**Name:** Carolyn Schofield

**District running for:** Representative District 66

**Political party:** Republican

**Political/civic background:**

2012-present McHenry County Board District 2

2013-present Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Board (representing McHenry County)

2013-present Northwest Water Planning Alliance (McHenry County Board member/alternate member 2013-2015)

2012-present Grafton 8 Republican Precinct Committeeman

2012-2014 Grafton Township Republican Committee Vice-Chairman

 2009-2012 Crystal Lake City Council

 1999-2009 Crystal Lake Planning and Zoning Commission

**Occupation:**

-McHenry County Board/Community Activist

-12 years as Loss Control Engineer focusing on fire protection/highly protected risks and Product Liability Specialist

**Education:** Bachelors of Science General Engineering with Environmental Specialization- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

**Campaign website:** www.CitizensforCarolynSchofield.com

**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.*

A) The best way to balance the budget is to increase the number of taxpayers by adding jobs. Over the last two years alone, Illinois has lost almost 20,000 manufacturing jobs while neighboring states have gained manufacturing jobs. If Illinois doesn’t become more competitive and focus on job growth, a tax increase will be unavoidable. If elected, I will do everything in my power to create jobs and grow the Illinois economy, so that budgets can be balanced without a tax increase. In addition to job growth, I support the completion of a comprehensive eligibility audit of the Medicaid system so that only those who meet income, eligibility and other requirements are receiving benefits. This audit is estimated to yield billions in savings. I would also recommend strengthening accountability standards and collection practices so that those who are supposed to make reduced payments for services are forced to pay their portion for the benefits they are receiving. Lastly, I fully support a constitutional fix to the pension crisis, which would have a dramatic positive effect on future budgets.

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) Pension reform must remain an absolute top priority for the General Assembly. The unsustainable systems affect every other area of the budget by crowding out funding for essential services the State must provide. We need to find a way to not only fund the existing pension obligations but also begin to pay down debt which has been incurred. The Supreme Court has ruled that earned pension benefits cannot be diminished or impaired. Any changes to the pension system would therefore have to take place moving forward with monies that have not yet been paid by the pension system participants. I would support a proposal that would provide participants with an option that would allow them to stay in their current tier with a limited ability to receive raises that would boost pensionable income, or choose to move to a more affordable and sustainable system, like the current Tier II option or a 401-c3-style benefit. Representative Batinick has also introduced House Resolution 752, which would urge Speaker Madigan and the Chairperson of the House Personnel and Pensions Committee to hold a series of hearings on how the State could potentially approach a lump sum pension or partial pension exchange option. This proposal could provide more flexibility in retirement planning while at the same time benefiting the State by removing pension liabilities. This is a tool that has been utilized in the private sector and is worthy of consideration to find a solution to the pension crisis.

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) Today the legislative leaders, primarily those from the majority party, have a disproportionate amount of influence over what budget is ultimately presented through the budget bills to the members of the General Assembly. I support a bipartisan, bicameral group developing a budget template to create a collaborative, non-politically-motivated budget. If this type of system was in place right now, I believe Illinois would have a budget. Legislators from both political parties have expressed frustration that Illinois is now in its seventh month without a budget. It appears that lawmakers are eager to have budget bills before them so they can vote on them.

**Education:**

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

A) Education needs to be student-centered and not centered around state and federal mandates. There is no “one-size-fits-all” template that ensures a successful education, and public schools need flexibility so they can create a curriculum that benefits their unique demographic of students. In all cases, I would support expanding dual-credit and AP classwork that allows college-bound students to receive college credit while in high school. This has the potential to significantly cut college costs for Illinois families. The House has convened a bipartisan Education Funding Task Force which is looking at current inequities and exploring possible solutions that would allow for a funding system that is fair for all students and taxpayers. I look forward to reading their findings. I would support legislation that protects suburban taxpayers and the investments they make in their local school districts, and would fight to keep more of our local tax dollars here rather than sending them downstate and into the City of Chicago. Communities that have had successful voter-led referenda to boost school funding should not be penalized for that community choice. I would also support realigning assessments statewide so that Cook County, which is currently only assessed at 10% of EAV, would be treated the same as the rest of Illinois, which is assessed at 33%.

