**Name: O. Patrick Brutus (preferred name “Patrick”)**

**District running for: 1st Congressional**

**Political/civic background:**

**democratic candidate in the special election for the 2nd Congressional District in 2013.**

**RAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – ELECTED MEMBER OF THE LOCAL SCHOOL COUNCIL (2013-14) –CHAIRMAN OF THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT WORKPLAN AND PRINCIPAL SELECTION COMMITTEES.**

**BOARD MEMBER – HENRY BOOTH HOUSE – ADVOCATED FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND PREPAREDNESS (2012-2015)**

**VP – GRAND CROSSING PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL (2013-PRESENT) – ADVOCATE FOR INCREASED OPEN SPACE USES OF OUR PARK AS WE SEEK TO MAKE IT A DESTINATION AND SAFE HAVEN FOR COMMUNITY RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO OUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

**COALITION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS (COAL) – MEMBER, CO-CHAIR OF URBAN PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE – IDENTIFYING BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIC PLANNING ON HOW TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS (VENDORS, CONTRACTORS AND INDIVIDUALS) IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRIES**

**HAITIAN-AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL NETWORK (2009-PRESENT) – CO-FOUNDER/PRESIDENT. ADVOCACY ON A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES (DEPORTATIONS, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, IMMIGRATION, ETC.) FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE HAITIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY.**

**CHICAGO’S YOUNG & POWERFUL GROUP - SENIOR ADVISOR (2014 TO PRESENT) – PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND COUNSEL TO THE CHAIRMAN, BOARD AND COMMITTEES ON BEHALF OF ISSUES THAT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN THE CHICAGOLAND METRO AREA. WE ARE COMMITTED TO TRAINING AND DEVELOPING EMERGING LEADERS AND PROVIDING THEM WITH A PLATFORM TO BE SEEN AND HEARD.**

**CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP LEAGUE – AREA COMMISSIONER (2014-2015) – LED AND DIRECTED A CHRISTIAN SPORTS RECREATIONAL LEAGUE FOR OVER 325 PARTICIPANTS. LEAGUE OFFERED A SAFE HAVEN FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND PROVIDED THEM WITH MENTORSHIP AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WHICH LED TO ZERO INCIDENTS THAT OF VIOLENCE AMONGST PARTICIPANTS.**

**Occupation: COORDINATOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**CITY OF CHICAGO/DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**

**Education:** **UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS at URBANA-CHAMPAIGN**

**BACHELORS OF SCIENCE/BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (1993)**

**Campaign website:** **WWW.BRUTUSFORCONGRESS.COM**

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

**Legislative priorities:**

Q) *What are your three top national legislative priorities for the country?*

A)

* **Increasing minimum wage**
* **Sustaining and increasing the job growth in the manufacturing sector**
* **Figuring out creative solutions to solving our deficit**

Q: *What are the three most important issues in your district on which you believe the federal government needs to act?*

* **Increasing the minimum wage**
* **Increasing the threshold for DBE participation on federal funded projects**
* **Developing more opportunities for small businesses to open, operate and thrive in the marketplace and move the needle on job growth in multiple sectors**

Q) *What is your biggest fundamental difference with your opponent(s)?*

**My biggest issue is leadership. Our District does not have sufficient, relevant and relatable leadership that inspires confidence, hope and real support from constituents. As voters, we are routinely reminded that all we need to focus on are “services” such as garbage pickup, tree-trimming, snow removal (local) and IRS, SSA and VA services (federally). These services are mandated by local municipalities and the federal government and tax payers receive them anyway and regardless who is in office. Neither one of my opponents can offer the unification of the District that is LONG OVERDUE that I can, because I simply understand the people of the south suburbs and southland better.**

