**Name:** Tammy Duckworth

**Political/civic background:** U.S. Representative for the 8th Congressional District of Illinois

**Occupation:** Member of Congress

**Education:** University of Hawaii, B.A., The George Washington University, M.A., Capella University, Ph.D

**Campaign website:** www.tammyduckworth.com

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

**Legislative priorities:**

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

A) 1) Building an economy that works from the bottom up rather than the top down, which will strengthen the middle class and small business

2) Making college accessible and affordable

3) Honoring the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform and Veterans, as well as ensuring America pursues a smart foreign policy that never again sends American troops into harm’s way without a clear objective and exit strategy.

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

1. 1) Investing in and modernizing our state’s infrastructure

2) Ensuring that Social Security and Medicare are here for generations to come

3) Protecting and promoting quality Illinois jobs

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

A) I believe we grow our economy and strengthen our country from the middle out, not the top down. That is why I support policies that reward working families and small businesses. Senator Kirk, on the other hand, supports the Ryan Budget, which would raise taxes on middle-class families to pay for tax cuts for those at the top, and turn Medicare into a voucher program. We fundamentally disagree.

**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) My campaign regularly invites the press to all public events, and will continue to do so. We also document our travels around the state through social media. Most information about individual fundraisers and fundraising events is available in our quarterly reports.

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

A) I have no relatives on public or campaign payrolls.

**National security:**

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

A) One of the most important actions the Senate can take to reduce the threat of ISIS is to pass an Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF). Passage of an AUMF would send a strong message that the U.S. is committed to taking on and defeating ISIS. Our brave men and women in uniform deserve a Congress that gives the president specific guidelines of the scope and length of any military action against ISIS. We’ve already learned our lesson that we cannot send our troops into harm’s way without an exit strategy.

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

A) I have accepted risk against my life, and made it my personal responsibility to defend the Constitution. I feel it would be a subtle and indirect attempt to subvert the intent of Article VI of that document to establish a religious test for those who would immigrate here in search of a better life. I do not support any ban on the immigration of Muslims into the United States. Protecting our homeland from ISIS must be accomplished without slamming the doors on innocent victims of terrorism. Congress should be working to address real vulnerabilities, combat homegrown terrorism and improve security here at home, not hurting those who are escaping the brutality of those we must eliminate.

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) The SAFE Act was designed to shut down the refugee program. I opposed it because I believe we cannot turn our backs on human suffering and refugees fleeing the same terrorists we are fighting. This legislation is against our values and only strengthens ISIS’ recruiting of disaffected youths. Instead, I support the Secure Refugee Process Act of 2015, which would improve our refugee vetting system without ending the 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) No-fly zones and humanitarian safe zones are extraordinarily resource-intensive and they both represent an escalation in our direct confrontation with Assad. However, as Senator, they’re both something I would consider closely. This is another reason why it’s important that we establish a new AUMF as a first step.

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.*

I have served on the House Benghazi Select Committee as one of the five Democratic Representatives since the Committee’s inception. I initially believed that a Congressional investigation into the attack on the diplomatic mission in Benghazi would be useful in order to assure our diplomats were secure and to prevent future tragedies such as this one. However, it has become increasingly clear that the Republican majority is intent on using the Committee solely as a tool to attack Secretary Clinton for political purposes. The Committee has already spent $4.5 million. It’s time to stop this political attack on Secretary Clinton and stop wasting taxpayer dollars.

The lives and service of Ambassador Stevens and the three other Americans who died in the attack should not be so dishonored, and I believe the Committee should wrap up its work as soon as possible.

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) So long as necessary protocols are followed, like search warrants, I support giving U.S. authorities access to encrypted or “dark web” communications about potential terrorist plots should they pose a clear threat to national security.

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

A) Yes.  More than 50 retired generals and admirals, including Major General Lehnert, who helped create Guantanamo, support closing the facility. This isn’t a partisan issue, as former Secretaries of State Kissinger, Powell, and Albright all support closing it. The facility hurts our nation’s credibility abroad and is a recruiting tool for terrorists. We are always most secure when we lead with our values and continuing to keep Guantanamo open undermines our values and credibility around the globe.

**Gun violence:**

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

A) Passing comprehensive legislation for universal background checks and closing the gun show loophole.

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

A) I serve as a proud cosponsor of the Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act. I strongly believe that the Attorney General should have the authority to prohibit individuals who are terrorists, - or individuals who the AG reasonably suspects are seeking to purchase a firearm or explosive to commit an act of terror - from buying such deadly weapons.

