**Name:** Thomas Day

**District running for:** U.S. Congress, 7th District

**Political/civic background:** U.S. Army, 2002-2007 (Iraq 2003-2004); Journalist, 2007-2010 (including in Afghanistan, 2009-2010); The Bunker, 2014-2015.

**Occupation:** Consultant

**Education:** B.A. Penn State University, 2003; M.S.J. Northwestern University, 2008; M.P.P. University of Chicago, 2012.

**Campaign website:** www.thomasday.org

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

**Legislative priorities:**

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

A) There is no more important concern for our country right now than to create jobs and increase wages so as to create an economy that provides jobs for every American. In twenty years we will be able to travel to work in driverless vehicles and some computers will be as adaptive and intuitive as humans. According to some futurists, automation could replace as much as half the jobs that currently exist within the next twenty years. The highest priority I see for our country is to ensure that we put in place a comprehensive plan to prepare Americans for the coming age of automation and “upskill” our workers who may no longer be equipped to administer future technologies. We also need a greater commitment to apprenticeship programs, similar to what we see in European nations. We need to act quickly. Our workers cannot be left behind through a lack of technical skills if we are to remain competitive in a burgeoning world economy.

Immigration reform is my second-highest legislative priority. I support a pathway to legalized citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in our country, I support streamlining the green card issuing process, and I strongly favor a startup visa program, which will allow entrepreneurs from foreign countries to come to the U.S. and develop new businesses, creating new jobs in the 7th District. A startup visa program would be especially beneficial to America’s largest venture capital communities and help us to develop the Chicago area into a leading technical development center.

Finally, in 2016, we are far past due in closing the gender pay gap and ensuring equal pay for women. How do we do that? The country can start by following Chicago’s lead and raise the minimum wage for both tipped and untipped workers. Women make up the majority of minimum-wage workers, and women account for nearly three-fourths of tipped workers – hairstylists and restaurant servers, for example – where the minimum wage is just $2.13 an hour of guaranteed, pre-tip wages. About one in ten workers in these tipped occupations report their hourly wages fall below the federal minimum wage of $7.25. We can also pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, which outlaws paying men and women unequally for performing the same work. And we can finally ensure paid maternity leave for women.

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

A) The 7th District currently has an unemployment rate that is three times the national average. Given such an alarming number, the most important issue facing this district is to bring new jobs to our district. Many of the jobs we’ve lost in this district and throughout the region were in the manufacturing sector. Chicago has always been a manufacturing town, but manufacturing jobs are leaving in droves every day. Federal leadership can go a long way in keeping jobs here and bringing new manufacturing to our district. Some job training programs that would prepare workers in advanced manufacturing technologies are funded by federal dollars and those programs must be expanded. Employers in Chicago have posted many offers for jobs in manufacturing that cannot be filled because they can’t find qualified workers.

The 7th District has been more impacted by our flawed criminal justice system and systemic community neglect than any district in our state. From the beginning of my campaign, I have offered a comprehensive plan to end mass incarceration and economic neglect within low-income communities. My plan includes a rollback of federal funding incentives for police to enforce drug laws, which I believe have been unequally enforced in low-income and predominately African-American and Latino communities. My plan also includes expanding the New Markets Tax Credit that will incentivize massive investment in low-income communities and create jobs. I also believe we should double the current tax credit provided to employers for hiring in a designated Empowerment Zone, provided those hires enter into advanced industries. Economists have found a four- to five-job multiplier effect for each hire in advanced industries.

The events of recent months have made clear the need for greater transparency within our law enforcement community here in Chicago. In 1994, the U.S. Congress instructed the Attorney General to compile and publish an annual accounting of police use of excessive force. Despite this directive, such an accounting has never been done and never been published. For 21 years, the American people have been deprived of a vital statistic that would have alerted us to such reports of police misconduct. To help rebuild the trust between our communities and the men and women who serve our city in the Chicago Police Department, in my first few months representing the 7th District in Washington, I will put a bill on the House floor that compels the Attorney General to comply with the 1994 directive.

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

A) The biggest difference between myself and Representative Davis is that I come from the military and the private sector, whereas Representative Davis has spent his career entirely in politics. I will go to Washington determined to fight to bring jobs back to our neighborhoods.

