**Name: Peter Roskam**

**District running for: IL-6**

**Political/civic background: Member of Congress since 2007**

**Occupation:**

**Education:** BA, University of Illinois, JD, IIT Chicago Kent College of Law

**Campaign website:** www.roskamforcongress.com

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

**Legislative priorities:**

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

A) 1.) We must reform our tax code to make the United States economically competitive. The Federal Tax code is over 70,000 pages long, and represents a real burden to individuals, potential entrepreneurs, and small business owners who are overwhelmed by the complexity and fear their business or earnings could be confiscated based on an honest error.

2.) We must ensure the U.S. remains competitive internationally. In addition to reforming our international tax code, we must remain vigilant in pursuing an aggressive trade agenda. Should we fail to recognize the need for American leadership in negotiating trade, it will be China and other emerging nations that will be writing the trade laws for the 21st century. Trade is a key component to economic growth. The more products we make and sell to other countries, the more jobs we support in America and in Illinois. In fact, according to the Business Roundtable, 1.7 million – more than one in five – jobs in Illinois are supported by trade.

3.) We must reestablish the United States as a global force for good. Under President Obama there has been an absence of U.S. leadership on the international stage. Sadly, President Obama has abandoned our friends like Israel, Poland, and Ukraine, in order to appease adversarial regimes like Iran, Russia, and Cuba. I’ve introduced and passed legislation to fight efforts to delegitimize Israel and stood up to my own party’s leadership to make it more difficult for the administration to eliminate sanctions against Iran. Just recently I introduced a bill to sanction Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) for its support of terrorism around the globe.

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

1. Please see above.

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

A) During the course of my time in Congress I have a proven track record of legislative accomplishments. I have worked with other Members of Congress, regardless of their political or ideological background, to advance legislation that is important to the citizens of the 6th District, the state of Illinois, and the nation as a whole. As the Chairman of the Oversight Subcommittee for Ways and Means, I authored legislation recently signed into law which reforms the IRS and protects citizens from being targeted because of their political beliefs. Additionally, I have worked to reform our entitlement system, specifically Medicare, to reduce the over $60 billion a year of taxpayer funds which are spent on fraudulent claims. Most recently, I have worked with both Republicans and Democrats to ensure Americans continue to have access to retirement planning, while strengthening oversight and enforcement standards to protect consumers from bad actors.

**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) All contributions to and expenditures of my campaign are publicly disclosed in compliance with the law. My availability in the district visiting with constituents, employers, and social service organizations is well-known.

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

A) I do not employ any relatives.

**National security:**

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

A) The United States has historically played an important role in promoting peace, stability, and freedom around the world. Over the past few years, we’ve seen what happens when our country refuses to provide that global leadership – we end up with a world that is less peaceful, less stable, and less free. We must stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies and face to face with our adversaries.

Rather than listen to our military commanders on the ground, President Obama decided to remove combat troops from Iraq based on an arbitrary withdrawal window in order to fulfill a campaign promise. It was a rhetoric-driven decision, not a strategy-driven one - a costly mistake that created a power vacuum later to be filled by Jihadi extremists known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL). The United States is uniquely positioned to lead on the global stage and be a force for good in this volatile part of the world. However, the Administration’s inability to foresee the consequences of its politically-motivated military decisions has left Iraq perhaps more unstable than ever before. President Obama needs to present Congress and the American people with a clear strategy for defeating ISIL and the threat it poses to the United States and our Western allies. There are a number of steps we can take besides putting boots on the ground. We must take action now before it’s too late.

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

A) A ban on a specific religious group flies in the face of our nation’s ideals and values. The idea of a religious test to gain entry into the United States is contradictory to the values and morals upon which our nation was founded. There are better, more effective ways to ensure the security of our homeland, including reforms recently signed into law like the Visa Waiver Program Improvement Act, which prohibits individuals who have traveled to Syria or Iraq from using the expedited entry system. I also strongly favor legislation such as the American Security Against Foreign Enemies (SAFE) Act, which would require the FBI & DHS secretary to thoroughly vet and certify each and every individual attempting to enter the United States from Syria & Iraq has been subject to a thorough background check and does not present a security risk.

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 am a strong supporter of this legislation. The United States is a nation of immigrants. It always has been and I am confident it will remain so. We welcome with open arms those who are fleeing conflict and seeking freedom. However, our first responsibility is to the safety of our citizens. I do not believe it is wise or prudent to allow immigrants from this region into the United States until we can verify those being admitted from Syria & Iraq do not pose a threat to our safety or our homeland.

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

A) The world continues to look to the United States for leadership and I believe that we must continue to work with our regional partners to address the humanitarian issues.