Giving law enforcement the authority to prevent people from buying firearms or explosives who are on the FBI's Consolidated Terrorist Watchlist is simply common sense.

This should not be a partisan issue. Not only did a republican author the bill, but the legislative proposal originates with the Bush Administration, which first submitted the proposal to Congress in 2007.

**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) Yes, and it’s not a close call. Scientists are near unanimous in their agreement that climate change is caused by human activity. Further inaction on climate change will only be detrimental for our planet and our children’s future. I believe that the Paris climate change agreement is an important step towards protecting our environment.

**Economy:**

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

A) I have a “Families first” approach to reforming our tax code and will continue pushing legislation that supports middle-class families and better ensures people pay their fair share. In the Senate, I would support proposals like the 21st Century Worker Tax Cut Act. We all know that wages have been flat, but expenses for child care and goods to support families continue to rise. This legislation would make it easier for working parents to stay in the middle class, by providing working families a deduction on the second earner’s income. A mom or dad who gets back in the workforce and brings home an extra income, would get a deduction.

Too often the wealthiest Americans are able to avoid taxes and pay less than they should. That’s why I recently teamed up with Senator Warren to introduce the SAVE Benefits Act, which would close a loophole in the federal tax code that allows corporations to write off executive bonuses as business expenses. It would save enough revenue to provide nearly $580 to each of the estimated 70 million Veterans, seniors, people with disabilities and other Social Security beneficiaries who despite rising costs of many necessities, received no cost-of-living adjustment this year. The savings would also strengthen the Social Security and Disability trust funds, further securing the programs’ fiscal security for years to come.

I would also support reducing the corporate tax rate as part of a comprehensive program. While I am open to reducing the corporate tax rate for companies, I also want to make sure small and medium size businesses get a tax cut as well. Our medium and small businesses are the backbones of our economy.

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

A) I am committed to strengthening and protecting Social Security and Medicare so they are intact for generations to come and to opposing Republican privatization efforts. As Senator, I would be willing to work with my colleagues to find a commonsense solution – and I am open to the possibility of lifting the current Social Security cap. I firmly believe that millionaires should not be paying a smaller percentage of their income into Social Security than middle-class families. If, for instance, we returned to the way the law was structured in the 1980s, that would go a long way to reducing the shortfall.

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

A) I support a risk fee on big banks because we need to disincentivize the risky investments and practices that led to the 2008 financial crisis and, if left unchecked, may very well lead to another.

**Health care:**

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

A) I oppose the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. It’s time for Congress to accept that the ACA is settled law. Instead of wasting time and taxpayer dollars on trying to repeal it, Congress should begin working together to improve the law. The ACA is not perfect and I support fixing flaws in the legislation so it can benefit the greatest number of Americans. I voted to repeal the Medical Device Tax.

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

A) No. Planned Parenthood provides vital healthcare services, including lifesaving cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment, birth control, and well-woman exams, for millions of women all across the country. In fact, when I was a college student I relied on Planned Parenthood to obtain a physical I needed to get a job.

**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) Yes, I support a pathway to citizenship for DREAMers. America is the only place they have called home and the only place many of them have ever known. These individuals did not choose to come here and all their lives they have been contributing to our society and economy. Sending them back to a country they’ve never known and may not even speak the language of is inhumane. America isn’t a country that punishes children for the actions of their parents. Furthermore, I proudly helped introduce the bipartisan ENLIST ACT, which provides undocumented immigrants serving in our military a way to become legal permanent residents.

On this score, in Congress, I introduced a bipartisan amendment that would grant citizenship to undocumented immigrants who serve in the military. Those who are willing to defend and die for our nation deserve the opportunity to legally live in the country they are defending.

**Education:**

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

A) I was able to afford to go to college because of Pell Grants, student loans and a part-time job, and college affordability is a major priority for my campaign. I recently introduced the *Working Students Act* to address the unfairness of students who choose to work and who, under current federal law, are often penalized with reduced financial aid. That means that they must work even more or take on additional student loan debt in order to finish school. My bill would increase the amount of outside income students can earn without reducing their federal aid eligibility by 35 percent. Under the bill, a working single parent with two children could work to earn approximately $10,000 more each year without endangering their financial aid, an independent student could earn an additional $3,400 each year and a dependent student could earn $2,200 more before their income impacts their financial aid award.

I also support President Obama’s plan to offer free community college to students who earn it; Senator Warren’s bill to allow individuals to refinance their student loans at lower interest rates, just as they would with a mortgage; and Senator Hirono’s efforts to protect and expand Pell Grants.