A) **Bobby Rush – his leadership style is no longer relevant to the era we are currently in. What the District needed prior to expanding in 2010 (redistricting) was perhaps a symbolic figure to advocate for the African-American community and the ongoing needs we face in the far most northern parts of the District (Chicago). However, he is unable to represent the District that we have today. His failure to effectively communicate with the far most southern areas of the new 1st District potentially harm our ability to have a unified and synergistic District where we are all working cohesively and in an interdependent way to accomplish our goals and reach new objectives for the 21st Century; such as – unifying our multiple areas/townships/municipalities so that we take advantage of the diversity that exists. Working towards creating employment opportunities for those most in need throughout the District and identifying industries and companies who can take advantage of a ready-to-work labor force that exists among those who are unemployed, under-employed and hard-to-employ. Furthermore, his voting record is less than exemplary and is representative of him not working to advance meaningful legislation for the constituents of the 1st District. His over 2,400 roll-call votes missed lifetime (15.7% votes missed lifetime average exceeds the mean average of 2.2% compared to his colleagues) is consistent with his record as ranking among the worst members of the House missing votes (99th percentile), him missing 36 out of 44 votes in the current Session (January 2016) and his lifetime record of only passing 5 Bills and none since 2009 also fails to inspire confidence. This represents a colossal negligence on his part to work on behalf of the people of this District and is a clear sign that if re-elected, this pattern will continue while unification of the District and equal representation would not happen. Finally, he extols his leadership credentials (as he is a Ranking Member on a Sub-Committee) and states that he is line for a Chairmanship (should the Democrats regain the Majority), however he is not even seen as a leader by his peers. Of the 6 Democratic Caucuses (Blue Dog Coalition, Progressive Caucus, Asian-Pacific American Caucus, Hispanic Caucus, New Democrat Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus) and the one Task Force (Seniors Task Force), he is not a member of any except for the Congressional Black Caucus, where he is not in the leadership there either. Additionally, since it is not anticipated that the House would flip until at least 2022 (after the next Census and redistricting), his ascension to a Chairmanship should not be viewed as a guarantee, nor one that would bring a sudden renewed focus to his approach and responsibility of serving the District.**

**Howard Brookins – The Alderman has not really been impactful in his service to date as a member of the City Council. With only one real tangible, yet controversial development project worthy of recognition (Wal-Mart) during his tenure, this should not convince anyone that big things are on the horizon for our District. Also, in his 4 elections, he has been in a run-off 3 times, again not inspiring. Additionally, his current voting record (2011-2014) of 100% aligned with the Mayor does not represent what his constituents in the 21st Ward want or expect from their Councilman. My issue here is that representatives must listen to their constituents and represent their interests. The people of the 21st Ward have spoken, but their Alderman is not listening. Many of the Ordinances he is credited as passing have had a detrimental effect and an adverse impact on people in Chicago (such as: largest property tax increase in history, closings of schools and mental health facilities, approval of payout settlements to victims’ families without obtaining sufficient information) which will take years to recover from. Finally, as the Chairman of the Council Black Caucus during the time of the LaQuan McDonald issue, he sat silent and is only now speaking up on the issue due to this campaign….however, claiming to be “misled” does not strike a confident tone for someone who was just re-elected, and who is trying to flee his position. This is not the leadership that the people are seeking.**

**Transparency:**

Q) *Will you pledge to make public: a) your campaign schedule; b) your fundraiser schedule and the names of all fundraiser hosts ; c) if elected, your daily schedule of meetings? If not, why not?*

A) **(a) campaign schedule public – yes;**

**(b) fundraising schedule public/hosts named – yes;**

**(c) daily meeting schedule public - yes**

Q) *Please list all relatives on public or campaign payrolls and their jobs on those payrolls.*

A) **no relatives on campaign budget**

**National security:**

Q) *What are the most important actions Congress can take to reduce the threat of ISIS abroad and at home?*

A) **The ISIS situation is a very dilemma that must be handled with delicacy. In order to lead a multinational approach alongside our Coalition partners, America must be strong, yet smart. We need to defeat ISIS while not becoming (yet again) the world’s single enforcer and eradicator of terrorism. Whatever form of action is taken (firm commitment of ground troops, continued air strikes and/or a full assault on ISIS in the theaters of Syria and Iraq), the Congress must be allowed to authorize the use of troops. As Congressman, the most important action we can take is the vote to authorize and I would be prepared to take that vote because if allowed to continue, ISIS will only continue to expand its presence in America and globally.**

Q) *What bans, if any, do you support on Muslim admissions to the United States? Please explain your position.*

