



Mark Kirk

Daily Chronicle questionnaire: Mark Steven Kirk

Election primary: U.S. senate (Republican)

Age: 50

Bio: In his fifth term as Illinois' 10th Congressional District congressman; saved his district's veterans hospital from closing; led the effort to kill the "Bridge to Nowhere" and took on congressional felons; a U.S. Navy Reserve Commander, served over Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq; named Intelligence Officer of the Year in 1999 by the Navy; deployed to Afghanistan last year, the first congressman to serve in an imminent danger area since 1942.

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

I introduced the Medical Rights and Reform Act, HR 3970, which would: adopt the Medical Rights Act (HR 2516), prohibiting the government from interfering with decisions made by you and your doctor; cut billions of dollars in waste, fraud and abuse; end defensive medicine by enacting lawsuit reform and expanding electronic medical records; allow Americans to buy cheaper and more flexible health insurance from any state in the union; give individuals who buy their own insurance the same tax break employers receive; promote innovative state programs to insure high-risk pools and end pre-existing conditions; and not raise taxes, add to the deficit or cut Medicare. The Pelosi bill creates a new massive spending program, supported by heavy taxes and cuts to Medicare. Congress should reject this government-run health care plan and back the practical reforms I outlined to lower costs and expand coverage.

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?

If we want to advance legislation that lowers our dependence on foreign oil and improves the environment, we need to do it in a way that does not harm jobs and economic growth in our state. Since the economic impact of the "cap-and-trade" bill on the wider State of Illinois – a state dependent on manufacturing, agriculture and coal – is far greater than its impact on the suburban 10th District, I will no longer support this legislation in the House and Senate. As Senator, I will support efforts to lower our dependence on foreign oil and improve the environment without harming economic growth. In my view, we should support wind, solar, geothermal, fuel cell, ethanol, biodiesel and other alternative energy research. We should build 50 new nuclear power plants in America and complete the trans-Canada natural gas pipeline. Finally, we should back Illinois innovators like FutureGen, Argonne and Fermilab.

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

While I support reforms to prevent another financial crisis, I do not believe the Treasury Department or the Federal Reserve Board should hold the power to take over private corporations at will. Political liberty is founded on economic liberty, and history teaches that liberties are sometimes attacked during a crisis. Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner wants Congress to give the executive branch total authority to seize any financial institution in America. It is an awesome power that would be quickly abused after just one vote by the Federal Reserve Board – made up entirely of presidential appointees. No judge would rule. Congress would not cast a vote. What a historic lunge for power. Instead of putting the power in the hands of the Treasury secretary, we should use the independent Risk Authority Board to alert us when large institutions enter crisis and provide specific authorities to federal judges to intervene.

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?

One of the primary duties of the federal government is to control the border and know who is entering our country. Border security equals homeland security. Most illegal drugs and nearly all foreign drug gang members illegally cross our borders. With

Mexican drug cartel violence continuing to threaten our border, the urgency for comprehensive border security never has been greater. Last year, I voted to provide \$10.1 billion for customs and border protection, including funds for border security fencing, infrastructure, technology, facility construction, border patrol agents and the Southwest Border Counterdrug Initiative. I previously voted to fund unmanned aerial vehicles, ground-based sensors, satellites, radar coverage, and cameras. I also supported the SAVE Act – legislation that would mandate employment verification, expand the Criminal Alien Program and establish a rewards program to crack down on the manufacture and sale of fraudulent documents.

What should the U.S. do in Afghanistan?

Last year, I became the first sitting congressman to deploy to an imminent danger area since 1942 when I served as a navy reservist in Kandahar, Afghanistan. I hold a unique view of what is at stake. On Aug. 31, General McChrystal submitted his recommendation – 40,000 additional troops to back a new counterinsurgency strategy to protect the Afghan people from the narco-Taliban, double the Afghan police and army, remove the enemy’s heroin funding source and allow U.S. forces to come home. I support the McChrystal plan. News that the President approved additional troops indicates Americans in uniform will get most of the tools and support they requested. While gains by our NATO forces and the Afghan government will be very difficult, Sept. 11 reminds us that ignoring Afghanistan will not keep our families safe. In the end, we have a no-failure option against the narco-Taliban.

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

Last December, the Treasury Department loaned General Motors \$13 billion. In the spring, Treasury loaned GM another \$6 billion. In June, the administration provided another \$30 billion when the government took ownership of GM. Ex-“Car Czar” Steve Rattner estimated that the taxpayers’ stake in GM stands at \$25 billion. If Mr. Rattner is correct, this “Bridge Loan to Nowhere” lost half of the taxpayers’ money. American taxpayers remain in the dark when it comes to basic details of \$49 billion in taxpayers’ money provided to GM. Unlike typical shareholders, American taxpayers have no access to financial and operating information. That is why I introduced the Taxpayer Investment Protection Act, which would require the Federal government to withdraw its ownership of several private companies by Dec. 31, 2010. Congress should set a timetable for withdrawal from private company ownership before more money is lost.

What are your top priorities in the state?

With unemployment at 11 percent, the deficit spiraling out of control and families struggling to stay afloat, we need a proven fiscal conservative to put Illinois back on track. As senator, job creation and economic growth will be my highest priorities. I will oppose attempts to raise federal taxes for Illinois families or impose crippling regulations on small businesses and family farmers. I will fight to cut wasteful spending and make current tax relief permanent. I will invest in our rails, roads, rivers and airports and boost support to Illinois exporters. At the same time, we cannot understate the economic cost of corruption and the devastating impact Rod Blagojevich had on our state. Our fight against corruption is not only morally correct – it is directly tied to our economic recovery. As senator, I will make sure U.S. Attorney Fitzgerald keeps his job for as long as he wants it.

What should Congress do about the national growing budget deficit?

Spending in Washington is out of control. In January, I opposed the trillion-dollar stimulus. In February, I opposed the \$407 billion Omnibus Appropriations bill filled with 9,000 secret earmarks. Now Congress is poised to spend another trillion dollars to fund a government-run health care plan. Meanwhile the national debt tops \$12 trillion heading toward \$13 trillion by the end of the fiscal year. As a proven fiscal conservative, I will work to rein in spending and restore fiscal sanity to our nation’s Capitol. I remain the only member of the House Appropriations Committee to reject pork-barrel earmark spending. It was the Kirk Amendment that canceled House funding for the Alaskan “Bridge to Nowhere.” By eliminating earmarks, enacting the line-item veto and passing the Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution, we can dramatically reduce wasteful spending and restore fiscal discipline.

What distinguishes you from other candidates in this primary?

In the wake of Rod Blagojevich and Roland Burriss, we need a senator who will restore dignity to our state, create jobs and opportunities for Illinois families and keep our nation strong and secure. In Congress, I saved a veterans hospital, led the effort to

kill the “Bridge to Nowhere” and took on congressional felons. As a proven fiscal conservative, I voted to cut taxes over 40 times, co-sponsored the Balanced Budget Amendment, supported the line-item veto and swore off wasteful earmark spending. As a 20-year Navy Reserve Intelligence Officer, I served over Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. Last year, I became the first sitting congressman to deploy to an imminent danger area since 1942 when I joined my unit in Afghanistan. As senator, I will fight for lower taxes, less spending, veterans care, a strong national defense and, above all, integrity in public office.