

ILLINOIS NOW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SENATOR BARACK OBAMA
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Candidate: Barack Obama

Committee: Obama for Illinois

District: Candidate for U.S. Senator

Party: Democrat

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1. Do you support passage of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that gives women full constitutional equality including reproductive rights and protection from discrimination based upon sexual orientation?

I would need to see the text of a proposed amendment before supporting it. I support the Equal Rights Amendment and a ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation. I have been a staunch supporter of a woman's right to choose in the Illinois General Assembly, which is why I have earned the endorsements of groups including Personal PAC and the Illinois Planned Parenthood Council.

2. Would you support ratification of an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteeing that equality of rights will not be denied or abridged on account of a person's sex?

Yes. In the Illinois Senate this year, I was a sponsor of a joint resolution ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment.

3. Do you support ratification of CEDAW (the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)?

Yes.

4. Would you vote to repeal the U.S. Patriot Act?

Yes, I would vote to repeal the U.S. Patriot Act, although I would consider replacing that shoddy and dangerous law with a new, carefully crafted proposal that addressed in a much more limited fashion the legitimate needs of law enforcement in combating terrorism (for example, permitting a warrant for the interception of cell phone calls, and not just land-based phones, to accommodate changes in technology).

5. Do you oppose additional anti-terrorism legislation such as the Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003.

Yes, I oppose the draft "Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003" (or so-called "Patriot II") in the form in which it was released by the Department of Justice. I would have to see the text of other proposed anti-terrorism legislation before supporting or opposing it. We can pass federal legislation for homeland security without trampling individual freedoms. The priorities should be to strengthen frontline community medical capacities, fund new firefighter and police officer positions, secure the water supply, and fund efforts to dispose of nuclear waste and material.

6. Will you oppose any attempts to roll back affirmative action?

Yes.

7. Will you support legislation, like the Fair Pay Act, which seeks to end pay discrimination against women who work in female-dominated job categories by addressing the equivalency of different jobs?

Yes. I was a sponsor of the Equal Pay Act, which became law in Illinois this year.

8. Would you support initiatives that allocate additional funds to strengthen the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's ability to identify and respond to wage discrimination, teach employers and businesses how to meet legal requirements, and to disseminate public service announcements informing employers and employees of their rights and responsibilities?

Yes.

9. Would you oppose bills, which have been sponsored in Congress, to eliminate funding for vocational education programs that help women and girls?

Yes.

10. Would you oppose legislation that would weaken Title IV and sex equity programs provisions in current law?

Yes.

11. Will you support legislation that would continue to address the lack of affordable childcare for working families, low income and TANF recipients?

Yes. When we passed welfare reform in Illinois, I was the chief negotiator in the State Senate for the Democrats, and I pushed hard to make sure that there was funding for child care and transportation. It was because of our efforts that Illinois has had a successful transition to welfare reform. We must continue and enhance these efforts.

12. Would you support measures that will strengthen each state's enforcement of child support?

Yes.

13. Would you support measures that would stop the five-year clock on welfare benefits?

I favor ensuring that the time limit is tolled when a recipient is engaged in job training, education, or is on the job, and I helped institute such a policy here in Illinois.

14. Would you support reforms to unemployment insurance programs to include more workers, especially part-time workers, extending benefits and giving them directly to the unemployed (not block-granting to the state, creating another level of bureaucracy)?

Yes. A federal extension of unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed, along with expanded eligibility for those who have worked only part-time or for low wages in the months preceding their unemployment, would help millions of individuals find their way back to work while boosting the economy

15. Would you support including emergency cash, food stamps, childcare and health coverage for welfare and low-income workers in the economic stimulus package?

Yes.

16. Would you support legislation that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing and employment?

Yes. I sponsored such a bill in the State Senate.

17. Would you support legislation that eliminates all discrimination in the military based on sexual orientation?

A I would have to examine specific legislation, but I would oppose policies that fail to advance equal rights in the military.

18. Would you support legislation to repeal the Protection of Marriage Act.

* I support laws recognizing domestic partnerships and providing benefits to domestic partners. However, I do not support legislation to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act. *

19. *Would you support social security reforms that would provide lesbian and gay families with the same benefits provided for heterosexual families? This would include at least survivor and disability benefits.*

* I support the Domestic Partnership Benefits Act of 2003 and generally favor providing benefits to the domestic partners of federal employees. However, given the precarious financial status of the social security system, I would need to evaluate the fiscal impact of a specific social security reform proposal before supporting it.

20. *Would you support legislation to establish a national health care system that assures that TANF recipients, low-income and other individuals not covered by a health plan have access to health care?*

Yes, universal access to health care is one of my top priorities. I am the chief sponsor of the Cardinal Bernardin Amendment, which would guarantee the right of health care coverage to all Illinois residents. I was also the chief sponsor of the expansion of Family Care and Kid Care on the state level, which will provide access to health care for 20,000 additional children and 65,000 additional parents.

21. *Would you support inclusion of abortion coverage as part of women's health care in any national health care system being considered by Congress?*

Yes.

22. *Would you oppose any constitutional amendment to ban abortion?*

Yes.

23. *Would you support coverage for abortion for all Medicaid recipients, not just those who need an abortion to save their life or because of rape or incest?*

I would support Medicaid coverage of abortions to preserve the health of the woman.

24. *Would you support the reauthorization of Title X funding for domestic family planning and oppose limits on international family planning funds?*

Yes.