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) As a member of the Benghazi Select Committee, I oppose the idea that the investigative work done by the Committee should somehow be subject to an arbitrary deadline. The Committee, through the capable leadership of Chairman Trey Gowdy, has stated the investigation into the events surrounding that fateful night will follow the facts as presented by witness testimony. I can think of no greater disservice to those who lost their lives or those families who lost a loved one than to end the investigation prematurely.

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) We must ensure we have the tools and technology to thwart the Islamic State’s communications efforts both on the battle field and in their recruitment efforts. While the U.S. should focus on the recruitment tools used by enemy combatants, the intelligence community should be cognizant and vigilant in maintaining the legal protections afforded to American citizens.

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

A) I have consistently and adamantly opposed efforts to allow for the transfer of detainees to the United States. These are foreign military combatants who have no right to the judicial system of the United States. Furthermore, transfer to the U.S. would only serve as a recruiting tool and could further imperil the safety of our citizens. While President Obama's desire to close the facility is well known, he himself signed into law a prohibition on transferring detainees into the U.S.

**Gun violence:**

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

A) Without question the best way to prevent future tragedies like those we have witnessed is mental health reform.

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

A) I do not support this bill. While I am not opposed to the idea in and of itself, the fact remains that the lists are fraught with errors and erroneous names. Without better safeguards and transparency, there is currently no recourse for an individual to clear his/her name. Additionally, I believe it is important to note that the vast majority of the individuals on these lists are foreigners who, along with non-immigrant aliens, are prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms.

**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) The term “climate change” is extremely vague. The term implies that until recently the earth’s climate was stagnate, steady, and predictable. This is simply not the case. To what extent humans are the primary cause and thus responsible for global warming, cooling, or any other “ing” compared to other influences such as solar flares, natural cycles, and volcanic activity remains to be seen. Regardless, we must all be aware of our collective impact on the world around us and attempt to leave our planet as good as or better than we found it.

I seriously doubt the Paris Climate Change Agreement will do much to address the issue and believe that ultimately market forces and economic growth, not government mandates, will have the greatest impact.

**Economy:**

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

A) In the almost 30 years since the last reform, the code has been amended a staggering 15,000 times. It has become so complex and burdensome that individuals and businesses spent over seven billion hours completing the paperwork and billions of dollars in compliance costs last year alone. The United States has one of the highest corporate tax rates in the world. Our tax code is so broken that American companies are fleeing the country, moving their headquarters overseas to escape the record high taxes they face here in the U.S. in a process called inversion. Put simply, our tax code is making America a bad place to do business. Job creation and economic growth suffer while Washington does nothing.

President Obama has paid lip-service to tax reform, only indicating a willingness to reform the corporate tax structure in order to increase rates and raise more tax revenues for government spending. This is not the kind of change that will help the economy. What we need is a reform package similar to the successful tax reform plan of 1986 that followed what’s called a revenue-neutral plan. The savings from closing loopholes and carve-outs for special interests are used to lower the rates for everyone and create a fairer, simpler system. With lower tax rates, companies have the ability to invest in their business, creating more jobs, paying higher wages and lifting the economy. As a result, the federal government enjoys increased revenues because businesses are growing and hiring, not because of increased rates. Reforming the corporate tax code to make American businesses more competitive is vital, but we must also reform the personal income tax code to create a flatter, fairer system and let families and individuals keep more of their hard-earned money. A number of independent economists have called for revenue-neutral comprehensive tax reform, estimating that with reduced government spending, it could lead to one million new jobs in the first year alone.

Since regaining the majority, House Republicans have been working on a comprehensive, revenue-neutral reform of the tax code. As a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, I have served on the manufacturing working group and attended dozens of meetings and strategy sessions to map out solutions on these issues. The draft released last Congress was an important step forward in achieving the tax system overhaul our economy so desperately needs. Comprehensive tax reform cannot occur without buy-in and input from both sides of the aisle, and I remain hopeful that, regardless of who is ultimately elected president, Congress will be able to build upon the important foundation laid by former Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp, Speaker Paul Ryan, and current Chairman Kevin Brady to create the momentum necessary to complete the much-needed reform of our tax code.

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

A) As a Representative from Illinois, I am acutely aware of what happens to an economy weighed down by debts and over-promised future liabilities. After 10 years of one-party control and avoidance behavior in Springfield, our state is burdened with the largest pension shortfall in the country, an unemployment rate higher than the national average, and a tax burden that keeps increasing. In short, we are a fiscal basket case, and it’s holding back job growth and increasing the cost of living. Illinois is an economic study of what not to do, and what’s happening here today is the future that awaits the United States should we continue on our current unsustainable path.

