

# 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Election Questionnaire

**Name:** Sara Feigenholtz      **Birth date:** 1956

**Political affiliation:** Democratic

**Home address:** Chicago, IL 60657

**Do you live in the district?** Yes, I am a lifelong resident of the 5<sup>th</sup> District.

**Phone**

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**Marital status**      single

**Occupation/Firm name**      Full-time State legislator

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**Campaign manager**      Mike Rendina

**Press Secretary** Kevin Franck      **Media consultant** AKPD Media

**Pollster** Greenberg Quinlan and Rosner      **Direct mail consultant** Mission Control

**Finance directors**      Chris Carr

**Other campaign staff/consultants**      Dennis Gragert

**Name of any relatives on public payrolls**      None

**Name of your federal campaign committee**      Friends of Sara

**Campaign treasurer**      Angelina Rossi

**Please attach sheets with names of your finance committee; dates, locations and names of hosts of fundraisers, and copies of solicitation letters issued by your committee.**

Joe Power (Power, Rogers and Smith PC) and Gila Bronner (Bronner Group) are chairing my Finance Committee.

A list of upcoming fundraisers and previous solicitations letters are attached.

**Have you had any kind of program for top donors or fundraisers (for example seminars, briefings, golf outings)?**

We do not hold formal fund-raising programs or outings for our top donors; however, my finance staff works with them and provides technical assistance where needed. We rely on our Finance Committee to solicit contributions for the campaign through a scale of contribution levels and a variety of tools including, but not limited to, personal (person-person) solicitation, emails and letters to friends and family, and events.

**List lobbyists assisting you, directly or indirectly, in raising money for your campaign.**

There are no federally registered lobbyists on our Finance Committee (including co-chairs) or finance team, who are responsible for assisting in raising money on behalf of my campaign.

**Will you pledge to disclose in advance where and when your fund-raising events occur? If the answer is no, please explain.**

All fund-raising events are posted on our website, but people interested in attending are asked to call the campaign office in advance for all the details.

**Please explain how your occupation and your life experience qualify you for the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District seat.**

Raised in Hollywood Park on the Northwest Side, I am a lifelong resident of this congressional district. My worldview has been shaped my experiences growing up here, and my legislative and budget experience in the Illinois House has provided me with a unique set of skills to help fix Washington and work toward improving the lives of families in the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

I am the adopted daughter of Florence Buky, an immigrant from Eastern Europe who came to this country during the Great Depression. One of only two women in her class to graduate from medical school, my mother worked as a doctor in our community. She often treated patients, many of whom were children whose parents were unable to pay for basic health care, right on our kitchen table. She never turned anyone away.

My mother taught me the true meaning of public service, which has inspired everything I've done in public life.

Having served 14 years in the Illinois House, and six years as chair of the House Human Services Appropriations committee, I have a record of fighting to expand access to health care for women, families and the uninsured. I sponsored the *FamilyCare* program along with then-State Senator Barack Obama to provide health care for working families. I fought to require insurance companies to cover mammograms and contraceptive services. I championed the *All Kids* law to expand comprehensive, affordable health care coverage to all children in Illinois who need it.

I was able to get these things done by avoiding the finger pointing and political gamesmanship that often dominates Springfield. That's allowed me to work with both Republicans and Democrats to get real results for those most in need. At this very difficult time in our history we need to rise above partisanship and deliver for people. That's how I've worked in Springfield and it's the type of leadership I'll bring to Washington.

I want to go to Washington to help fix our nation's economic crisis, create jobs and work to get all Americans access to the health care they need. Amid the toughest financial crisis in our lifetime, I will work to ensure that any proposal to stimulate our economy or provide relief for taxpayers helps middle class families who need it most.

**Issues:**

**Please attach any materials you wish describing your key issues.**

**DOMESTIC ISSUES**

**What are your top three district-specific priorities?**

The 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District is very diverse and filled with strong, hardworking people. The economic downturn has had a dramatic impact on our community and families are worried about what challenges lie ahead. I talk with constituents everyday who are a pink slip away from losing their health insurance and losing their way of life. I'm running for Congress to represent their needs and their interests. We must ensure that our nation remains a place of opportunity for the families and communities that make up the 5<sup>th</sup> district.