A) **I do not support a ban on Muslims entering the United States. However, given the climate of the unknown, I am for a more strict and thorough review of any/all foreigners entering the United States so that we are making the absolute best efforts possible to ensure that we minimize the risks of terrorists entering our country.**

Q) *Specifically, how would you have, or how did you, vote on the American Security Against Foreign Enemies (SAFE) Act of 2015 and its efforts to make it harder for Syrian and Iraqi refugees to enter the U.S.? Please explain your position.*

A) **I believe I would have voted NO on this Bill. The Bill is prejudicial (in nature) against Syrians and Iranians and because of this, I do not believe that it shows America in its best light. By targeting specific ethnic groups (and incidentally a religious group as well), this Bill plays on the worst fears that we may have as a nation and does not help us maintain our status as the world’s moral leader.**

Q) *Do you support a Syrian no-fly zone or the U.S. enforcement of Syrian humanitarian safe zones? Why or why not?*

A) **Taking politics aside, a no-fly zone is perhaps the most decisive military action we could take that would pose a greater deterrent to Assad continuing his attack on opposition fighters and usher in a probable toppling of his regime.**

Q) *Regarding the House Benghazi Select Committee, should its investigation remain open-ended, or should the panel be given a deadline to complete its work? Please explain.*

A) **Unfortunate as it is to the taxpayers, this investigation should be allowed to continue. Also, I am in favor of a date-certain end because I believe it would assist the Committee in completing its work in a meaningful way, however, this kind of investigation is the kind that is revealing a number of previously unknown facts about exactly what happened in Libya, which has been very helpful to citizens. I believe anytime real Americans are exposed to how government really works, is helpful in understanding the fundamental questions (why, how, who, when, where) of the process.**

Q) *What measures, if any, do you support to give U.S. authorities access to encrypted or “dark web” communications about potential terrorist plots? Please explain.*

A) **I believe that this is one of the biggest threats to national security and with the unsecured parameters of electronic communication we face today; there is room for discussion about allowing the Government greater latitude in this area with respect to national security. However, we still have a Constitution that provides Americans with unalienable rights of privacy and certain protections and as such, we need to keep that in the forefront of any decisions that are being contemplated as we consider the long-term ramifications. I believe that the relative US Departments and agencies efforts to work with our private sector partners in the telecommunications industries is the right first steps of working in a collaborative manner to safeguard our country and root out terrorists networks, plots and identifying any sleeper cells that may exist here in our country. Therefore, I support working with our tech sector as a continued step, while Congress works on laws limit the Governments powers to strictly national security interests.**

Q) *Do you support transferring the detention of terrorism suspects from Guantanamo Bay to the United States? Why or why not?*

A)  **I do support the transfer of suspects from Guantanamo Bay. I applaud the President for making this a priority based on his Doctrine. Additionally, as we now seek to normalize relations with Cuba, this needs to be part of the rationale for closing this base down and transferring detainees elsewhere. However, I am undecided if I prefer them here in the United States or at any of our military bases (black sites) abroad, such as in Diego Garcia or Bagram. I believe that essentially, we should do everything possible to detain these individuals at the most secure locations we have possible so that any information obtained that result in our ability to reign in terror anywhere that threaten American interests be done while reducing any risks (both real, perceived and imagined) on American soil.**

**Gun violence:**

Q) *What is the single most important action Congress can take to reduce U.S. gun violence?*

A) **This continues to be a very serious issue domestically and especially here locally in the 1st District. I believe the most important act we can take as a Congress is to pass a Bill. As of 2013, there had been 31 Bills offered in Congress regarding Gun Control, with many more offered in subsequent Sessions since. I support HR 226 (Keeping Guns from High Risk Individuals Act), introduced by Rep. Robin Kelly (IL) on January 8, 2015 that Amends the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act and prohibits the sale of firearms and or ammunition to any person knowing or having reasonable cause to believe such person (and has 4 provisions). I believe that there is a proliferation of handguns in our country, and there are a lot of people who should not have those firearms committing violent crimes. We need to pass this Bill if we intend to reduce gun violence and make America a safer country.**

Q) *Do you support or oppose the ‘‘Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act?” Please explain your position.*

