**Name:** Wilbur Tillman

**District running for:** IllinoisState Representative of the 29th District

**Political party:** Democrat

**Political/civic background:** Board member for School District 149; Family Christian Center member and volunteer; Board Vice-President of Citizen United to Save the Southland

**Occupation:** Self-Employed

**Education:** Western Governors University – BS in Business Management

**Campaign website:** www.willtillman.com

**Chicago Sun-Times Editorial Board questionnaire responses**

**Taxes/Budget:**

Q. *Illinois has a massive state debt and crushing pension debt. Many elected officials from the governor to state lawmakers have indicated there is a need for additional revenue to help balance the budget.  If Illinois needs to generate additional revenue, which options would you support in a budget package:*

*1.     Increase the state’s income tax on individuals or corporations, either temporarily or permanently.*

*2.     Expand the sales tax to services.*

*3.     Tax retirement income in excess of $50,000.*

*4.     Adopt a progressive income tax.*

*If you oppose all tax hikes, please provide specifics on how you would reduce state spending by $7 billion to balance the state budget.*

A) I support the introduction of a fair, progressive tax in the State of Illinois. I believe that such a levy has the potential to bring a great deal of added revenue to the State while limiting the negative impact on citizens, especially those who cannot afford additional costs.

Q) *Do you support another legislative attempt at pension reform? If so, which proposed changes in the pension system would you support that you believe would pass constitutional muster?*

A) The reality is that we have two methods we can pursue to reach a pension solvency; reduce pension benefits or raise revenues (or both). For current and former employees, the courts have sharply constrained our ability to reduce benefits, as is consistent with the state’s constitution and the promises that were made. For future employees, I believe we need to figure out what is an attractive package of retirement and other benefits that will ensure a steady flow of good candidates but reduce demands on state funds in the future. On the revenue side, I firmly believe that long-term, our surest path to solvency is accelerating economic development. Short-term, I support a progressive income tax and I’m open to other ideas, but stand against nickel and diming residents.

Q) *Do you support a budget template developed by a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators that would allow members to pass a budget without the consent of the legislative leaders?*

A) Elected officials are in place to represent the interest of their constituents. As above, I believe we need to take a good long look at the kind of packages that we can afford to offer future employees that will also allow us to attract the best candidates. I believe offering employees options (i.e. the choice of a 401K or a traditional pension) could be a good step. I also believe that, with people working later into life we need to have a real discussion on raising the retirement age, perhaps coupled with allowances for particularly stressful or physically demanding careers (i.e. laborer might not be able to work as many years as a clerk). It is abundantly clear that some combination of reduction in pension benefits or an increase in contributions will be part of an equitable solution to the problem. I believe we must put in place safeguards to ensure payments are made in a timely manner so that we do not find ourselves in such a big hole in the future.

**Education:**

Q) *What, if anything, should we do to change how we fund schools?*

A) There is little disagreement that Illinois’ roughly 20-year old formula needs an overhaul. Schools receive state aid to offset basic education costs through an obsolete formula factoring in poverty. The current calculation is unfair for penalizing high poverty districts. In addition, school districts also get grants based on the number of students in certain programs which puts many communities at a disadvantage. We must ensure that future spending is focused on a more balanced funding distribution and stop kicking the proverbial ‘can’ down the road for the next generation of legislators to solve.

Q) *Do you favor the state picking up the pension costs for Chicago teachers, as the state does for teachers outside Chicago? Do you favor school districts outside Chicago picking up their own pension costs, as Chicago does now?*

A) I believe the most important thing we can do for pension solvency is continued accelerating economic development. In the short-term, I am open to examining any serious, responsible proposal for adjusting benefits for new employees.

Q) *State support for public higher education has declined for two decades. Do you favor the status quo or a significant increase in state funding? What is your plan to restore Illinois’ leadership in public higher education?*

A) The state in the past has been able to fund both kindergarten through high school, as well as higher education. In light of the current budget impasse I suggest implementing a compromise that will partially fund public universities, community colleges and Monetary Award Program grants at portion of their 2015 funding levels, in order to get some relief and movement for these universities. Balancing the budget on the backs of students is not an option. Education, and the funding it receives, is paramount obligation of the state. By implementing at least partial funding, we can begin to bring expenditures in line with revenue.