First, our country must make a solid commitment to expanding access to health care for all Americans and strengthening the ability of our health care providers right here in the 5<sup>th</sup> District to continue delivering quality care to patients. While funding is an important part of the solution, we also need to address the structural problems in our health care system – such as the 120-day Medicaid backlog in Illinois – that threaten to shut down

health care centers in our community and make it more difficult for Medicaid beneficiaries to receive the care they need.

Second, I support an immediate investment in our local and regional infrastructure, as part of a national economic stimulus plan. Such an investment would create needed jobs here in Illinois while promoting economic growth for the long-term. A significant portion of that money should be directed to our mass transit system. Achieving efficiency and increasing capacity for the CTA, upholding higher safety standards for Metra Rail, and ensuring accessibility for Pace and ADA Paratransit users will improve economic opportunity throughout our region while reducing reliance on foreign oil and improving our environment. It will also be helpful in attracting the 2016 Olympic Games.

Third, while rebuilding our roads, bridges and communications networks, we also must invest in our human infrastructure. As chair of the House Human Services committee, I have seen firsthand the human cost of political paralysis and dramatic budget cuts in Illinois. Our daycare centers, in-home health care providers and Meals on Wheels programs are stretched to the limit during these tough economic times. The vast majority of workers who provide these services are women, including many single-parents. While a stimulus plan focused solely on construction jobs will put many men back to work, it ignores the millions of female workers who provide the social services on which our children, seniors and disabled citizens rely.

**Do you feel TARP has been effective so far? Why or why not? If not, what would you change? Are you satisfied with the transparency and accountability of the program?**

When the Troubled Assets Relief Program was approved in the fall, there was one priority on the minds of Americans – stop the bleeding and prevent our financial systems from total collapse. We knew that inaction was not an option, but at the same time we had no handbook for how to deal with this sort of crisis.

As the former Treasury Secretary began doling out American tax dollars to companies that later rewarded their failed leaders with extravagant bonuses, it became clear that the Bush Administration had not put into place sufficient safeguards or oversight to ensure that these billions of dollars were well-spent. While additional assistance to the financial sector may be necessary to turn our economy around, we must make sure that these early mistakes are not repeated.

TARP's lack of transparency and failure to provide immediate relief for homeowners facing foreclosure was a serious breach of public confidence. There were virtually no restrictions on how banks could use the Treasury infusions and it did little to stem the tide of rising foreclosures.

I am encouraged by the TARP reform package recently passed by the House, which requires greater accountability and responsibility from beneficiaries of TARP. It sets

restrictions on bonuses for the executives of participating firms, makes foreclosure mitigation conditional, demands greater transparency by forcing banks to report how government funds are being used and closes existing loopholes. If elected, I will work to ensure that any future federal assistance to any sector of our economy comes with full transparency, accountability, and the expectation that it eventually will be repaid.

**Before becoming President Obama's chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, was on track to be speaker of the House, which would be a coup for Chicago and Illinois. There have been persistent rumors that Emanuel might wish to return to the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional seat for that very purpose. Yes or no, in those circumstances, would you be willing to step aside?**

I am running this campaign based on my record of public service and my vision for the future. I have an opportunity to take my legislative experience to Washington to help families in the 5<sup>th</sup> district who are worried about losing their homes, their health care and their jobs. Should I be fortunate enough to win this election, I will serve the people of this district as long as they will have me. I will not step aside to help someone else achieve their career goals.

**Do you support President Obama's proposed stimulus package? Explain.**

Yes. We clearly need fast and effective federal action to boost our economy, restore confidence in our future and put millions of Americans back to work. I support President Obama's focus on rebuilding our nation's infrastructure, which is the cornerstone of this economic stimulus package. This investment in roads, bridges, mass transit and the high-speed Internet lines will immediately create jobs here at home and build the foundation for a competitive economy in the future.

I am also encouraged that President Obama made energy and environmental issues a priority in this stimulus package. This will foster the development of a green economy and could create between 3 and 4 million jobs over the coming years in new technology and renewable energy industries.

As stated above, I want to ensure that we also invest in our human infrastructure. As chair of the House Human Services Appropriations committee, I have seen the effect of the national economic downturn on our service providers – both public and private. An infusion of dollars to bolster Medicaid funding and other worthy programs – including a proposed \$3.2 billion for Children and Family Services Programs and \$4 billion for preventative care – will help Illinois providers and those they serve to weather this economic storm.

