



A PLAN BY THE PEOPLE

RESTORE FAITH IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

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★ FOR CONGRESS ★

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I've driven around Southern Illinois a lot this year. I've driven from Cairo to Alton and back again, stopping at diners and union halls, American Legions, colleges, and countless parades. I've held town halls in Granite City, in Christopher, in Carbondale, and in many other cities and towns. I share a lot during these conversations, but more importantly, I listen.

What I hear is heartbreaking. It's not just the real issues that folks in Southern Illinois face every day—there is a sense of quiet desperation, a sense that no matter what anyone says, no matter what anyone does, nothing will ever change. Folks are losing faith.

To restore faith in our democracy, we must rescue it from those who allow the consolidation of political and economic power in the hands of fewer and fewer people. We have to choose leaders we can trust, leaders we know are working for the people—not special interests.

We must restore faith in the essential American ideal: the power of the vote. If we get out there and use that most basic right of each and every American citizen, we can change the rules of the current broken system and make the lives of people in Southern Illinois better.

The following are some steps we can take to restore faith in our political system:

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I. GET MONEY OUT OF POLITICS

There is too much money in our politics. Lobbyists, mega-donors, and huge corporations throw piles of cash at candidates and members of Congress. I won't take money from the Big Banks, and I will never accept money from the Big Pharma companies whose opioids are killing our people. But we also have to fix the roots of the problem. Our leaders in Congress must make our political system more transparent and accountable. In Congress, I will support the DISCLOSE Act, which would stop people, corporations, and PACs from hiding the identities of their donors. I'll also support a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court case that allowed all this money in the first place: *Citizens United v. FEC*. Only then will the needs of the people—and not the needs of the powerful few—drive our politics and our policies.

II. STOP GERRYMANDERING

We're taught in school that citizens pick their politicians. Right now, politicians pick their citizens. When sitting members of Congress get to draw their own Congressional districts, any incentive for lawmakers to get results for the people they serve is destroyed. The extremes of our country are attended to, instead of the needs of working families. We need to stop the practice of gerrymandering, and find non-partisan ways to draw fair maps based on fair math.

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III. TERM LIMITS

Public service is called “service” for a reason. It’s not about currying favor with powerful donors and special interests while feeding from the public trough for decades. Public service is about making a difference, helping your fellow Southern Illinoisans, and then stepping aside to let the next generation lead. We need to put a limit on the amount of time that legislators are allowed to stay in office, instead of letting them hang around different seats of power for 20 years or more.

IV. PENSION REFORM FOR CONGRESS

During my town halls, I’ve answered many variations of one question: “What are you going to do to help my pension?” Southern Illinoisans who always thought they’d be able to retire are suddenly realizing that it might not happen for them. While thousands of people spend their nights worrying about how they’re going to be able to retire, some members of Congress (my opponent among them) are already collecting better state pensions than those that our teachers receive—and are on track to receive yet another from the federal government. We need to reconsider the pensions members of Congress receive, and stop the double-dipping that occurs when former state and local officials draw both federal and state pensions.

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V. STOP ABUSE OF TAXPAYER-FUNDED MAIL

“Franked” mail is the name for taxpayer-funded mail, a privilege granted to those who hold Congressional office. This mail is intended to help our representatives communicate with the people who elected them. Unfortunately, it’s often exploited to help politicians get themselves re-elected using taxpayer dollars. My opponent spends more than any other representative in Illinois, and is one of the most blatant abusers of franked mail on Capitol Hill. He sends big campaign-style mailers to promote himself at taxpayers’ expense instead of using more cost-effective ways to update constituents, like email and letters. This abuse of taxpayer money needs to stop, and franking privileges must be held to stricter ethical standards.

VI. HOLD TOWN HALLS

As a candidate for Congress, I’ve been holding town halls for a year now, and I’ve made them a priority of my campaign. They’re not always easy, and I’ve had to answer some tough questions. But that is the job of a member of Congress. The people are the boss of a member of Congress. If you can’t handle talking to the boss, you should be fired. Town halls are a critical way to answer to the people of Southern Illinois. As your Congressman, I pledge to hold a town hall at least once every quarter. You’ll know I’m always there to hear what you have to say, through the bad times and the good.

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VII. NO BUDGET, NO PAY

Members of Congress have a lot to get done, but there's one simple task that they've been having trouble with lately: passing a federal budget. I will work with anyone from either party to write and pass a budget that works for Southern Illinois. If we can't get it done, members of Congress shouldn't be paid. It's simple: you shouldn't get rewarded for doing a job you haven't done.

VIII. EXPAND PUBLIC CORRUPTION ENFORCEMENT AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Public corruption undermines our trust in government and our elected leaders. I've spent years going after corruption in both parties. Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants are tools essential to ensuring the safety of our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. COPS grants should also be applied to corruption. Congress must also have aggressive oversight to rein in public officials who spend taxpayer dollars on fancy furniture and first-class travel. We can only do that with funding dedicated to rooting out the rot, so our police, public safety officials and investigators will be better equipped to restore faith in our public institutions.

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IX. CUT USELESS LAYERS OF GOVERNMENT

When the federal government sends much-needed funds to states, especially a state like Illinois, the money sometimes get buried in layers of bureaucracy that have outlived their original missions. Often, it's in these outdated, unnecessary layers that corruption thrives and the public trust is broken. Federal money must include a mandate requiring the entity asking for those funds to prove its value and worth. These same standards must apply to the federal government. As leaders, we have to make evidence-based choices about federal duplication, fragmentation, and overlap, and not protect any bureaucratic sacred cows.

X. PLEDGE TO POST DAILY CALENDAR

When in office, I pledge to publicly post my congressional office meeting calendar. After all, members of Congress are in office to serve folks in Southern Illinois. If folks in Southern Illinois can't know who their member of Congress is meeting with, then they may not be serving those folks very well. You deserve to know who is visiting my office every day, and I'll make sure you do.

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XI. AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION AT AGE 18

In an age when Facebook keeps track of everyone's birthdays and many records are now available online, there is no excuse for our country's failure to get its citizens registered to vote when they turn 18. Congress should act on automatic voter registration to ensure that every American election is honest and open to every American citizen over the age of 18.

XII. END THE CONGRESS TO LOBBYIST PIPELINE

For many representatives, Congress is just a stepping stone on their way to the job they really want: lobbying. Former members use their connections from Congress to push the interests of Big Pharma or Wall Street—and they get paid well to do it. In Congress, I will work to pass legislation which would restrict lobbying by former members of Congress. And I promise to never cash in and become a lobbyist after my time serving you is done.

