In preparation for the upcoming election, the River Cities' Reader asked candidates to respond to the following: "Compare yourself to and contrast yourself with your opponent(s) in terms of your respective positions on the issues you think will be most important during the next term of the office you're seeking. "

We sent this question to more than 70 candidates in contested races on the ballots in Scott and Rock Island counties. More than 30 candidates answered the call, and their responses are included here.

Keep in mind that we asked candidates to be brief, to be specific, to contrast their positions with those of their opponent(s), and to back up their claims. We'll leave it you to decide how well they followed those guidelines.

This exercise is intended as a supplement to other information voters should consider before casting their ballots.

Illinois State Treasurer

Tom Dart
Democrat
www.tomdart.com
I'm running for state treasurer so that taxpayers can regain some measure of confidence that Illinois government works for them. The primary focus of the office should be serving Illinois citizens and taxpayers instead of politics and self-promotion.

The treasurer's office has run adrift. Linked-deposit programs that focus on jobs, housing, and community development have been slashed. Investment and yields are shielded from public view. The operating budget and spending for other programs have grown significantly. Important budget decisions involving these programs are made without any legislative or public oversight.

I'll re-institute economic-development-based linked-deposit programs, restore fiscal responsibility to the budget, bring all program spending into the regular state budget and accounting process, and publish investments and returns on the World Wide Web for all to see. I'll increase investment choices in the college-savings program and cut the self-promoting marketing expenses that take money away from the college-savings accounts. I'll return built-up excess funds to local governments. I'll never make deals for politically connected insiders that cheat the state from dollars owed to it as in the case of the two downstate hotels.

I've served on the revenue and appropriations committees during my 10 years in the legislature. I have an exceptional understanding of state finances. I've been a leading advocate in child welfare, prison, and financial-service reform. As a form assistant state's attorney, I know how to root out government fraud and corruption. I am prepared to bring this experience and perspective to the treasurer's office.

Illinois Comptroller

Julie Fox
Libertarian
www.JulieFox.org

I am Julie Fox, the Libertarian candidate for state comptroller. There is one main issue that relates to the comptroller's race, and that is how to reduce and manage the state budget. The incumbent, Democrat Dan Hynes, is a health-care lawyer by trade. His lack of expertise in accounting is obvious by the fact that the state budget has increased 44 percent, four times the rate of inflation, in the four years he has been in office. Dan Hynes has done nothing to stop the runaway spending in Illinois that created a 4-percent shortfall in the budget last summer.

I feel that government officials have a responsibility to use taxpayers' dollars wisely. That has not been the case in the past. As a Libertarian, I am serious about smaller government, which in the case of the comptroller's position would refer to cutting pork and other frivolous spending out of the state budget. While the Comptroller does not determine the budget, he or she has the power to veto payments, which is exactly what I intend to do if elected comptroller. I would veto payments on frivolous and unconstitutional expenses. I plan on balancing the state budget through spending cuts, rather than by increasing taxes, as both Democrats and Republicans have advocated year after year.

One other issue that has come up relating to the comptroller's office is whether we should consolidate the offices of treasurer and comptroller. Forty states have already done this. My Republican opponent, Thomas Ramsdell, does not advocate consolidating these offices, as he thinks they are checks on each other. Ramsdell is also a lawyer, and his lack of expertise in accounting is obvious here. The check on an accounting function is through internal auditing. The comptroller's office contains an audit department, which would be the check on the how the budget is being handled.

The main way in which I contrast myself from my opponents is that I am qualified to manage the state budget, while both my opponents, being lawyers by trade, are not. I am a Certified Public Accountant and corporate controller. I have 15 years experience in the field of accounting and have managed budgets of up to $60 million. I manage budgets for a living. My opponents do not. Dan Hynes has done an abysmal job of managing the state budget in the four years that he has been in office, which is obvious by the current condition of our budget. Do we want to continue the trend of electing lawyers to the office of comptroller, and continue the trend of runaway spending, or is it time that we elect a qualified candidate who believes in keeping taxpayers' hard-earned income in their pockets, and who will cut wasteful spending from our budget?

You can find out more about my campaign by visiting me on the web at (http://www.JulieFox.org). You can e-mail me at (FoxforComptroller@JulieFox.org).