**Do you have a plan to ensure access to higher education? Explain.**

The single biggest barrier to college and career success is the lack of academic preparation, particularly for low-income students. I am working with the State Board of Education and the Illinois Board of Higher Education to improve P-12 curriculum alignment, rigor and expectations with college and career ready standards (American Diploma Project).

I strongly support Illinois' 21st Century Scholars Bill (an initiative of CPS, the Illinois Business Roundtable and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce) to improve academic preparation for low-income 7th and 8th graders. There has been great success in similar initiatives in other states, particularly Indiana.

I am also pushing the state's efforts (College and Career Readiness Pilot program) to reduce the high percentages of high school graduates requiring remediation in post secondary education, include labor apprenticeship programs.

Proposals similar to these mentioned above could be useful in the federal discussion about education reform.

As someone who has consistently voted to increase funding for the Illinois Monetary Award Program (MAP) to help young people pursue their dreams of higher education, I will continue to vigorously support increased Pell grants and provisions of the federal economic stimulus bill to increase capital and operational support for higher education.

Other states, including Missouri and Minnesota, have entered into agreements with public colleges to "buy down" tuition in return for state financial support. I will pursue incentives for public colleges and universities in Illinois to reduce tuition costs in exchange for increased state or federal funding.

I also support President Obama's opportunity tax credit for community service initiative, which would lower college tuition costs and make community college free for those who participate in community service projects.

### **Are you in favor of universal health care or some other plan?**

Universal health care simply means making care available to all Americans. I certainly embrace that ideal. The question is over the best way to achieve this goal. Like President Obama, I believe that if we were building America's health care system from the ground up, a single-payer system would be desirable and achievable.

However, since this is not the case, it is more realistic to extend health care coverage to all Americans by building on the system already in place. This means allowing workers and families to stay with their employer-based provider or enter into a national health insurance exchange. It means allowing seniors the choice between nursing homes and assisted living centers or the much less expensive option of in-home care. It means providing Medicare patients the choice to buy generic prescription drugs at a lower cost.

Ultimately, we can help pay for a system that covers all Americans by taking steps like these to bring more efficiencies and reduce the skyrocketing cost of health care.

As the daughter of a doctor, I believe that the needs of doctors and patients should drive the health care debate. Most doctors I talk to today share the desire that all Americans have quality health care regardless of their ability to pay. But they are bogged down with punitive policies from the insurance companies that encumber their ability to practice medicine as they see fit. The goal of this Congress must be to make health care, accessible and affordable to every American by bringing all the stakeholders to the table and building on the system already in place. I am eager to be a part of that debate.

### **How do you propose we fix Social Security?**

Jumpstarting the economy to create jobs will mean more workers paying into the system, which is exactly what the Social Security system needs right now.

Providing strong protections against any moves to privatize social security is also an immediate priority. One can only imagine the effect on millions of seniors had their Social Security benefits been subject to the recent stock market collapse.

Currently, the wages subject to the Social Security tax are capped at approximately the first \$100,000 of income. As part of keeping Social Security solvent for the long-term, Congress might consider lifting or adjusting that cap.

While protecting Social Security, we must also seek to help Americans save more for retirement. I support proposals to promote employer-sponsored savings plans, such as 401(k)s, as well as tax credits to encourage working families to put more of their income into savings plans.

### **Flooding has been a persistent problem in some areas of the 5<sup>th</sup> District. As its congressman, what steps would you take to help your constituents?**

The most immediate concern is to establish a reliable and accountable framework for responding to flooding and natural disasters. We must restore the solvency of the National Flood Insurance Program to provide immediate relief to homeowners and small business owners in the aftermath of a major flood.

I would also partner with leaders from the various municipalities in the 5<sup>th</sup> district to adopt and implement floodplain management strategies, which will reduce future damages, and work with government entities like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District to continually assess the needs of our community as they relate to flooding and storm water management.

A national investment in our infrastructure would put people to work on important public works projects like reinforcing levees, installing additional storm drains and protecting open spaces to absorb more rainwater.