We must address the coming fiscal crisis now, enacting reforms that preserve the long-term health of our entitlement programs, reduce our debt, and get our economy back on track. The good news is that if we act now, we can make the changes necessary to ensure the future solvency of the Social Security program and do so in a way that does not impact those at or near retirement. Slow, gradual changes such as increasing the retirement age by one month per year will go a long way towards ensuring the future viability of the program. In Congress I have voted to cut wasteful spending and balance the budget over ten years. Of course those proposals mean cutting back on some of the federal largess that many have come to expect from Washington, but I strongly believe people elected me to make the tough choices based on the best options and information available, not stick my head in the sand and ignore the big challenges until they overwhelm us. The choices we make now will be the difference between opportunity for our kids and grandkids and a future where the American dream is but a distant memory.

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

A) I believe that such a measure only reinforces the notion that some large institutions are indeed too big to fail, and thus alters market forces with the implicit guarantee that the federal government (and the taxpayer) will step in and bail them out if something goes wrong. The Dodd-Frank law, which was enacted in the wake of the financial crisis, only served to make the biggest financial institutions even bigger. The result has been less competition and fewer choices for consumers.

**Health care:**

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

A) Americans have seen their healthcare plans cancelled and their options limited. We pay more for less, and that’s just what we’ve seen so far. Like many, I believe we must repeal and replace this misguided and harmful law. While I look forward to the day when Obamacare is repealed, in the meantime we must do all that we can to ensure taxpayer dollars are not squandered. That is why I have introduced legislation to create a Special Inspector General – a single, high-level office with the ability to look beyond just one department or agency, and release the facts, data, and decision-making behind Obamacare’s implementation in a way that no oversight official currently can.

The American people deserve a full and fair accounting of the new health care law, and the Special Inspector General to Monitor the Affordable Care Act (SIGMA) would serve as an independent, nonpartisan advocate for the public. It would look out for our interests and shine a light on the federal government's actions so we can make informed decisions, hold the Administration accountable, and protect individuals from more harmful effects.

However, simply repealing Obamacare without a viable alternative is not an option. As a member of the Health Subcommittee for Ways & Means, I am a proud supporter of Republican alternatives that are patient-centered and designed to increase access to affordable, portable health insurance and spur competition among providers to lower costs.

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

A) Yes, and have voted to do so. Shocking footage of top Planned Parenthood officials openly discussing the illegal and inhumane sale of baby body parts has rightfully brought renewed urgency to this issue. We must therefore press forward in our fight to protect the unborn from the unethical, barbaric practices of organizations like Planned Parenthood and its affiliates. I am encouraged that two House committees have already opened investigations into this scandal, and I am proud to have supported legislation passed by Congress to prohibit funding for this organization. It is an important step forward in defense of life, an issue upon which I will never waiver.

**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) Any immigration reform we discuss is largely irrelevant if we are unable to control who enters and exits our country. This isn’t just an economic and social issue – it’s also a matter of national security. In the wake of terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California, we need to take a long, hard look at our immigration policies and close loopholes that can be exploited by those who mean to do us harm. Without broader reforms to our nation’s immigration policies, any discussion regarding the status of undocumented individuals living within the United States is premature. We must fix the problem at hand, not slap a Band-Aid on the problem and continue to look the other way.

That’s why I voted to pause President Obama’s Syrian refugee resettlement program until we can verify who exactly is entering our country and what their intentions are. I also voted to tighten up the Visa Waiver Program, exempting people who have traveled to Syria, Iraq, and other countries of concern from visa-free travel to the United States. Protecting our homeland and keeping the 6th district safe is the first and foremost Constitutional duty of the federal government. It’s a responsibility I take very seriously.

**Education:**

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

A) Contrary to what some may say, there is no silver bullet or single solution which will solve this issue. As the father of four children, the youngest of whom are currently in college, I understand the inherent angst and worry that students and their parents feel during what should be a momentous occasion in a young person’s life. As Oversight Chairman for the House tax writing committee, I held a hearing earlier this year regarding the many issues which have led to the high level of outstanding student loan debt facing recent college graduates, and will be holding additional hearings and fact-finding expeditions to examine what, if any, changes should be made to our tax code.

It should also be noted that while this is an area in need of reform, the most troubling and perhaps the largest cause of this crisis stems from the lack of opportunity, job prospects, and general economic outlook college students face upon graduation. The lackluster economic recovery we have experienced over the past eight years has had a detrimental impact on all Americans but I fear that young Americans may very well have the longest road to recovery. American ideals and opportunity are not myths and I believe that pro-growth economic policies will ultimately prove to be the answer to the economic stagnation we have grown accustomed to during President Obama’s time in office.