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) The Chicago teacher pension system historically has been separate from the remainder of the State’s public pension systems. Up until 1995, Chicago had a dedicated five-cent levy for their pension obligations. However, in 1995 the City of Chicago decided to abandon the dedicated pension levy, and this marked the beginning of Chicago’s underfunded pension system. This, coupled with decisions to direct those monies to other non-education areas of the City’s budget, were choices made by those council members. It is not the State’s responsibility to fill that gap. I would not be opposed to other school districts outside of Chicago picking up their own pension costs, but that shift would have to be done *very* slowly utilizing a very long and incremental ramp so that school districts have ample time to work the new obligations into their future contract negotiations. I would oppose the cost shift if it was structured in a way that would abruptly move those costs to the local level, because I believe it would result in massive property tax increases.

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) Higher education in Illinois has frankly become unaffordable and thus unobtainable for many within our State. A look at the entire system from reform at the administrative level to efficiencies in the operational costs should be closely examined prior to considering state funding increases. We also need to start finding ways to successfully educate those within Illinois and encourage the long term viability of their residency in our State. This is a full circle approach, starting with attracting businesses and jobs to our state, and providing an educated workforce for those businesses through education of our Illinois students. This would theoretically eliminate the significant decline in population we have been seeing and encourage growth, while in turn introducing more tax payers into the system and diversifying the tax base.

**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) There is no doubt that aging infrastructure and congestion can have a significant impact on the viability of a region. I am an advocate of infrastructure improvement projects that will enhance an area and provide resiliency. With limited funds and a declining population, the various projects need to be closely examined and prioritized for their long term benefits. As a member of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Board we have done just that. We are continuing to explore various solutions to a designated funding source for long term viability of regional planning which includes public transit. We need to continue an organized regional approach to infrastructure planning while at the same time supporting local projects which may have significant positive impact on the viability of an area.

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) As mentioned above public transportation needs to be included in regional planning. As with all potential increases, we should first be looking at the existing model and see if there are opportunities for efficiencies or shared services to reduce spending that could be designated to other areas such as capital improvements.

**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) First and foremost we need to focus on how we become competitive again with surrounding states. Illinois has one of the highest workers’ compensation costs in the nation. Workers’ compensation reform is needed, to lower the overall cost to businesses. Secondly, prevailing wage reform is needed. Removing the requirement for private projects receiving government-assisted financing to pay prevailing wages would produce a more even playing field with our surrounding states, as right now the prevailing wage requirement at times can offset the benefit of government assistance. I recently sat on a Comprehensive Economic Strategy Committee for McHenry County and in partnership with Boone and Winnebago counties we created a formal plan for growing our local economy through job creation. The plan includes identifying potential development and expansion, available workforce, infrastructure needs, and sustainable development all through a collaborative approach. A similar approach can be taken at the state level to identify regional strengths and how to best utilize them. For example, Illinois has the best freight network in the country and lawmakers should focus on how to capitalize on ease of access and mobility through our region. This should be a collaborative approach which allows municipalities flexibility in utilizing funds for incentives on the basis of job creation and benefit to the economy.

**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) New rules proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency call for reductions in carbon emissions from existing power plants, and encourage all states to adopt policies to discourage the loss of existing nuclear plants because of their environmental benefits. The Low Carbon Portfolio Standard in Illinois could act as a bridge solution that would facilitate further policy actions that may be required to bring Illinois into compliance with EPA rules and mandates. However, we also need to ensure that the cost does not outweigh the benefit. We should work closely together to find a balance of a diverse portfolio and an affordable cost to the taxpayer.

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) The Illinois Clean Jobs bill has the potential to offer a much needed business boost to our State. We can improve the Illinois economy through job creation while protecting our health and our environment. Illinois can be a leader with an innovative approach that has a long term vision of bringing full circle the creation of jobs through business attraction and retention, while protecting future generations through a vision of sustainability of our environmental resources.

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) I am proud of my Engineering degree which includes an environmental specialization. To that end, I recognize that reducing carbon emissions is a necessary step we must take in Illinois and across the United States. I support finding the balance between the utilization of best practices for reducing carbon emissions and the recognition that environmental protection efforts must also be cost-effective for consumers.

**Gun safety:**

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

A) Illinois has some of the strictest gun laws in the country. Increasing or strengthening the gun laws for law-abiding citizens does nothing to take guns out of the hands of criminals and those who do not respect or abide by our FOID card process. Rather than continually making it more difficult for law-abiding citizens to enjoy their Constitutionally-guaranteed rights, we should focus our efforts on combating gun violence and the sale and trafficking of illegal guns.

