**Name:** Jaime Andrade

**District running for:** 40th Representative District

**Political party:** Democratic

**Political/civic background:** Married, with two children. Founding board member, Cardinal Bernardin Early Childhood Center; member, North River Commission, Rincon Family Services' Avondale Coalition, and Albany Park Neighborhood Council; former member, Active Citizens Team/Neighborhood On Watch and Keep Chicago Renting Coalition.

**Occupation:** Full-time state representative

**Education:** St. Andrew Elementary School, Gordon Technical High School, B.S.B. in Accounting from DePaul University, I am also working on completing my Masters of Accountancy from the Charles H. Kellstadt Graduate School of Business at DePaul University.

**Campaign website:** www.facebook.com/Andrade4StateRep/

**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.*

In order to prevent devastating cuts to services that the elderly, people with disabilities and children rely on, I am open to increasing the state income tax. The money from any increase would need to go to paying old bills, especially those owed to social service organizations that provide services like meals for seniors, counseling for domestic violence victims and assistance for children with special needs. The state is not currently living up to its responsibilities, so our government needs to do the responsible thing and raise revenue to pay for the many vital services that are not being adequately provided.

*2.     Expand the sales tax to services.*

Again, I am open to approving a sales tax expansion only to prevent further devastating budget cuts. If any new revenue is approved, we need to make sure it is not used for new spending or programs, but that the spending is dedicated to reviving previous state support for education, health care, public safety and programs for seniors and veterans. The voters I have met at the door over the past year are very upset about the budget cuts and lack of funding for programs that they and their loved ones rely on. At the same time, I know that we need to be vigilant against waste and fraud to help ensure that more tax dollars are reserved for truly important programs and services.

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

At this time I am against taxing retirement income because it hurts seniors on fixed incomes who have already planned on having a certain amount of income in their retirement. Many seniors are already struggling to make ends meet in a time when costs for basic necessities are rising and younger generations are increasingly looking towards seniors to help them when they are having financial problems.

*4.     Adopt a progressive income tax.*

This is my preferred option for providing more responsible revenue for Illinois, especially proposals that would provide tax relief for middle class families while requiring the very wealthy to pay their fair share. I support amending the constitution to do away with the flat tax entirely. I have also supported and am a co-sponsor of HJRCA 26, the millionaires’ tax bill that would increase funding for our schools by an estimated $1 billion a year.

*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)

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) There is no easy solution to this issue, and there are very real legal doubts about the constitutionality of any benefit changes for current workers and retirees. But we need to make sure the pension funds stay solvent so that workers can receive they pensions they were promised. I believe any changes need to be discussed and agreed to by the various stakeholders involved. In the meantime, the state needs to continue to make the full pension payment every year (which we have done every year I have been in office) as much of the underfunding is due to previous governors and General Assemblies shorting their pension payments while workers continued to make their full payments with every paycheck.

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) I support the involvement of all legislators in the budget process and I would like for any solution to our budget issues to be bipartisan. It is long past time for all sides to come together and work together to do what is best for our state. In regards to the specific proposal presented earlier this year, there are parts of it I agree with and some parts that I do not agree with. I do not agree with taxing retirement income, as many seniors are living on fixed incomes. And I will strongly stand against any proposals that drive down the wages and standards of living of middle class families. Paying some working families less is no solution to our state’s budget problems.

Parts of the proposal that I do agree with include: fully funding the Child Care Assistance Program, Community Care Program and other vital services; mandating reporting on contractor minority hiring; making the full pension payment; and paying off the bill backlog. I am open to revenue increases along with responsible spending reductions in order to protect vital services for the members of our communities who need them most.

We can never forget during the budget-making process that our decisions affect real people. I think our Governor and others who would like to drastically cut services need to think about the women who will no longer receive breast cancer screenings, the homebound seniors who will no longer have meals delivered, and the victims of domestic violence and child abuse who will no longer have access to shelters and counseling services. These programs are life-saving, and I hope that people from both sides of the aisle and all across the state remember that and stand with me to provide funding for them.

**Education:**

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

A) . The solution to our state’s school funding issue is not to send less funding to Chicago Public Schools or to get rid of the block grant, as some are suggesting. The main thing we need to change is to make more resources available and better fund all of our public schools. Our kids deserve the chance to get the best education possible, and the state is not doing its part to make sure it happens. Right now schools from different parts of the state are fighting over a pot of resources that is too small to begin with. In order to get more funding to our schools, I support the millionaires’ tax measure where the very wealthy would pay an additional tax and the revenue would go toward schools. This measure would bring in an estimated $1 billion a year for students. This would be a good first step in the right direction.

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 state should stop discriminating against Chicago schools and provide the same support for pension payments as it provides for other school districts across the state. We need to do this carefully to make sure the state has enough revenue to cover this increase in cost (and I certainly support increasing revenues for this at the state level), but I believe it would go a long way towards improving finances of the Chicago Public Schools.

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) Governor Rauner has absolutely failed our state’s higher education system. He proposed outrageous 30 percent cuts to our universities, and when the General Assembly passed a budget that restored these cuts and gave our state colleges and universities the funding they needed, he vetoed that budget. Governor Rauner has since refused to work with the General Assembly to pass a higher education budget. I believe his dismissal of the importance of higher education in Illinois is really shortsighted.

High quality public universities not only give Illinois students greater opportunity to succeed in both their education and their careers, it also plays an important role in attracting businesses to Illinois, especially companies that provide the high tech jobs of the future. I believe increasing support for our universities (specifically more funding for the classroom and not administration) would help improve the overall Illinois economy.