**Transportation**:

Q) *Illinois has a tremendous backlog of infrastructure needs: roads, bridges, waterways, transit. What would be a good way to pay for it? Do you support an increased gas tax — and/or other taxes and fees — to finance infrastructure improvements, including public transit?*

A) Public transportation and rail investments are powerful job creators, as well as help reduce energy consumption and unhealthy air pollution. As previously mentioned I believe that economic development is the key to increasing revenues to finance much needed infrastructure development. In places where economic development isn’t moving fast enough, we need to be creative about how we budget in order to make up for lost revenues without nickel-and-diming those who can least afford it. Investments in high-speed rail are cheaper per mile to build than highways and according to the USDOT require half the energy of cars or planes to move passengers. I support increased funding for public transit and willing to review any proposals brought forward to continue the development of the State’s infrastructure.

Q) *Illinois’ public transportation formula provides money for operating costs, but not capital costs. Should Illinois create a reliable funding stream for capital costs?*

A) Yes **Jobs**:

Q)  *Illinois has long been a strong manufacturing state. Today, Illinois employs fewer than 600,000 manufacturing workers and manufacturing’s share of the Gross State Product has dropped to 12.4 percent.  Our state saw the loss of nearly 10,000 manufacturing jobs in 2015 and announcements from some high-profile companies of job losses. The average manufacturing job pays more than $70,000 and helps create a strong middle class.  Name the top three things that you would do to help attract and retain manufacturing jobs in Illinois.*

A) 1.Tout Illinois’ convenient and abundant transportation systems while encouraging companies to take advantage of state and local business incentives.

2. As a 20+ year union member, emphasis Illinois’ generous workforce training programs and tax breaks if the company is making a substantial capital investment. In addition, I will work with area residents to create community based apprenticeship programs and work with the community colleges to make sure that there are programs that prepare community residents for the jobs that are created.

3. Offer insourcing incentives for companies plagued by ‘cycle or delivery time’ problems and quality issues due to offshoring. Position Illinois as a state that will assist them in meeting their customer needs better and more quickly with production nearby.

**Energy:**

Q)  *Illinois has a very diverse energy portfolio and is a net exporter of energy in a deregulated marketplace. Energy is poised to be major issue in 2016 because of federal regulations and possible changes in Illinois’ energy portfolio. Nuclear energy emits zero carbon emissions at a time when the new federal rule requires Illinois to reduce carbon emissions by 44 percent. Do you support or oppose legislation backed by Exelon to create a low-carbon portfolio standard?*

A) Exelon’s self-imposed elimination of greenhouse gas emission primarily through energy efficiency, smart grid programs, economic renewable energy investments and increased output from its nuclear power plants should be something that is applauded. Renewable energy is an important and critical component to advance clean energy, but government policies designed to support investment in low-carbon resources often put economic pressure on the organization who are moving towards cleaner energy. Illinois has a very impressive record of environmental leadership. To continue to build on that legacy, we have to keep pushing for alternative fuels and other sustainable forms of energy. I am in support of clean power and adopting higher energy quality standards.

Q)  *Illinois’ current Renewable Portfolio Standard calls for Illinois to procure a certain percentage of renewable power by the year 2020.  The state is only halfway to its goal, and there is a proposal to increase the required amount of renewable energy and extending the time period to meet that goal. Do you support or oppose increasing Illinois Renewable Portfolio Standard even if the cost of power increases slightly? Do you support or oppose the Illinois Clean Jobs bill?*

A) The Illinois Clean Jobs Bill seeks to update and strengthen our current energy efficiency and renewable energy laws and put us on track to meet and exceed EPA’s carbon pollution standards. By fully embracing these measures in Illinois we can lower electricity cost and leave Illinois a better place for our children and grandchildren. At the same time, we can generate an estimated 32,000 new jobs per year in Illinois.

