**QUESTION 1: Do you have designated advisors and clear processes for making decisions on disability issues? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**My entire staff, both on my campaign and official side, is committed to making decisions on disability issues thoughtfully and we are uniquely focused on disability rights in both policy and practice, particularly because I have a disability. For example, my campaign only holds events in locations that are fully wheelchair accessible, with no exceptions. Disability issues are a top priority for my campaign.

**QUESTION 2: Is your campaign accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes, my campaign is accessible and inclusive to all people with disabilities. We have ensured that all campaign and field offices are fully ADA compliant. My campaign is also committed to hiring and accommodating a diverse staff.

**QUESTION 3: Do you have a proven record on improving or a plan to improve the lives of people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**I’ve worked hard to improve the lives of people with disabilities in my advocacy for disabled Veterans at the Illinois Department of Veterans’ Affairs and in my service representing Illinois’ 8th Congressional District in the House of Representatives. In Congress, I cosponsored the *ABLE Act*, which will ease financial strains on individuals with disabilities by making tax-deferred savings accounts available to cover expenses such as education, housing and transportation. I’m proud that President Obama signed this bill into law. I have urged Congress repeatedly to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to make disability rights a national priority. Legislation ensuring that people with disabilities are treated fairly would be at the center of my tenure as a U.S. Senator.

**QUESTION 4: Do you have a plan/commitment to reduce the stigmas about people with disabilities that are barriers to employment, independence and equality? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Having experienced the stigma surrounding people with disabilities myself, I am devoted to ensuring that every American has access to an independent life, quality employment and social and legal equality. A hallmark of my service in Congress has been fighting for fairness for those with disabilities and I would continue that work in the Senate.

**QUESTION 5: Do you have a proven record on enabling, or a plan to enable, people with disabilities to have jobs, careers and to start their own businesses? Do you have specific strategies for youth employment for people with disabilities and/or sector strategies such as jobs and careers in STEM, hospitality, healthcare and elder care? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**I have fought consistently for expanding opportunity for people with disabilities, and I will continue to do so in the future. Economic opportunity and autonomy are vital to ensuring independence and equality for those with disabilities.

That’s why I want to make sure every child has access to a quality public education, regardless of where he or she lives. It’s also important that children with disabilities receive the same opportunities to receive a quality education as any other child.  I’ll work to ensure we’re investing in education with an emphasis on STEM areas, so we can fill the jobs of the future, and I’ll work to link graduates up with local employers. I’ve also supported strong funding for IDEA and other programs that ensure disabled students can get quality education

I’m a cosponsor of the TIME Act, which will prohibit employers from being able to pay disabled Americans below the minimum wage. I also helped introduce the Transit Accessibility Innovation Act to help make public transit more accessible because disabled Americans rely on it more than most and it is critical to enabling them to go to work and live independent lives.

**QUESTION 6: Do you have a plan to enable students with disabilities, including those from historically marginalized communities and backgrounds, to receive the diagnosis, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and accommodations/services they need to succeed in school and be prepared for competitive employment? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**I support accommodations and services for students with disabilities, intellectual, developmental, learning, physical or otherwise. I will fight for expanding access to IEPs, the services needed to access them and their effective implementation.

**QUESTION 7: Do you have a plan to reform the benefits system (Medicaid, Medicaid buyin) to enable people with disabilities to work to the best of their capacities without losing supports they need to work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes, and I introduced legislation to do just that: the SAVE Benefits Act. Seniors, Veterans, people with disabilities and other Social Security beneficiaries did not receive a cost-of-living adjustment this year despite rising costs. I am working with Senator Elizabeth Warren to provide a cost-of-living increase, which would give a one-time boost to Social Security benefits by closing the loophole that allows tax write-offs for corporate executive bonuses.

**QUESTION 8: Do you have a plan to ensure people with disabilities are eligible for affordable health insurance regardless of preexisting conditions? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. I support the Affordable Care Act and insuring those with pre-existing conditions. I am willing to listen to all stakeholders and work to improve the ACA so it can benefit the maximum number of Americans. Already in Illinois, close to 623,000 people have signed up for health care plans available through the ACA, and the current uninsured rate has dropped from 15.5% to 8.8%.

We also cannot leave those who are most vulnerable behind. Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security are programs that middle-class families, seniors, and those living with disabilities depend on to make ends meet and live their lives with dignity. By identifying waste and fraud in these programs we can strengthen them, which is why I cosponsored the bipartisan PRIME Act with Congressman Roskam, parts of which was passed into law, to address Medicare waste and fraud. Taking steps to reduce our national deficit does not need to come at the expense of supporting middle-class families and seniors.

