**Name: Jim Oberweis**

**District running for:  Senate district 25**

**Political party: Republican**

**Political/civic background: State Senator**

**Occupation: Chairman, Oberweis dairy**

**Education:**  Graduate, Marmion Military Academy.  BA, University of Illinois.  MBA, University of Chicago

**Campaign website:** under construction

**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.*

            Illinois must clean up the waste, fraud and abuse so rampant in this state for many years before considering charging our hard working taxpayers even more.  Increasing taxes without basic, common sense reforms like those proposed by Governor Rauner would just accelerate the exodus of businesses and jobs (and thus tax revenue) from Illinois.  When the Democrat majority approves these necessary reforms, I believe Republicans will consider a temporary tax increase specifically to pay down some of the unpaid bills.  Such a temporary tax increase could be on income or services.  Taxing retirement income would just accelerate the exodus of retirees to Florida, Texas or Tennessee where there is no income tax.

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) We must stop the situation from getting worse by continuing down our current path.  We must follow the example of the private sector and move to defined contribution plans instead of defined benefit plans.  We will have to honor existing earned pension rights unless there is a constitutional change which is unlikely.

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 would consider that but the real problem is leadership that hangs on to power for far too long.  I strongly support term limits, not only for leadership but for all legislators as well.

**Education:**

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

A) Fund 100% of foundation level support and then help those districts most in need.  However, we need to make our education system much more cost effective by encouraging school choice, merit pay for teachers and accountability for all, including administrators.

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 each school district should ultimately be responsible for its own pension costs but the transition to such a standard must be done carefully and fairly.

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) We must make our school system more efficient through greater competition.  Charter schools are a positive step in that direction.

**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) Illinois is a transportation hub and we must maintain our infrastructure to continue our leadership role as a transportation center.  Motor fuel taxes should be dedicated solely to infrastructure improvements and not “borrowed” for other purposes.  With gas prices at relatively low levels, this is a good time to consider an increase in the user fee of motor fuel taxes.

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 would consider that but we must be very careful because such “funding streams” tend to grow over time and never seem to end, even when no longer needed.*

**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) Lower taxes

     Workman’s Comp reform

     Tort reform (at a minimum, stop venue shopping)

**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 lean towards support but I would continue to listen to both sides of the argument.

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) We are all concerned about the future of our environment but that must be balanced with the cost to Illinois consumers.

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) not at this time

**Gun safety:**

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

A) Support banning those who are on no-fly list from purchasing guns without some kind of court oversight.  Support limiting straw man gun purchases.

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

A) Oppose

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 with limits

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) Yes.

      Absolutely.

      Yes

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) Non-violent crimes, yes, but not all crimes.

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) Yes.

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 have not seen the proposal.

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

A) “Merit selection” sounds wonderful but the devil is in the details.

**Other:**

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

A) Absolutely.

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

A) For an individual to receive 100% coverage under Workman’s Comp, the injury should be primarily related to the job.

            Ending venue shopping is the easiest, most common sense step towards tort reform.

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

A) Oppose but above all, I believe a voter (whether automatically registered or not) should be required to produce a state issued picture ID to vote as is required in many other states in order to reduce voter fraud in Illinois.  For those who do not have a driver’s license, the state should provide a picture ID at no charge.

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

A) Incumbents tend to have a significant advantage over challengers and campaign-funding laws frequently help incumbents.

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) My mother, my sister, my daughter-in-law, my daughter, my son-in-law and I all are or were teachers.  I don’t want to pick one of them.