Representative Danny Davis has failed to pass a bill of any size on any issue in the 8 years since Barack Obama was inaugurated President. He misses three times more votes than the average member of Congress. The 7th District has an unemployment rate three times the national average. Federal programs like the Neighborhood Stabilization Program have failed to deliver on the promises made to the people of this district, and my opponent has not provided the leadership and oversight that is crucial to the success of economic development programs.

I will be far more supportive of the 7th District’s startup and small business community, especially in manufacturing. I helped build a startup community for military veteran entrepreneurs, called “The Bunker,” inside of 1871, a massive coworking space for startups. During my time at 1871, seemingly every elected leader in the city came by to visit. Mayor Emanuel visited so often we sometimes didn’t bother to look up from our computer screens when he came by. David Cameron and Bill Clinton visited. Danny Davis never visited. As the representative of the 7th District, I will physically locate an office near 1871 and other centers of entrepreneurship, like Matter and Catalyze Chicago, and provide the Chicago startup community assistance in accessing of all of the federal programs that can support their ideas and their businesses. New businesses create jobs.

Finally, Representative Davis has hardly communicated with the people of the 7th District, using a spattering of community organizations and churches. I will work hard to communicate with all the people of the 7th District by not only using community organizations and churches but also leveraging social media and an online presence that reaches every constituent. During every major issue I confront and every critical vote I face, I will seek feedback and guidance from the people of the 7th District. Every major vote I take, I will post an explanation on my Facebook page. day.house.gov will be the most rich and interactive site of any House member. I will leverage the unique civic technology being developed at places such as Code for America, 18F, and the U.S. Digital Service to communicate fully with every constituent.

**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) Yes, I will pledge to make public all relevant information including the three items listed.

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

A) I have no relatives on my campaign payroll.

**National security:**

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

A) First, Congress should vote on military action in Iraq and Syria. Congress has yet to vote on an Authorization on the Use of Military Force (AUMF), and Congressman Davis has not called for a vote to come to the floor. I would work with my House colleagues across party lines to demand the Speaker allowing a vote on the floor, and if it were to come to the floor, I would support it. Once the President has been appropriately provided that authority, I would support the creation of international command, unifying efforts (to the greatest extent possible) of our allies under one command. Right now, in the words of former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, “everyone is doing their own thing.”

Thinking more long term, I would support procurements that are appropriate to the current and changing threat environments. We need more Foreign Service officers and fewer combat support troops. (Full disclosure: I was a combat support soldier in the Army’s 101st Airborne Division from 2002-2007.) As then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted, we have more troops in military bands than we have active Foreign Service officers.

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

A) I support absolutely no plan to deny entry into the United States to Muslims or any other group solely because of their religion. I served with a number of Muslims during my time in the Army, including my year in Iraq. Those men and women took an oath to protect the American people, and I will carry on that commitment in Washington. More than 350,000 Muslims live in the State of Illinois – third most of any state -- and our elected leaders need to stand up against Donald Trump’s outrageous campaign of hate against them. I have yet to see a public statement from Congressman Davis on Mr. Trump’s campaign, and while I don’t suspect Rep. Davis’ silence suggests support for Trump, I do wish he forcefully spoke against Mr. Trump’s proposal.

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) Naming this bill the “SAFE Act” is duplicitous. It does nothing to make us safer. It adds no resources to our security agencies, rather it only makes an already-redundant process of screening refugees even more redundant. It does nothing but undermine international confidence that the United States is a willing partner and leader in helping the estimated 13.5 million refugees attempting to flee the Syrian conflict. The United States should safely welcome 100,000 refugees into our country. Right now, too many of our European and Middle East allies are shouldering the burden of housing and caring for these refugees. Jordan, one of America’s strongest allies in the Middle East, has taken in more than 1.4 million refugees over the past four years – well beyond their capacity to support these people. We have a responsibility to the Jordanians, the Turks, and our European partners to do our fair share to help solve this crisis.

On the subject of laws targeting people from Iraq and Syria, I would call attention to another bill, the “Visa Waiver Program Improvement Act,” which was passed into law in December with Representative Davis’ support. This act is a knee-jerk reaction to the rhetoric of Donald Trump, and was passed without careful consideration. We cannot run away from American values in the face of Mr. Trump’s campaign. The act would make individuals with one Syrian parent living outside of Syria ineligible for the Visa Waiver Program; indeed even a person with one Syrian parent *who* *has never even been to Syria* would be ineligible for the Visa Waiver Program.