**QUESTION 9: Do you have a plan to provide home and community-based services to people with disabilities who would rather live in their own homes instead of institutions, and have the community attendant supports they need to work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**The availability of quality, affordable alternatives to institutions, in terms of assistance in home care and community attendant supports in the workplace, is vital to the independence of people with disabilities.

**QUESTION 10: Do you have a plan to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive services that would prevent them from being swept up into the criminal justice system, divert individuals with disabilities who are arrested to treatment options in lieu of jail where appropriate, receive needed accommodations in the criminal justice process and while incarcerated, and offer appropriate reentry support to help individuals with disabilities leaving jails and prisons reintegrate into their communities and secure jobs? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**I find the frequency with which those with disabilities are incarcerated and the care the receive in criminal justice system an urgent problem and a gross miscarriage of justice. Safeguarding the rights and the safety of those with disabilities must be a top priority in criminal justice reform, by expanding diversion and treatment options as an alternative to imprisonment. I believe that rebuilding the way the criminal justice process interacts with people with disabilities will be essential to making the system smarter, fairer and more cost-effective.

**QUESTION 11: People with disabilities are twice as likely to be victims of crime as those without disabilities. People with disabilities also are far more likely to suffer from police violence, partially because manifestations of disability can be misunderstood as defiant behavior. Do you have a plan to address these issues? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**I support the full prosecution of those responsible for abusing people with disabilities, including neglectful caretakers and under-informed police. In the Senate, I will fight passionately for the safety and protection of people with disabilities from anyone who wishes to do them harm or neglect their health and wellness.

**QUESTION 12: Both children and adults with disabilities are more likely to be victims of rape or sexual assault. Do you have a plan to address this issue? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Sexual violence is unacceptable in any situation, whether in the military, on a college campus, or in a situation that exploits people with disabilities. I have supported the Violence Against Women Act vigorously, including provisions that mandate rapists be held accountable and that prioritize the needs of underserved communities such as people with disabilities. In the Senate, I will fight passionately for the safety and protection of all people with disabilities from sexual violence.

**QUESTION 13: Do you have a plan for veterans with disabilities facing barriers transitioning from active duty to civilian employment? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. As a disabled Veteran, the issue of post-military transition is deeply important to me. I have dedicated my life to serving my country, and honoring those men and women who risk their lives every day to protect our nation. While serving at both the IDVA and the VA, I launched innovative programs and helped write legislation to help Veterans find jobs and to combat Veterans’ suicide and homelessness, especially for those veterans with disabilities. I get my own healthcare at Hines VA, so I am committed to making sure the VA health system works and delivers great health outcomes for all Vets.

**QUESTION 14: Do you have a plan for accessible, affordable, integrated housing to allow people with disabilities to live in the communities where they work or are seeking work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**All people have a right to safe, affordable, integrated, quality housing. A safe place to live is an essential part of building integrated and fair communities, and justice for people with disabilities begins at the local level. I will support expanding and protecting this right for those with disabilities and emphasize the importance of accessible and ADA compliant housing.

**QUESTION 15: Do you have a plan to address the lack of accessible transportation options that is a barrier to work for people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**The dearth of accessible and affordable transportation for people with disabilities is a significant obstacle to quality, meaningful employment. I serve as the Democratic Ranking Member of the Transportation and Public Assets Subcommittee of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, where I fight for the availability of affordable transportation for all. I will do all I can to remove barriers to the employment of people with disabilities.

**QUESTION 16: Do you have a plan to advance innovations (i.e., assistive technologies, devices) that can help people with disabilities become more successfully employed, productive and independent? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**I support expanding the use of assistive technologies and devices that allow many people with disabilities to become more productive and independent. I voted to repeal the Medical Devices Tax and I am thrilled to see the progress our country has made in terms of accepting assistive devices. The development and improvement of these supports for people with disabilities must be a priority for innovators in private business, the technology industry, and the medical field. I will continue to fight for innovations that help people with disabilities live lives with dignity.

**QUESTION 17: In your foreign policy and national security plan, do you plan to continue America’s tradition of standing up for the rights of oppressed people, including people with disabilities, around the world? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**From ISIS and instability in the Middle East, to Russia’s reassertion of influence, to China’s uneven and unpredictable economy, we’re living in uncertain times. Rather than retreating, we must play a more active role in leading the international community to face these diverse challenges. My 23 years in the Reserve Forces, my long study of international relations in the academic environment, and my experiences growing up as an American in war-torn areas, inform my views on national security and foreign policy.

I didn’t risk my life in Iraq to come back to a country that ignores human rights atrocities and turns its back on those in need. Instead, we need a solution that is both rigorous and measured to ensure the long-term safety of Americans at home and abroad.

I will work to ensure that we do not send our troops into harm’s way without fully considering and understanding the true costs of war.