete package and options proposed in a specific bill.

I would prefer private ownership of new licenses or facilities and favor competitive bidding; however, it is very difficult to prevent the social ills that are associated with gambling. If any expansion 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. Licenses should be awarded for a set period of time and then re-bid periodically.

We also need to be sure we have provision to deal with gambling addiction problems including a way to monitor those with problems and to prevent them from entering our casinos.

**Q: Would you support a constitutional amendment to allow citizens to recall the governor, state lawmakers and other public officials? Why or why not?**

While I believe that voters have the ability to "recall" elected officials every election cycle, I would support additional recall ability. Public servants are just that. If they drastically fail to serve the public that elected them there should be more accountability than waiting several years for the next election.

The voters I talk to seem uniformly in favor of such a proposal. However, states that have passed this type of law have rarely used it, so I am unsure as to whether it would be effective.

**Q: Illinois has lagged in the creation of private-sector jobs in recent years. What specific steps would you recommend to improve the economic climate of the state?**

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 much 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.

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.

Another is 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.

Additionally, improving our transportation systems and our infrastructure will encourage businesses to remain in the state and will also encourage workers to live here. Businesses want to be able to move their goods and services efficiently and employees want to be able to get back and forth to work in a reasonable time at a reasonable expense.

**Q: Should state government provide health care for all citizens? What specific reforms in health care do you recommend?**

The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not ensure its citizens access to basic health care. As a result, more than 1.8 million people in Illinois alone are without health care. This is tragic! I am not sure that a government run system is our best or only option. This is a problem that must be dealt with at the federal and local level.

First of all, we need to provide affordable preventive care. 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. 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 businesses provide affordable health care options to employees. 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.

We also need to reform the Medicare Part D program to eliminate the gaps in coverage that currently exist. We 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.

**Q: How would you address the performance of public schools in the state? Do you support performance pay for teachers? A voucher system for school choice? An end to teacher tenure? Preschool for all children?**

AS a former teacher and elementary school administrator it is unacceptable to me that Illinois currently ranks 48th in education. With the resources and standard of living enjoyed by our state, we should be doing much better! 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. That said, I realize that money alone is not the solution to the problems we face. We need to actively pursue parental involvement. We need to continue with school-business partnerships. In some instances, Charter Schools have proven to be very effective. We need to seriously examine how we spend our dollars and determine which practices are most effective.

In addition, 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. We also need to demand that the federal government provide the funding to support its mandates in the No Child Left Behind Act and that no additional mandates are imposed without having the funding available.

Performance pay for teachers has been under consideration for years. I am willing to work with parents, teachers, administrators, school board members and other legislators to examine the options and try to come up with a plan that could be implemented on a small scale to see if it was effective.

I rarely hear voters in my district discuss school vouchers. Most want quality neighborhood schools. They don't want to send their children out of their community.

As a former educator, I know that tenure is not the cause of the problems facing our schools today. Most teachers genuinely care and want to do what's best for every child. That's why they became teachers in the first place. Yes, we have some inadequate teachers but they are the minority and many of them can become good teachers with help. The few who are actually bad can be removed after the appropriate due process steps are taken. It's not a perfect system, but we have much more important problems to deal with if we are going to improve our schools. Fighting teacher tenure would only waste time and money that could be spent more productively.

It is proven that pre-school is a valuable resource for all children, but especially for those from underprivileged homes. It can truly make the difference between success and failure for some students upon entering Kindergarten. The state has been moving in the right direction in this area and has taken an active roll in helping at-risk kids.

**Q: Would you support a tax increase to pay for transportation infrastructure? For public education? For expanded health care? For state pension liabilities? If so, what taxes should be raised and by how much?**

We desperately need to invest in rebuilding our own infrastructure; however, our current economic conditions do not favor doing so at the expense of a tax increase on our already strapped middle and lower income earners. They already are taxed to the limit on gas and everything else in addition to paying much higher costs for food and everyday necessities. Currently, ridership is up on most public transportation. This should bring in an increase in revenue will help to some extent. Illinois needs to increase its efforts to obtain more federal assistance for mass transit. With todays gas prices and with future energy prices uncertain it makes sense to make mass transit a priority.

The voters in my district oppose an increase in the sales tax. In today's economy our middle class cannot bear additional taxes and I could not support legislation that increased their burden. In the last five years we've added 1.5 billion dollars to school funding without an income or sales tax increase.

We need to look seriously at cutting bureaucracy, getting access to more federal funding to pay for expensive health care coverage and eliminating pork projects from the state budget.