A) **While this Bill has no chance of passing, I support it as introduced by Rep. Peter King (NY). I do think we need to do everything possible to prevent firearms from getting into the hands of terrorists. If we know that they are out there lurking stateside, we need to empower our Attorney General to close a loophole that currently exists. The mere fact that this is supported by over 90 Democrats (as co-sponsors) secures its dying in committee.**

**Climate change:**

Q) *Do you believe there is scientific evidence of climate change, and is it caused by human activity? What is your position on the Paris climate change agreement?*

A) **I support the agreement as it now calls for a global effort to save our planet by reducing greenhouse gas (emissions). I do believe that this agreement and the accord reached by over 190 nations is rooted in the belief that there is in fact scientific evidence supporting the forward thinking measures to reduce the carbon output in the world, produced by human output.**

**Economy:**

Q) *What changes, if any, to the U.S. tax code do you support and why?*

A) **There is a lot of discussion on whether or not those earning at the highest levels of income should be contributing more (paying a higher tax rate); and discussions of flat vs. progressive tax plans. I think right now in order to simplify the tax code, a flat tax would probably be the most efficient way to accomplish it, effectively eliminating the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). A flat tax is fair to most Americans, capital gains taxes are eliminated and the business community could grow faster, thus improving our economy and increasing the number of jobs created in this country. This is the number one issue in my District – job creation! Here we need to think about the future and protect our economy by making it feasible for US companies to operate in this country and not establish their presence abroad with cheap labor. We have to think about how the bottom line affects US workers and those in the labor force who are hard-to-employ, underemployed and unemployed.**

Q) *What are the most important actions Congress can take to ensure the solvency of Social Security?*

A) **We need to vote to keep the SSA funded and provide for retirees who depend on this program and keep our promises made to them and future generations. Now we also need to modernize the system for the 21st Century so that we can still guarantee that we have a system that for those who need it will be there, by proposing innovative measures, such as: Raising the retirement age. Since Americans are living longer, raise the age to 68 or 70. Recalculate the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Increase or eliminate the Payroll Tax Cap. There is room for meaningful discussion with financial and actuarial experts to determine exactly how to save this program that we in Congress can support with a passed bi-partisan Bill so that Americans know that this is a program that the President can support and sign into law.**

Q) *Do you support a “risk fee” on big banks? Why or why not?*

A) **Knowing that (in large part) this is a proposal to raise revenues, I do think it is sound economic policy. The big banks that are the target of the fee ($50B in assets) are highly leveraged bank holding companies that enjoy a substantial advantage because even if they take excessive risks the government is not going to let them fail. Thus, its reasonable for them to pay a fee for this privilege. This would reward sound management and deter excessive leverage and risk and hopefully it would deter the kinds of banking practices that almost destroyed the world economy and caused lasting economic harm resulting in the bailouts.**

**Health care:**

Q) *Should Obamacare be overturned, left intact, or changed — and if so how?*

A) **Left intact. Millions are now covered. Looking into the future, we need to make sure that Americans have health insurance so that families are not subject to being tax burdens on local governments (such as Cook County health system), etc.**

Q) *Do you favor stripping federal funds from Planned Parenthood? Why or why not?*

A) **No, I do not. This program is an essential resource for those women who need breast examinations, pregnancy prevention education and Pap Tests; and I believe that the benefits of this program outweigh the negatives and support continued funding.**

**Immigration:**

Q) *President Obama used his executive powers to prevent the deportation of "DREAMers—youths who came to the U.S. illegally as children with their parents. Would you support legislation to prevent DREAMer deportations? Do you support putting DREAMers on a path to citizenship?*

A) **I would support legislation that would prevent DREAMer deportations and I do support putting DREAMers on a path to citizenship.**

**Education:**

Q) *What congressional reforms do you favor to address America’s student loan crisis?*

A) **I believe that we should have a vote on the matter of making college free, providing tuition loan reform and relief. We have got to determine a smart way for Americans to be able to thrive in this country and create jobs. Debt is killing us and in my District, we can no longer afford to not look at innovative ways to advance ourselves forward into the 21st Century. We have got to get our people working and living productive lives as student loan debt cripples many of us for years.**