



David
Hoffman

Daily Chronicle questionnaire: David Hoffman

Election primary: U.S. senate (Democrat)

Age: 42

Bio: Graduated from Yale and the University of Chicago Law School; helped lead the fight against corruption and abuse of power in government the last four years as the independent Inspector General of Chicago and as a member of the Illinois Reform Commission; worked for seven years as a federal prosecutor under U.S. Attorney Pat Fitzgerald; served as the Foreign Policy Legislative Assistant to Democratic Sen. David Boren; married to Monique for seven years; has 2-year-old son, Grayson.

What should be the key components of health care reform? Among the ideas being considered, what should not be part of health care reform?

Any health care reform should: Assure affordable, quality health coverage for all Americans. I support a public option as one of the best ways to promote competition in the marketplace and make insurance affordable; end barriers to coverage for people with pre-existing medical conditions; insist that health insurance plans cover preventive care; reduce long-term growth of health care costs for businesses and government, especially small businesses. Among other things, we should (i) remove the antitrust exemption for insurance companies to increase competition, (ii) ensure that small businesses can combine forces to maximize their negotiating power with insurance companies; (iii) provide incentives for new approaches to the delivery system rather than fee-for-service billing; and (iv) minimize waste, fraud and abuse through better oversight. Health care reform should not include the Stupak Amendment, which would restrict a woman's access to affordable, quality reproductive health care.

What is your position on the cap-and-trade bill that passed the U.S. House this past summer? If you oppose the bill, what should Congress do, if anything, about carbon emissions and climate change?

I support the cap-and-trade legislation because it is a market-based approach that introduces a pollution-credit trading system and provides strong incentives to reduce the most harmful emissions. Wise investments now – both public and private – will be much less costly and much less disruptive than delaying action until it is too late. But in moving toward policies that protect our environment, we also must ensure that we are protecting the livelihoods of our workers at home. As we transition to a low-carbon economy, we need to provide strong financial assistance to those industries requiring help in adopting the cleanest production methods possible. And to ensure we do not place U.S. businesses at a competitive disadvantage to businesses overseas, the U.S. must be a strong leader in trade, aid policies and other international agreements to promote a worldwide commitment to limiting atmospheric green house gas emissions.

What kinds of new regulations of the banking industry do you support? What don't you support that is being proposed?

We must strike a new balance that protects consumers more than banks. I support the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Agency, but we must close the massive loophole exempting the vast majority of banks from oversight and transparency. Complex derivatives (like the ones that helped cause this collapse) should be traded on an open, transparent, public exchange, to reduce risk and systemic failure of banks. To ensure that no bank is "too big too fail," we must set tighter risk-based capital requirements, so the larger the bank, or the riskier its investments, the tighter the leverage requirements; and the largest banks must maintain an approved "winding down" strategy so that the government does not have to choose between a sudden bank failure or a taxpayer-funded bailout. I would support creating bank executive compensation rules that provide incentives for banks to prioritize long-term stability, as proposed by the Federal Reserve.

Immigration reform has taken a back seat to other priorities of the Obama administration during his first year in office. Should immigration reform be more of a priority? What do you propose?

I am in favor of comprehensive immigration reform as soon as possible. I believe the Kennedy-McCain bill, the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, struck the right balance. Any overhaul of U.S. immigration laws should include: providing a clear pathway to citizenship, with penalties for those who have not followed the rules and requirements for earned legalization; expanding the guest-worker program to allow foreign workers to fill available jobs that cannot be filled with U.S. laborers; and reviewing the current, overly-steep nationalization fees. Additionally, while I do not sanction any violation of our laws, we must ensure that undocumented workers are treated with dignity and compassion, and that they are neither exploited nor demonized for entering this country illegally. Comprehensive immigration reform will help secure our borders, make our communities safer, and will encourage millions of undocumented residents to come forward, pay taxes, and become citizens.

What should the U.S. do in Afghanistan?

While I respect President Obama's judgment, I am skeptical that increasing troop levels above the 68,000 already deployed is the right strategy. My concern is that the mission of securing all of Afghanistan is very broad, is an expansion of our core mission of protecting us from al-Qaida, is potentially open-ended, and is likely to be very costly in lives and dollars. While I have an unwavering confidence in our armed forces, I agree with Vice President Biden, Ambassador Eikenberry, and Senator (and former Navy Secretary) Webb, that our mission must focus on the threat to our nation's safety from terrorist groups. We should remain in Afghanistan but should continue to focus on dismantling al-Qaida and disrupting its ability to plot attacks from its Afghan-Pakistan border base and the other countries, such as Somalia and Yemen, where it has spread.

Do you support the government bailouts of the financial and auto industries? Why or why not?

It should make all of us angry that the government had to bail out parts of the banking and auto industries. But in light of the fact that we were facing the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, I don't believe President Obama had any other choice. Had he allowed the biggest banks and the auto industry to collapse under the weight of their own mismanagement, the hundreds of thousands of jobs that would have been lost would have done catastrophic harm to the U.S. and world economy. My criticism of the bailouts is that the administration did not demand responsible conditions from the banks and automakers in exchange for federal assistance. The banks should have been required to make loans to the small-business community, and the automakers should have been required to commit to higher fuel efficiency standards.

What are your top priorities in the state?

My top priority for our state is improving our competitiveness in the global marketplace, through innovative investments in our educational, economic, and environmental capacities. Our ability to lead in the world market, and create good, sustainable jobs depends upon an educated work force. I will be an advocate for better education and innovative reforms, pushing for increased standards and supporting teacher excellence. To create jobs, Illinois must transition to a state that leads in developing money-saving, energy-efficient technologies, and one that meets most of its energy needs with renewable resources. We need to create incentives for green-friendly companies, and provide financial assistance to those industries requiring help as we transition to a low carbon economy. I will also lead the effort for essential infrastructure investments; a "smart grid" to harness Illinois' wind-power; incentives for R&D of technologies to meet environmental demands; and the use of Illinois crops in bio-fuels.

What should Congress do about the nation's growing budget deficit?

Given the current economic situation, premature tightening of fiscal policy would cause more economic decline and worsen the deficit. But I am a pro-growth Democrat who believes that we must have a deficit-reduction plan over the medium to long-term that stimulates economic growth and puts our country back on a path toward fiscal responsi-

bility. In the medium term, we can reduce the deficit by cutting unnecessary spending, eliminating wasteful corporate subsidies and boondoggle appropriation projects, and reducing government intervention in various industries. Long term, we must enact entitlement reform through a bipartisan commission. We must also pass comprehensive health care reform that curbs growing health care costs. We also must support policies that encourage economic growth as well as investments in our national infrastructure and the industries of the future – alternative energy, bio-technology, high speed rail and other mass transportation industries – to help increase revenue and lower deficits.

What distinguishes you from the other candidates in this primary?

I am the only Democratic candidate who has no ties to the insider politics of Tony Rezko and Rod Blagojevich and is completely independent from the Illinois political establishment. I have a proven record of fighting corruption as a federal prosecutor and as Inspector General of Chicago. As a member of the Illinois Reform Commission, I fought pay-to-play and the culture of corruption that have dominated Illinois politics. To beat Mark Kirk, Democrats need a candidate who truly takes the corruption issue off the table. I am the only candidate who does that. We also need a candidate with sufficient experience to take on Mark Kirk. I have been in public service for 16 years, serving in all three branches of the federal government, and am the only candidate in the primary with foreign policy experience. Finally, I am the only candidate to refuse contributions from all PACs and lobbyists.