



Jacob
Meister

Daily Chronicle questionnaire: Jacob Meister

Election primary: U.S. senate (Democrat)

Age: 44

Bio: 25-year career working in Congress, the state legislature, in international business and as a commercial litigator on behalf of small- and medium-sized companies.

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 believe health care is a right, not a privilege or a commodity. If I were in the Senate now, I would first have favored a strong bill, one that contained a public option provision. The legislation passed by the Senate is an example of how special interests have trumped the public interest. Given that the Senate version was a take-it-or-leave-it bill, I would have voted for it because it achieves some minor gains for the uninsured. Going forward, I support a comprehensive national health care plan. Comprehensive health care reform must serve all American citizens. As senator, I will continue to work for such reform, including some of the following measures: mandate coverage for all, a public option, and repealing the antitrust exemption for health insurers. For more information on my public health positions, please visit the issues page of my Web site – www.meisterforsenate.com.

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 comprehensive cap-and-trade, climate-change legislation, including incentives to reduce global-warming emissions and put millions of people back to work in green, sustainable jobs. We cannot allow the environment to be damaged at no cost to polluters, because this imposes a tremendous hidden cost on everyone. Environmental policy should create incentives and disincentives that encourage sustainable environmental choices. We need to start imposing costs on practices that harm the environment so there is rational decision making when it comes to production and consumption choices. These costs will serve as incentives for individuals and businesses to make conscious, environmentally sound choices, such as producing and buying fuel-efficient vehicles or carbon capture-and-sequestration technology. Disincentive costs and cap-and-trade auction revenues can fund vehicle fuel-cell/battery technologies; wind, solar, geothermal and biomass power; mass transit, high speed rail and freight rail; high-speed broadband Internet access.

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

The state of our economy represents a tragic period in American history; as a result of irresponsible government policy that has allowed the free market to go unchecked. Government policy needs to ensure that there are limits on the market so it operates in the best interests of the country. Prudent and productive policies were put in place as a result of the Great Depression which were designed to protect against another 1929-type collapse of the financial system. The Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 established the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and included banking reforms, some of which were designed to control speculation. But the banking lobby and other special interests have used their power and influence to overturn these regulations, ultimately repealing Glass-Steagall in 1999. The resulting deregulation has prevented the government from protecting the public interest. Please visit my Web site for my comprehensive policy platform on banking and securities.

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?

A comprehensive immigration policy will require recognition that people from all over the world will continue to want to immigrate here; that the status of illegal immigrants living here must somehow be normalized; and that the United States must continue to protect the integrity of its borders. To achieve such a comprehensive policy, I will support federal legislation that provides law-abiding undocumented workers and their families who work and contribute to their communities with permanent legal

status through an earned legalization program that creates legal pathways for those who want to immigrate to the United States; creates an effective lottery system that will reduce the rate of illegal immigration; strengthens both enforcement of and penalties for violating the employer-verification system; and increases funding to federal agencies for improved coordination to strengthen defense of air, land, sea and our borders.

What should the U.S. do in Afghanistan?

From the beginning, and since the president's call for more troops, I have supported his decision to continue our combat operations in Afghanistan because I believe it is in the best interest of our national security and the safety of the American people. I will continue to support this decision only if the president remains committed to achieving success based on his previously laid out criteria and in his proposed time frame. Furthermore, my support hinges upon the United States making a clear, significant and immediate effort to help the Afghani people rebuild their country. We must take the critical lessons from the Soviet-Afghan War of the 1980s and be careful not to make the same mistakes twice. Without a considerable humanitarian effort in Afghanistan, any military success or progress will be lost if we don't help show the Afghani people what their country could look like under fair, democratic leadership.

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

I did support the bailout of these institutions because, as we all recognized, their failure represented an unacceptable and devastating collapse of the U.S. economy. What this moment should teach us is that common sense regulation, and working toward creating an economic climate that gives large manufacturers the tools and incentives to succeed in the U.S., must be our focus as a nation if we intend to re-emerge as a global economic powerhouse. In addition, while I supported the bailouts, we only have begun to repair a broken financial system that placed risk and profit against that which provides for the common good. Resolving this issue begins with reinstating the Glass-Steagall Act, to ensure that there is a clear separation between commercial and investment banking, making every American's money more secure for their future.

What are your top priorities in the state?

Simply put, my first and only priority is creating jobs and reinvigorating Illinois' economy. I have proposed a comprehensive plan, called 20/20 Vision, that focuses on how we can rebuild the Illinois manufacturing base, overhaul our education system to better prepare students for future jobs and create an environment that allows Illinois businesses and entrepreneurs to take full advantage of the emerging green industries like alternative energy, bio-technology and the construction of new infrastructure systems. Our current economy, based more squarely on services, will not be able to sustain positive economic growth of job creation in the future. If we expect to help working families pursue the lives that they have always wanted, we have to put American back to work, and we have to put ourselves to work making the goods the world buys.

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

Currently, we are caught in a Catch 22 situation. We are being forced to spend more to continue supporting the working families who have been hit hardest by this economic crisis, to support failing financial institutions so credit can begin flowing again, and to incentivize a new, sustainable, green economy that will provide the jobs and financial security of future generations. Furthermore, we are still fighting two wars and must continue to fund those efforts in the interest of national security. In addition, for the United States to truly dig ourselves out of the debt we face, we must aggressively pursue policies that bolster our manufacturing base. Through re-establishing the U.S. as a global leader in the research, development and manufacturing of alternative energy technology, bio-technology and new infrastructure systems, increased exports and new investment from American businesses will give us the resources we need to pay down the debt.

What distinguishes you from the other candidates in this primary?

There are three factors that differentiate and distinguish me and my candidacy from others in the race. First, my campaign is based on listening to the concerns of voters and reaching out to them. For that reason, I have the most comprehensive network of campaign offices in the state, located in Aurora, Champaign, Chicago, Homewood, Peoria and Wheeling. Second, I have the most comprehensive plan for job creation and economic recovery. My "20/20 Vision" platform, which can be viewed at www.meisterforsesenate.com, is a detailed plan of action for creating jobs by revitalizing manufacturing and creating a new educational

infrastructure. "20/20 Vision" also encompasses banking and securities regulation, labor policies and environmental protection. Third, I am not a career politician. I am free of associations with special interests, and I am independent of city and state political machines. I will represent the interests of the people of Illinois and nobody else's.