

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

To the candidates: Please complete the following questionnaire and attach a short bio. Feel free to use more than the space allotted if you would like to address an issue in more depth.

The deadline to return the questionnaire is by **5 p.m. Feb. 4**. The questionnaires will be posted on-line shortly afterward at the Chicago Sun-Times web site for voters. Personal information, such as home address and phone number, will be redacted. Any candidate who does not meet the deadline will not have their answers posted.

Name: Tom Geoghegan Birth date: 1/22/1949

Political affiliation Democrat

Home address \_\_\_\_\_

Do you live in the district? Yes

Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (mobile) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pager) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Tom@Tom09.com Blog www.Tom09.com

Marital status single Spouse's name \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation/Firm name Attorney; Depres, Schwartz & Geoghegan

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Other campaign staff/consultants Joe Trippi, Consultant; Jacob Dusseau, Field Director

Name of any relatives on public payrolls

None

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Name of your federal campaign committee Tom Geoghegan for Congress

Campaign treasurer Joe Costello

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.

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

No

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

N/A

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

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

*As a Chicago lawyer for thirty years I have fought for working people in this District and throughout the city. I have represented unions as well as people with no unions to protect them. In plant closings I have helped them recover health and pension benefits. I obtained health care for the uninsured. I've been pressing the State of Illinois to crack down on payday lenders.*

*In my life as a lawyer I have lived out a commitment to one cause above all – to bring economic security to working Americans, in our District and in our country. That's the same commitment I will bring to Congress. We're deep in an economic crisis unlike any other we've known. It may last years. We need new and creative ways to protect working Americans, especially our older working people who have no real pensions to live on. For years we've heard the doomsayers: "We can't afford Social Security." "We can't afford 'single payer' national health." One thing we all learned from the \$700 billion bailout: We've got the money to do all of this and more.*

*All my life I've fought for economic security of working Americans, and I am running so I can take these causes which have been part of my law practice directly to the halls of Congress.*

## Issues:

Please attach any materials you wish describing your key issues.

### **DOMESTIC ISSUES**

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

*First, I want to expand Social Security, our public pension system, to replace, not overnight but in stages, the private pension system which has collapsed. Social Security now pays about 38 to 39 percent of your working income. In other developed countries, it averages 65 percent. That's where our fiscal stimulus should be: a commitment to reach this goal, a public pension that ordinary working people can live on.*

*Second, we have to move to single payer health care program, at least in phases: we might begin with extending Medicare to children, but the government should ultimately be the single payer for all. That's not because single payer is the only ethical and efficient way to protect us all. It's also because it is crucial to making us competitive globally. Through single payer and expanded Social Security, the goal is to pick up the "non-wage" labor costs that employers now have to pay. That's already how other countries out-compete us: they have the government and not the private employer pick up these non-wage health and pension costs.*

*Unless we have government pick up the costs of pensions and health care, our companies can't compete, and we'll go on piling up huge trade deficits. We'll have debacles like GM, which has collapsed in part because of the health and pension costs that the federal government should have been paying all along.*

*For years, the conservatives have said: "We can't do this. The money isn't there." Well, the money is there. It was there for the Iraq war, a colossal waste of money, and for the bailout, the first half of which has been a colossal waste as well. And if we now have the government pick up non-wage labor costs with the use of general revenues, we will in fact make it cheaper and easier for our companies to hire. This is in fact the best and most realistic approach for a long term recovery.*

*Finally we have to put limits on returns to financial firms. We should re-enact the usury laws, the interest-rate caps that were in place in America up till the 1970s. We need to stop the rates of 30 to 35 percent, the hidden fees, the hundreds of ways that banks pull our money out of industry and into gambling and speculation.*

**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?**

*The Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) has been a failure. Before any more money is given to the banking system, the government must take over insolvent institutions.*

*Once the bad debt is written off and institutions become viable, we infuse with capital and reprivatize. If an institution is not viable, no matter its size, it needs to be closed and the remaining assets sold. Taking these steps will allow the tax-payers to get their money back.*

*Congress must also demand that banks stop foreclosures, decrease charges and interest rates on consumer debt, and start lending to businesses so we can get the economy moving. The banks we bail out should follow a golden rule: Just as their own debts have been forgiven or written down by us the taxpayers, they need to write down the debts of our citizens in appropriate cases. That's especially true when I meet clients who have paid back the principal and a reasonable return and still seem to owe as much as ever.*

**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?**

*No.*

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

*I support the President's stimulus package, but would like to see changes. We definitely need to spend money to get the economy moving. However, we must also begin to deal with the long term problem of too much private, and especially consumer, debt.*

*Where we taxpayers have put in the money, we should have government appointed directors sitting on the boards. These directors should ensure the banks stop pointless foreclosures and collection cases against working Americans that now fill up our courts. To get out of this particular crisis, we need to focus on directly cancelling and writing off as much private or consumer debt as we can. The banks which we are bailing out have an obligation to help us achieve this goal.*

*We also need to assume the pension and health costs that private employers are now carrying – that is one way we can avoid debacles like GM and Chrysler. For example, we need a single payer public funded universal health care system, and I propose that we increase the social security payout so that it can become a real public pension that older Americans can really live on. Both of these steps will allow American industry to become more competitive.*

*Furthermore, with tougher financial regulation we can discourage the flow of so much cheap money from Asia into the financial sector and direct it into the manufacturing that can help reduce our frightening trade deficit.*