The abandonment of low income students by the Governor’s refusal to work with the General Assembly to pass a budget that includes MAP grants is especially tragic. Many of these students depend on these grants in order to be able to afford to go to college at all, and we have seen reports that many students have been forced to drop out now that these grants are not available. For many Illinois residents, the American Dream is becoming less possible due to these cuts and others caused by the Rauner administration.

**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) I believe that there should be an ongoing, annual plan to improve Illinois infrastructure to make sure our roads and bridges remain safe for Illinois residents. I am open to new revenue options; especially ones that would have the wealthy pay their fair share and put less of a burden on middle class families.

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) I agree that capital costs should be included, as many Chicago residents rely on public transportation every day to get to work and school. I would be open to looking at funding ideas in order to make sure all Chicago residents have access to safe and reliable public transportation.

**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) I believe the number one thing we can do as a state to attract all kinds of jobs, not only manufacturing jobs, is to improve the fiscal condition of the state and get a budget in place. No company wants to relocate to a state that is as unstable as Illinois is right now. Businesses want to be located in a state that consistently provides important services for their employees and their families, while also having strong schools that prepare their children to lead productive lives. Governor Rauner’s unwillingness to work with the General Assembly has not only hurt people who need help, like seniors, people with disabilities and disadvantaged children, but has also seriously damaged our state’s reputation and our ability to attract good-paying jobs to the state.

These days with the level of technology used in manufacturing, manufacturers need an educated workforce. We must do more to provide our children and young adults with a high quality education and advanced training so they are prepared to enter a competitive, global job market. I believe the state can do more to make sure there is job training available to anyone willing to work, so companies will want to come to Illinois to hire our trained and ready-for –the job work force.

I also strongly believe that U.S. companies that manufacture textiles, machinery and other products need to start leading by example and manufacturing in the U.S. whenever possible. At the end of the day, the U.S. is not going to be able to compete with other countries that do not have the strong labor protections that we have. Some companies have chosen to manufacture their goods in the U.S. anyways and support our economy with good-paying jobs. We should put public pressure on more companies to do the same.

**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) I have concerns about this legislation, including about whether it will make it harder in the long run to increase renewable energy sources in Illinois and whether it will decrease competition and harm consumers through lack of competition and increased charges. I support reducing carbon emissions and I plan on working closely with the Sierra Club and other environmental groups to work towards that goal.

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) I support the Illinois Clean Jobs bill and I am signed on as a co-sponsor. It is estimated that this bill will create more than 30,000 jobs a year, save consumers nearly $1 billion, and reduce carbon emissions while also reducing costs.

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) Yes, I support reducing carbon emissions through both of these means. I am a co-sponsor of House Bill 2607, Elaine Nekritz’s comprehensive bill to establish a long-term renewable resources procurement plan.

**Gun safety:**

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

A) Support.

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) Yes.

**Criminal justice:**

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

A) I support requiring video and audio of police shootings to be preserved and released to the public in order to rebuild trust between the police and our community.

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 think the legislature needs to thoroughly examine criminal justice reform issues, and make sure to keep in mind everyone who may be impacted by any changes. These are very complex issues, and both the interests of the former offender and any victims must be considered.

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 think the legislature needs to thoroughly examine criminal justice reform issues, and make sure to keep in mind everyone who may be impacted by any changes. These are very complex issues, and both the interests of the former offender and any victims must be considered.

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 support looking at this issue more closely, as I believe it would be great if the state could shift more resources into providing services to help at-risk youth in order to preventing crimes from being committed in the first place.

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) I am in favor of laws that protect children and other Illinois residents from dangerous sex offenders and predators.

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

A) I have concerns about taking any more decisions out of the hands of voters and putting into the hands of bureaucrats and insiders. I think that these races should receive more media coverage and that bar associations should do more to inform the voters about these races.

**Other:**

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

A) I am open to the idea of redistricting reform but I would need to review any specific proposal before supporting it. I have very serious concerns about the current proposed constitutional amendment and whether it protects minority voting rights. Groups like the NAACP have raised concerns about redistricting proposals that reduce minority participation. As an example, the US Justice Department recently ruled against a map created by an “independent” commission in the state of Arizona because of this issue.

I also worry about the accountability of an unelected commission drawing the maps. We here in Chicago have seen the damage that unelected officials in important positions can cause through our unelected school board. I strongly support more accountability and having to answer to voters, which is why I support changing our system to one where the school board is elected.

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

A) During several Committees of the Whole on these topics last year, we heard directly from workers and employers who live in Illinois and some who live in other states so we could compare different regulations. Hearing these witnesses’ testimony, especially those of witnesses from other states who have to now have to rely on public assistance because of the lack of compensation for their injuries, made me more dedicated than ever to stand up against legislation that would cause more harm to injured workers.

I supported several pieces of legislation last year, in an effort to compromise with the governor, that aimed to help businesses realize more of the savings that were part of workers’ compensation reforms passed in 2011. I am particularly interested in making sure the insurance companies pass along the cost savings they have received through previous reforms on to businesses through lower premiums.

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

A) I strongly support making this proposal and any proposal that makes it easier for citizens to exercise their right to vote.

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

A) I think there is a lot of distrust that Illinois residents have for our political system, and we need to do more to restore that trust. I support tougher laws against public corruption, giving the Secretary of State’s office more oversight over lobbying activities, strengthening the role of the Illinois Legislative Auditor General, and creating a new criminal offense for the theft of public funds.

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) Rita Calabrese was my fifth grade teacher and she was important because she inspired me to always work my hardest at everything I do. Great teachers must run in the family, as I met her son (a CTU teacher) when I toured one of the public schools in my district.