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

A) As someone who served five years in the U.S. Army, including a year in Iraq, I would have no more important duty in Washington than keeping Americans safe. Defeating ISIS and bringing an end to the Assad regime are critical to our national security. I support a no-fly zone over strategic regions in Syria. We need to have total control over the skies of Syria, and gaining total control over the skies of Syria is well within our capability. This action would demonstrate to moderate communities that we are on their side, and stop further air attacks against allied rebel forces.

I am aware that enforcing the no-fly zone would mean that American fighter planes would potentially be forced to confront Russian operations. Yet it is clear to me that the administration has thus far been too slow to assert leadership in this strategic region. NATO planes have safely escorted Russian planes out of Turkish airspace recently without incident. A no-fly zone should be enforced concurrent with diplomacy with the Russians.

Congressman Davis has been virtually silent on the Syria/Iraq conflict during the past two and a half years. I believe it is the responsibility of members of Congress to participate in the public debate over such a critical issue. I also believe it is incumbent upon elected officials to inform their constituents of the importance and risks inherent in any undertaking within the region.

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) My first duty as a member of Congress would be to protect American lives. I support the Congress’ critical role in providing oversight over the administration, and the imperative of addressing concerns and failures, especially on issues related to national security. However, I do not support investigations driven solely by partisan politics.

This investigation has expended far more time, money, and energy that Congress spent to investigate the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. It has been an embarrassing waste of time and money. Seven different investigations into Benghazi, each absolving Secretary Clinton of wrongdoing, are enough. Congressional Republicans have now been investigating Benghazi for more than 600 days and spent more than $5.5 million taxpayer dollars. The panel should be given a deadline to complete its work, and that deadline should have been yesterday.

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 favor allowing the intelligence community’s access to data collection with *strong* oversight from the courts. Private data should be accessible to the intelligence community only after a FISA court order is given; otherwise this data must remain in private hands. While Section 215 of the Patriot Act – which allowed bulk collection of data from private sources – has expired, the U.S. government has not had significant problems obtaining a court order to obtain this data. One reason is that the FISA courts do not allow for a direct opposition to the government’s request; rather a “friend of the court” counsels the court on privacy law, and this counselor is often not qualified to speak on the complex details of cyber technology. I would support allowing a public interest advocate to directly oppose the government in all requests for data access.

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

A) Enemy combatants should be held accountable for their actions. If you take arms against American troops, I strongly support legal responses to take these enemy combatants off the battlefield. However, our legal response should not involve Guantanamo Bay.

I strongly support immediately ending the confinement of terrorism suspects at Guantanamo Bay. I was briefly deployed to Guantanamo Bay during my Army enlistment, and stood a short distance away from the holding cells. It’s a beautiful military installation, provided you are not an inmate in the brigs. That’s the only good thing I can say about Guantanamo Bay. I strongly support President Obama’s efforts to close the brigs, and join Robert Gates and Colin Powell and even George W. Bush in recognizing that Guantanamo Bay has assisted terrorists in recruiting followers. We must close this detention facility.

**Gun violence:**

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

A) More than 100 people were shot in the City of Chicago in just the first ten days of 2016. The “more guns, less crime” agenda of the hard core right wing of the Republican Party has been a nightmare for Chicago, and families across the country who are now sending their kids to school in fear. The single most important action we can take is ensure that anyone who takes ownership of a gun is required to first clear a federal background check. We should also force all gun manufacturers selling to use microstamping technology on each gun sold in the U.S. This would provide investigators with the gun’s make, model, and serial number imprinted on the cartridge of every bullet fired, an invaluable tool for investigators.

Strengthening our mental health support for those in need is also a critical element of any national strategy to curb gun violence. Unfortunately Congressman Davis was all but silent as public mental health clinics throughout the City of Chicago have closed.

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

A) I strongly support universal background checks on all firearm sales. If a person attempting to purchase a firearm is on the no-fly list (or their state has determined them to be a danger to themselves or others), I strongly support legislation to ensure that person is not permitted to purchase that firearm. I support the Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act. The title of the bill is appropriate. This is about denying firearms and explosives to terrorists and keeping Americans safe.