Q)  *Illinois has to reduce carbon emissions by 44 percent under the federal rule.  Do you support creation of either a cap-and-trade program or a carbon tax to help mitigate carbon emissions in Illinois?*

A) Climate change has a range of effects on our ecosystem, including rising sea levels, severe weather events and droughts. We must take action to maintain our environment for all future generations. It is time to put a price on carbon. This revenue stream should in part help support transition of coal communities with worker transition and tax base supplementation and spur clean energy growth.

**Gun safety:**

Q) *Do you support tighter gun background check laws? Do you support limiting straw gun purchases?*

A) The City of Chicago has responded about as well as it can to the decision to strike down Chicago’s handgun ban, which leave it little room to operate on this issue. It’s worth exploring gun crime laws to see where we might be able to toughen penalties for those who would supply guns illegally to criminals.

Q) *Do you support or oppose state licensing for all firearms dealers?*

A) Support

Q) *Do you support or oppose allowing families to petition the courts to temporarily remove guns from people in crisis?*

A) Support

**Criminal justice:**

Q) *Do you support or oppose legislation to promote the transparency and preservation of police disciplinary records?*

A) Support

Q)  *Do you support the goal of reducing the Illinois adult prison population by 25% by 2025? Would you support sentencing reform such as reducing or eliminating prison terms for non-violent drug offenses? Would you support early release of aged and disabled prisoners predicated on an assessment of risk to public safety prior to release?*

A) I am an advocate for putting resources to work where there are problems. We need to address mental healthcare, substance abuse, rehabilitation programs and more wraparound services for family members as well as employment opportunities for ex-offenders simultaneously while addressing the goal of reducing the adult prison population.

Q) *Do you support automatic expungement and sealing of criminal records for all crimes after an appropriate period during which the former offender commits no crimes?*

A) I am open to examining any serious, responsible proposal for expunging or sealing criminal records.

Q) *Given that there are more empty beds than youth now in the juvenile prisons, do you support closing one or more juvenile prisons?*

A) I am open to examining any serious, responsible proposal for closing or repurposing juvenile prisons.

Q) *What is your view on a proposal to end the placement of juveniles on the state’s sex offender registry based on assessment of their risk and likelihood to reoffend and/or benefit from treatment? For adult sex offenders, what is your view on delivery of rehabilitation therapy and limiting sex offender registry restrictions only to those men and women assessed to pose a danger to others?*

A)

Q) *Do you support a form of merit selection of judges?*

A) This question is not clear. I would need more information to provide a response.

**Other:**

Q) *Do you support the pending constitutional amendment to create an independent commission to draw legislative districts?*

A) Legislative districts, and existing committees, are tailored so that each is broad enough to cover all of the several closely related subject areas and narrow enough that it can be specialized enough to develop real expertise. This careful fitting is an advantage for legislative districts, whose members can dedicate significant time and effort to issues they care most about, while benefitting from complementary dedication to their colleagues. However, I am always open to new ideas and will review any serious consolidation proposal.

Q) *What changes in workers’ compensation or tort reform do you favor?*

A)

Q) *Do you support or oppose automatic voter registration?*

A) Support

Q) *What sort of ethics and campaign-funding reforms does the state need?*

A) I think there is far too much ‘big money’ in politics at all levels of government. Public financing of campaigns would give the public added assurances that their representatives are representing only that public’s interest, and not the interests of big business or wealthy individuals. Maintaining public trust is essential and I believe public campaign funding would create a critical bulwark against cynicism.

Q) *2016 is going to be a big year in education, as both state and the City of Chicago wrestle with fundamental issues of funding and school policy. Who was the most important teacher in your life and why?*

A) Arthur Nachowitz- Division and drafting Teacher in HS. I was having trouble adjusting from 8th to 9th grade. After he recognized there was a problem, he took me and steadied me for the rest of the year building my confidence to help me realize I could accomplish anything I put my mind to do.