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

A) Firearms dealers are already licensed, and again I see no need to further increase mandates for law abiding citizens who are already following the procedures for licensing. The real issue is the selling and trafficking of illegal guns. These individuals would not abide by new licensing regulations.

Q) *Do you support or oppose allowing families to petition the courts to temporarily remove guns from people in crisis?*

A) I support an increase in efforts to keep guns out of the hands of those who are mentally ill.

**Criminal justice:**

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

A) Because the government is “owned” by the people, I support all efforts at improved transparency. We have seen recent examples too close to home, such as the officer Joe Gliniewicz situation in Lake County, where a lack of transparency has had devastating effects on communities and has put a stain on the integrity of the profession of being a police officer. We have also seen examples in the City of Chicago where a lack of transparency has led to community outrage. With the exception of instances where the courts have sealed records, full transparency should be the standard by which all police departments operate.

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 that putting a general number on what the prison population should be by 2025 may have unintended consequences. We need to address the root cause of why our population is as high as it is. Looking at addressing areas such as mental illness within our prison system and providing adequate treatment to those individuals so they do not become repeat offenders can have a significant impact on the general population numbers. It is estimated that 1/3 to over half of the prisons’ population has a mental illness. We need to focus on the processes that will be most effective in the prevention of future crimes.

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) No I do not support automatic expungement. I think that a conversation about expungement for specific offenses may be worthwhile, but our society demands transparency and there is an expectation that criminal records for serious crimes follow individuals throughout convicted people’s adult lives. Even though an individual may be able to learn from an offense and become a more productive member of society, the consequence of having a public, life-long criminal record should be utilized as a crime deterrent.

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. We should constantly be looking at efficiencies in government to save taxpayer dollars and half-empty juvenile prisons are a waste of taxpayer resources.

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 believe that juvenile sex offenders should be evaluated on the likelihood to reoffend and that offenders should be considered on a case by case basis. For example, violent offenders should face a more rigid consequence than those who engaged in a consensual relationship.

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

A) I would support exploring this option. In theory, becoming a judge should be about what you know, not who you know. Most voters have a limited knowledge of judicial candidates, and the best candidate is not necessarily the candidate who has the most money to spend on a campaign or who can garner the most endorsements from political allies.

**Other:**

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

A) I absolutely support the fair maps amendment proposal, which would take legislative map-drawing out of the hands of politicians and instead have districts determined solely by population and geography. In 2012, Speaker Madigan, who is also the State Chairman for the Democrat Party, created a gerrymandered map that protected his incumbents and assured his continued control of the House.

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

A) Illinois currently has the second highest worker compensation costs in the nation. We must take steps to become competitive with our neighboring states because businesses are fleeing Illinois, and taking their jobs with them. Many say that our workers compensation costs were a large factor in their decision to leave Illinois. I support an integrated approach to becoming more competitive, and believe we must address causation to ensure that those receiving worker compensation benefits actually sustained their injury on the job or as a result of their work. We also need to be open to rate reviews and caps on injury awards.

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

A) No. While I believe all adults should become involved citizens in the political process, I do think there needs to be an application process where photo identification and other valid forms of identification are used to prevent voter fraud.

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

A) While lawmakers can legislate ethics they cannot legislate morality. As long as there are elected officials who hold power and control as priorities over doing what is right and proper for the citizens they represent, they will find loopholes and ways to take advantage of the rules. I would support evening the playing field with regard to the funding of campaigns. Today’s rules allow an individual to spend an unlimited amount of their own money on a campaign. With strict regulations for donations from other sources in place, this gives the wealthy an unfair advantage. I would also support tightening the regulations for donations to legislative leaders.

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) I have always had an appreciation and admiration for our teachers. It is difficult for me to choose just one as many have had a significant impact on my life. My math and science teachers top the list as they were the foundation of my passion for engineering and our environment. I also think of my English and Speech Communications teachers often especially when speaking on issues. However, the one teacher that I think of most often is my 5th grade teacher Mr. Novak. Mr. Novak brought life into the classroom. He taught us not only about the subject matter in books but about how to apply it in life. Mr. Novak extended his teaching beyond the classroom and even applied to be the first teacher in space. When I think of him I cannot help thinking of the 1986 Challenger tragedy and the ultimate sacrifice that was made by Christa McAuliffe in her quest to educate our youth. Mr. Novak sets off a complete spiral of thoughts on the importance of education, how we are not perfect but it is how we handle our imperfections that matters, and the value of life and learning.