25. *Would you oppose amendments to prevent abortion coverage in health care plans for federal employees?*

Yes.

26. *Would you support a bill to strip provisions that ban abortion in military hospitals overseas for servicewomen and military dependents even if the woman pays for the procedure herself?*

Yes.

27. *Would you support a Freedom of Choice Act that codifies Roe v. Wade into federal law?*

Yes.

28. *Would you vote to repeal the so-called "partial birth" abortion bill that bans abortion procedures?*

Should it become law, I would vote to repeal a so-called "partial birth" abortion ban. As it currently exists, the legislation is unconstitutional because it is overly broad and unnecessarily vague. It would ban many types of common procedures and would do so without an exception protecting the health of the mother. The federal courts have already declared unconstitutional a comparable Illinois law.

29. *Would you oppose legislation that criminalizes transporting a minor across state lines by any one other than a parent for the purpose of obtaining an abortion?*

I would oppose any legislation, such as the Child Custody Protection Act currently pending in Congress, which fails to include an exception for minors who have been victims of sexual abuse, neglect, or physical abuse by a parent.

30. *Would you oppose a resolution to praise crisis pregnancy centers that provide women with deceptive and incomplete information about their reproductive options?*

Yes.

31. *Would you support efforts to make pregnancy prevention drugs (morning after pills) available without a prescription (over-the-counter)?*

Yes.

32. *Will you support a mechanism in Congress to apply EEOC non-discrimination laws, including sexual harassment provisions, to federal elected officials and their staff?*

Yes.

33. *Would you support legislation to remove caps on punitive damages for sexual harassment?*

Yes.

34. *Would you act to include legislation like the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement act, formerly the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, that would strengthen existing federal provisions against hate crimes by removing the current requirement that the victim be engaged in a "federally protected activity" and extend the current law to cover hate crimes based on sex, sexual orientation and disability?*

Yes.

35. *Will you use your vote and your influence to ensure that programs included in the Violence Against Women Act are fully funded?*

Yes, and I was the chief sponsor and architect of recently enacted Illinois legislation allowing victims of domestic or sexual violence to take time off work for treatment, counseling, and safety measures.

36. *Would you oppose efforts to appoint individuals to federal positions (including the Supreme Court) who hold anti-choice, anti-gay, or anti-affirmative action beliefs?*

Yes.

37. *Would you oppose efforts by anti-choice advocates to block appointees to the office of Surgeon General or any other office because they are pro-choice?*

Yes.

38. *Would you support a filibuster to block the appointment of someone who advocates overturning of Roe v. Wade or interprets in a way that puts restrictions on a woman's right to reproductive freedom.*

I would support a filibuster to block the appointment of a nominee whose opposition to the basic precepts of privacy, racial equality and gender equality reveals a fundamental disregard for our constitution, or whose lack of a record makes it impossible to evaluate his or her fundamental views with regard to civil rights and civil liberties.

39. *What paid-decision making leadership positions do women hold on your current staff? In your campaign?*

Women make up a majority of my staff, including the Finance Director, Deputy Campaign Manager, and Communications Director. Several leaders on my Finance Committee are also women.

40. *For which of the issues reflected in this questionnaire would you take a leadership role? Which would you actively oppose?*

Protecting a woman's right to choose and stopping discrimination based on sexual orientation are two of my top priorities. I have always taken a leadership role on pro-choice issues as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Since I am a civil rights lawyer and constitutional law professor, I often take the lead when it comes to fighting anti-choice bills. I plan to continue to be a strong advocate for protecting a woman's constitutional right to choose an abortion.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered citizens are too often discriminated against on the job and in the community. Our human rights and hate crimes laws should protect the civil liberties, civil rights, and safety of all people, regardless of sexual orientation. What separates me from others who may espouse these same beliefs is my record in the Illinois Senate. No other candidate for U.S. Senate in either party has a real track record of standing together with the LGBT community in the fight for basic rights in Illinois.

I will also continue to take a leading role in achieving affordable, universal health care and in enacting welfare reform measures that increase funding for childcare and encourage education and job training.

41. What efforts would you make within your own political party to promote legislation that benefits women and oppose legislation that harms women?

I will be a forceful and outspoken advocate on behalf of women. I will work to build coalitions and to reach across party lines – as I have done in the Illinois General Assembly – to pass important reforms that benefit women. I was the chief sponsor and architect of recently enacted legislation providing that victims of domestic or sexual violence may take time off work to seek medical care, counseling, and legal services, and to take steps to ensure their safety and the safety of others in their household. I co-sponsored the successful Equal Pay Act of 2003, which prohibits sex-discrimination in wages. I have co-sponsored a joint resolution ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. I will stand firm with my fellow Democrats in opposing radical conservative attacks on women's rights, including filibustering legislation and presidential nominees where appropriate.

42. If elected what special projects or subject areas will you or do you currently work on?

Some of the topics that I will focus on:

- Protecting Roe v. Wade and a woman's right to choose.
- Providing universal preschool education for every child in America.
- Fighting for access to quality health care for all children; prescription drug coverage for seniors who need it; and protecting families from the economic devastation of a catastrophic illness.
- Strengthening our public schools
- Helping families to send their children to college
- Stimulating our economy and investing in job training and development



- Protecting pensions for Americans who've worked hard for their retirement, but whose golden years are threatened by corporate bankruptcies and corruption.
- Strengthening homeland security and renewing our leadership abroad

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