**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) There is more than sufficient scientific evidence of climate change and that human activity is driving that change. We have known this for about three decades. Strangely, the United States is the only country on earth where the cause of climate change is a partisan issue. The Paris climate change agreement is an historic achievement for the Obama Administration and leaders across the globe. I strongly support it. The challenge now is to meet the goals set out by the Paris agreement. The agreement will not be successful without international cooperation and strong action from the world’s largest emitters – especially the U.S. and China. As Congressman for the 7th District, I will be a strong advocate for renewable energy and energy conservation.

**Economy:**

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

A) My highest priority would be closing the carried interest loophole, which allows capital managers to have their earnings taxed at the capital gains rate and not as ordinary income. This is an outrageous and indefensible perversion of the tax code because it engenders a massive wealth transfer from the pension funds of public employees and workers’ unions to multi-millionaires. Closing the carried interest loophole would bring in $18 billion over ten years – money we could invest in our highways, universal pre-Kindergarten, or job training.

A close second would be a 4 percent surcharge on incomes over $5 million. This proposal mirrors similar surcharges in Europe, and would generate more than $10 billion each year, direct from the wealthiest .002 percent of Americans.

Here’s a few other ideas that only make sense: end tax exemptions for municipal bonds to fund sports stadiums, end tax deductions for yachts claimed as a second home, and levy an “exit tax” on corporations who reincorporate overseas.

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

A) We should lift the cap on taxable income subject to the Social Security tax. Lifting the cap would instantly make our tax system more progressive, and raise significantly more revenue for the trust fund, allowing us to ease Social Security benefit cuts for seniors after a spouse dies. With so few Americans able to adequately save for retirement, it has never been so important to strengthen Social Security and ensure its solvency.

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

A) Eight years after the financial crisis, we have yet to create a financial system that can manage the systemic risk posed by the “Too Big to Fail” banks. A risk fee, which has been proposed by the Obama Administration and Secretary Clinton, would go a long way toward managing the Too Big to Fail banks, and I support it. I support implementation and increasing that fee based on a risk assessment of a bank, which would factor in size and total capital ratio. Deposits that are already federally insured would be exempt from the fee. Secretary Clinton estimates that the risk fee could bring in $50 billion to the Treasury over the next decade, making this a great way to help balance the deficit.

**Health care:**

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

A) The Affordable Care Act is far from perfect, but it represents an important and historic step forward for our country and should remain law and be strengthened. Obamacare does not go far enough in controlling costs. It also does not do enough to invest in prevention and cures. I would propose creating a public-private partnership, funded by publically-issued bonds, which would bring together the finest minds in biomedical research to find cures for cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s, to name a few diseases. These cures would be made publically available; no pharmaceutical company would be able to own any cures found by this public-private partnership.

It is likely that Congressman Davis would oppose this kind of investment in prevention and cures; he has accepted tens of thousands of dollars from Political Action Committees representing the pharmaceutical industry this election cycle alone.

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

A) I stand with Planned Parenthood. This organization has helped millions of women find healthcare and support, including mammograms for women who cannot otherwise afford them, and it is outrageous that Planned Parenthood has been targeted by Republicans who are willing to shut the government down to advance their extreme agenda. Only three percent of Planned Parenthood’s services are abortion-related, and zero of their federal dollars go to abortion procedures.

**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 strongly support legislation to prevent the deportations of DREAMers, and I strongly support a path to earned citizenship. On two occasions I have stood with the Ashley Project, demanding that the U.S. government stop the deportations of military family members. The Ashley Project is named after Spc. Ashley Sietsema, who we lost in 2007 while she was serving a deployment in the U.S. Army. Unconscionably, Ashley’s family has faced deportation. The United States is and has for some time deported close family members of those serving in our military. No family who has served our country should ever face the prospect of deportation.

**Education:**

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

A) Nearly half of all student loan defaults are recorded from for-profit colleges and universities. I believe that colleges and universities that exist solely to profit from student loans and return no value should be banned from the student loan program.

I also believe that the federal government should expand upon a program that accelerates student loan repayments based upon government and community service. Borrowers who fall behind on their payments should be automatically enrolled into an income-based repayment plan, where borrowers pay no more than ten percent of their income on servicing their loans.

Managing the student loan crisis means managing costs and increasing state aid for state universities. Many state universities, suffering from underfunding by their legislatures, have also turned to aggressive recruitment efforts as a means to secure needed funding and have joined in developing programs that lead to unmarketable career paths. I strongly support a plans to provide federal aid to the states as long as those states in turn increase funding for their state universities.