*While I support stimulus spending, I would focus direct action on getting Americans out of debt and helping our industry become globally competitive. We got into this crisis by*

*allowing too much private debt; we will not get out of it by continuing to pile up mountains of public debt.*

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

*I support increasing the Pell Grants. I have written at length about the problem of increasing student debt. While a college degree should lead to higher wages and long term economic security, a significant debt burden undermines these goals.*

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

*We should “re-enact” Medicare — for everyone. We should take our single-payer health-care system and just make it wall to wall. Aside from its merits, people also understand it, while they don’t really understand any of the health-care plans. One thing that Ronald Reagan proved is that people like big, simple ideas: In his era, the big simple idea was tax cuts, and in ours, the big simple idea should be “Medicare for all adults,” and “national coverage of children, too.”*

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

*We don’t need to fix it, we need to increase it. Social Security should be expanded to replace, in stages, our collapsed private pension system. Social Security now pays approximately 38 to 39 percent of working income. In other developed countries the average is 65 percent. This is, in part, where our fiscal stimulus should be: a commitment to a public pension that ordinary working people can live on.*

**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?**

*We need to finish the tunnel and reservoir system on time. This will require sustained federal funding. Next we need to aggressively use proven green infrastructure techniques where appropriate. This will allow site specific solutions at a much lower cost than traditional methods of flood control.*

**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?**

*We need to have a path to citizenship for these economic refugees. But in all these proposed tests of good citizenship, an obvious one is missing — a requirement that new citizens register to vote. It’s especially in the interest of progressives to say: ‘If you want to be a citizen, persuade us you’re going to be a citizen and vote. Don’t show us your bank account. Prove to us you’re going to read a paper, follow current events, and take up the responsibilities of democratic self-government.*

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

*I support cap and trade legislation to reduce carbon emissions. This kind of program successfully reduced acid rain in the north-east and a properly designed program with the right incentives can be an important component of our strategy.*

*In a 2008 American Prospect column, Going Nowhere Fast, I argued that China and foreign countries holding our debt should get Kyoto credit for infrastructure investments that reduce carbon emissions in the U.S.*

## **FOREIGN POLICY**

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

*I was against the war from the beginning (Slate.com, 2/13/2003) and I agree with President Obama that American troops must leave. We must work with Iraqi government to bring our troops home and support the timetable endorsed by the Iraqi government.*

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

*In the matter of Israel and the Palestinians, I start with three principles: (1) Israel has a right to self defense, including military action. (2) Palestinians have a right to autonomy. (3) Both Israelis and Palestinian civilians have a right to live their lives in safety and free of fear.*

*I also believe our country has a moral obligation to press for an end to the violence, whether that violence may come from an off target military strike in Gaza or a Hamas rocket landing in an Israeli village. In the past few weeks we have seen too many dead Palestinian children – just as we have seen too many dead and wounded Israelis from rocket attacks over the years.*

*In the long run there will be no peace between Israel and Palestinians without some kind of two-state solution. The urgent question is how to get Hamas (or the leading part of Hamas) to renounce violence just as part of the IRA in Northern Ireland finally did – that is, how to pull at least the “political” people in Hamas into the peace process, and peel them off from those who will never give up their guns. I would press the Administration to rely on those who can tell us how to bring about this result.*

*One final note: I think Israel as a country is a remarkable phenomenon. Personally, I would like to spend time there. I wonder whether the U.S. would be as open and democratic if we had been under siege as the Israelis have been. Ultimately, though, the question is not Israel’s right to self defense, which is indisputable, but whether Israel’s*

*recent military action in Gaza in the name of self defense is really achieving any security for Israel.*

*I expect the Obama Administration to be far more engaged in the peace process in the Middle East. This is not a matter we can treat with "benign neglect." The Bush Administration let violence fester. Indeed, by a stupid and murderous war in Iraq, it contributed to a climate of killing in the Middle East. There can be no peace or rule of law in Gaza, in the Middle East or in the world until it is clear that the U.S. itself is committed to ending violence and establishing the rule of law.*

**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?**

*More troops are not the solution to the problems in Afghanistan. We must bring stability to region through economic and diplomatic efforts. I am most concerned about Pakistan. The global financial meltdown has severely impacted its economy and created greater instability within a nuclear nation. Until we have a stable Pakistan, more troops in Afghanistan will do little to stable the region.*

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

*Thirty years ago I served in the Policy Office of the U.S. Department of Energy. I was an editor of the document known as National Energy Plan II. In 1979, I was already helping to draft, as a national goal, that 25 percent our nation's electricity come from renewable sources like wind and solar energy by the year 2000. It is scandalous far short of that goal we still are in 2009 when it seemed so reasonable in 1979.*

*We need a commitment to provide tax incentives and federal investment into clean, renewable industries on scale with those to the coal, oil and nuclear industries.*

*I am especially interested in using House and Senate action to put in place by statutory law rather than by treaty the provisions of Kyoto or any successor to Kyoto. As I wrote in a 2007 American Prospect column, Forget Those Treaties!, I think it crucial to use statutory law as an alternative to a treaty requiring a two thirds vote in the Senate or else we will never engage in any international undertaking.*

Please e-mail the completed questionnaire, a candidate biography and a recent photograph to [swarmbir@suntimes.com](mailto:swarmbir@suntimes.com).