**What should Congress do about immigration? Should it pass a border-enforcement bill first and then vote on a guest worker program and a measure to provide a means to legalization for illegal immigrants? Or should it pass one comprehensive bill?**

Securing our borders and addressing the issue of nearly 11 million undocumented immigrants are priorities that cannot exist in a vacuum – they are too closely linked. We need to adopt a comprehensive solution to immigration reform, one that makes our borders more secure while striving to unify families.

As the daughter of an immigrant, I know that most immigrants come to America in search of a better life. The parts of Chicago that make up the 5<sup>th</sup> district have been home to generations of immigrants who have built this country, fought its wars and raised their children and grandchildren. Our country should continue this tradition by providing immigrants with a path to earn the privilege of citizenship. We also need to establish a new worker visa program that ensures due process and prevents abusive employer practices.

We need comprehensive immigration reform built on both compassion and strength – one that balances the desire of many immigrants to become citizens with the need to secure our borders and prevent further instances of illegal border crossings.

**To reduce carbon emissions, do you favor a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system or neither? Explain.**

I strongly support the cap-and-trade system for dealing with carbon emissions for both environmental and economic reasons. By implementing this market-based approach, we can achieve an overall cap on emissions at the lowest possible cost. This was the basis of the U.S. effort to control acid rain pollution, which has achieved greater reductions at lower costs than anyone anticipated. I have confidence in the system's ability to reduce carbon emissions as well.

## **FOREIGN POLICY**

**What is your timetable for withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq?**

As someone who actively opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, I would like to see a responsible end to the war that protects American lives and provides stability for the Iraqi people. I support a phased withdrawal to begin in the next few months, with the goal of removing all combat troops by Spring, 2010. I trust President Obama to closely monitor the withdrawal of U.S. troops, and agree with his willingness to adjust the timetable based on developments on the ground.

**What role should the United States have in bringing about peace in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?**

I am encouraged by President Obama's appointment of George Mitchell as America's envoy to the Middle East. He was key in bringing peace to the conflict in Northern Ireland and I am hopeful about his ability to build consensus and begin meaningful negotiations among the Israelis and Palestinians.

The United States should be an active participant in any peace negotiations. Israel has been America's most steadfast ally and the only real democracy in the Middle East, and we should help Israel to remain secure. I believe this is best achieved through the pursuit of a two-state solution that allows Israelis and Palestinians to live peacefully, side-by-side.

No peace can exist, however, if Hamas continues its barrage of rocket attacks against Israeli civilians. The U.S. must keep intense pressure on our allies in the Middle East to crack down on weapons smuggling into Gaza and provide Israel with the support it needs to protect its own people.

Iranian nuclear ambitions are perhaps the greatest destabilizing factor in the region. I embrace President Obama's pledge to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapons capability and would support him in that goal.

**Do you support a proposed troop surge in Afghanistan? How long are you willing to have troops stay there? How do you propose to bring stability to the nation once most of the troops are withdrawn?**

We have deployed some 34,000 American troops to fight an insurgency that is growing stronger every day, making the task for American combat troops increasingly more difficult. My first priority is to ensure the safety of American soldiers and provide them with the resources and funding they need to win the fight against Al Qaeda and to capture Osama bin Laden, who is thought to be hiding in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. I would also support efforts by President Obama to encourage our NATO allies to contribute more troops to the mission of eradicating Al Qaeda from Afghanistan.

Any "surge" of troops to that country, however, must be accompanied by a new strategy to support local governance and development aimed at weaning villagers away from Taliban influence. The U.S. must also push the Afghan government, under Hamid Karzai, to fight widespread corruption. These reforms are the only way to ensure that Afghanistan can be stabilized for the long-term and that the U.S. troop presence can be reduced.

**What steps should the United States take to reduce its dependence on foreign oil?**

As the representative of one of the most traffic-congested house districts in the state of Illinois, I understand the need for a robust investment in our nation's outdated and

crumbling mass transit. We need to enhance existing transit systems to increase ridership in the country's most populated cities, which will take more cars off the road.

We cannot continue to consume oil at current levels for both security and environmental reasons. Congress must invest in the development of alternative fuels like wind, solar, biomass and geothermal to move America's energy policy in a new and more sustainable direction. I am encouraged that the proposed economic stimulus plan before Congress seeks to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil by making direct investments in our infrastructure and in alternative energy.