**Name:** Howard Brookins

**District running for:**

Democrat, 1st Congressional District

**Political/civic background:**

Alderman, 21st Ward

**Occupation:**

Alderman and Attorney

**Education:**

Southern Illinois University, B.A.

Northern Illinois University, J.D.

**Campaign website:**

BrookinsforCongress.com

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

**Legislative priorities:**

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

A) Protect the Middle Class. Protect Our Rights. Protect Our Country.

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

A) Jobs, Safety, Equality. As an alderman, I am always looking for new community partners to hire residents or help us prevent crimes. As a Congressman, I will look for new ways to level the playing field for everyone. In Congress, I’ll fight to increase the minimum wage, develop new laws to protect our most vulnerable citizens and make sure everyone has an opportunity to pursue the American Dream.

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

A) For 20 years, Bobby Rush has been representing us in Congress. But, for over a decade, he has failed to show up. He has missed more votes than any other member of Congress and he has failed to vote for bedrock policies of the Democratic Party.

The biggest difference between Bobby Rush and I is that I show up. My ward can count on me. The 1st Congressional District cannot count on Bobby Rush.

**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.

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

A) My wife is an employee of Cook County in the Enterprise Resource Planning System.

**National security:**

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

A) The key to taking down ISIS is to cut off their funding supply. The less oil we purchase from the Middle East, the less money flows to ISIS. The better we protect antiquity sites, the less artifacts they have to sell. ISIS has dug in for the long haul and we need to suffocate their funding.

If Congress authorizes more domestic energy production and offers the right incentives for renewable energy, we can slow the flow of oil from ISIS controlled countries.

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

A) I do not support banning Muslim admissions into the U.S.

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 in the message engraved on the Statue of Liberty – “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe.” We need to keep America safe and we need to make sure that all immigrants are coming here legally and that they don’t mean our country harm but singling out an entire country of people goes against what we, as a country, stand for.

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

A) I support the President and his decision not to enforce a no fly zone in Syria. Military experts and the White House believe enforcement of a no fly zone is impractical and unfeasible.

Enforcing a No Fly Zone would only damage relations with Russia and would not prevent the deaths of Syrian nationals and Syrian refugees as most of the attacks are coming from the ground. We need to be developing a foreign policy that minimizes spending abroad and bring that money home. Sending jets into the sky costs money. Enforcing a no fly zone in Syria won’t save lives.

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) We should learn from Benghazi so that we can better protect American diplomats but we need to stop the Witch Hunt. The committee needs a deadline.

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) It would seem to be foolish to leave any stone unturned when it comes to catching terrorists. Terrorists both foreign and domestic use the “Dark Web” to communicate amongst themselves and plan their next moves. I believe that U.S. law enforcement should have whatever access they need to catch terrorists on the “Dark Web.” I do want to ensure that U.S. citizens’ rights are protected, so warrants must be used to tap their devices.

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

A) I believe we have the strength as a country to have our justice system handle these prisoners, as we have numerous times before. Although difficult for some of our citizens to accept, I agree with the President that we must move forward and close Guantanamo.

**Gun violence:**

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

A) We should make the President’s recent executive order a law. We must close loopholes that require those trying to buy a gun to get a license and go through a background check. We need to ensure that there is not an online marketplace for firearms. We need to continue funding mental health service providers so that the state police know who is mentally unfit to own a gun.

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

A) Support.

**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) Climate change is real. Climate changed is caused by human activity. Climate change continues to be one of the biggest threats to our economy and our public health. Capping carbon emissions is an important first step in slowing and hopefully reversing the effects of climate change. That is why I support the Paris climate change agreement.

**Economy:**

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

A) We need to implement changes that break down, what the New York Times referred to as, “Income Defense Industry.” The wealthiest Americans are exploiting tax loopholes to limit their tax liability to around 17% of their income when they are supposed to be paying 25% - 27%. This is a huge amount of income that would fund schools, mental health centers, and other vital safety net programs.

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

A) I believe that we need to explore a number of reforms but we should begin by raising the payroll tax cap. Under our current system, we are only taxing the first $106,000. We should explore raising this cap and having it apply to income derived from investments. No laborer on the street should have to pay taxes a banker or trader does not. It will result in wealthier Americans paying more into the system only to get the same benefits as others but it will provide some much needed relief for the system and preserve a vital entitlement.

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

A) Yes. Implementing a risk fee on big banks will help us prevent another stock market crash. People are still healing from the 2008 crash. Many Americans are still without jobs, pension funds haven’t recovered, small businesses haven’t reopened. We need to be doing more to prevent crashes like 2008 from happening again and the “risk fee” will help us do that.

**Health care:**

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

A) We should be reforming Obamacare so that we are on a path to single payer healthcare.

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

A) No. Planned Parenthood provides a number of health service options for women, particularly those in low-income communities that may not be able to afford other options.

**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 to prevent DREAMer deportations. 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) Secretary Clinton’s “New College Compact” is the most aggressive way to address the growing burden of student loans in America. It expands some of the President’s programs that allow students to repay student loans based on their income, enables low-income students to use their Pell grants for living expenses and allow students to refinance their loans. In addition, their needs to be more investment from states and the federal governments in high education.