



the

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Governor Presents Budget Plan

In his fourth budget address on February 15, Governor Rod Blagojevich described the financial problems he says his administration inherited and how it has responded to them, then he outlined new programs he wants the state to fund through what he described as a “balanced” budget.

The governor said the state had a \$5 billion deficit when he took over and had underfunded education while it overspent in other areas, such as the state payroll, which was “a constant problem in Illinois.”

Blagojevich said his administration’s guiding principles were to increase education funding and decrease government spending without hiking income or sales taxes. He said his administration accomplished this, balanced the budget, and strengthened the state pension funds, while expanding healthcare coverage for Illinoisans.

His \$55.4 billion budget includes proposals for about \$1.4 billion in new programs, including increased healthcare for children and veterans, scholarships for nursing students, stem cell research, road construction, a Prairie State DNA Institute, state-wide preschool for three and four year-olds, and tax credits for some college students, preschoolers’ parents, companies filming in Illinois, and groups that clean up Illinois riverfronts. He also wants to increase elementary and secondary education spending by \$400 million.

The governor says higher state tax revenues from an improved economy will help pay for the new programs and he wants the legislature to close “business tax loopholes” to add more money to the pot. An increased tax on cigars would bring in \$10 million and the state would use \$140 million from special purpose funds. In addition, combining the administrative functions of state agencies will save about \$115

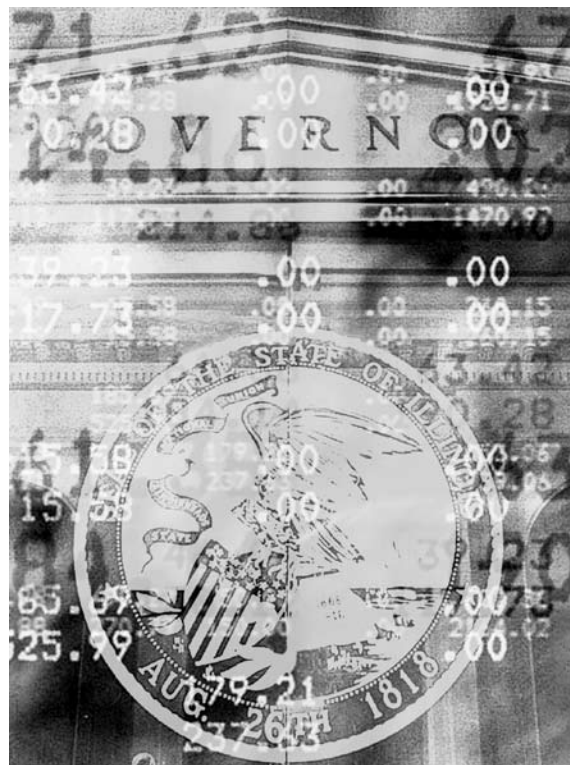
million annually. To save more money, Blagojevich proposed another round of early retirement offers to about 300 state employees.

To help the pension system, which he says his administration strengthened, he proposes earmarking proceeds from the state’s tenth casino license and from the sale of the state’s surplus property. Blagojevich also proposes making teachers work longer before they can get pensions.

Republican critics of his budget say the state has a large budget deficit and underfunded pensions, which need to be adequately funded before the state funds new programs. They say the budget also doesn’t adequately fund

the state’s Medicaid program. And they criticized some of the governor’s ideas to fund new programs, saying selling student loans and partly funding pensions with the state’s tenth casino license are short-term, one-time fixes that won’t do the job.

The state’s next fiscal year, 2007, begins July 1.



Statehouse Expert Tells Capitol Secrets



Photo courtesy of Jay Barnard, Senate Staff Photographer

“The old girl has a lot of secrets, but she doesn’t give them up very easily,” says Mal Hildebrand, referring to the Statehouse. He should know. He’s worked on the building for 36 years. In January, he retired as Director of the Office of the Capitol Architect.

He’s walked her catwalks, checked her high and low, and even knows her remote hiding places where “nobody could find you.”

During decades of caring for the building, Hildebrand discovered some of her “secrets.”

For one, she’s full of horsehair. “The plaster they used when they built the Statehouse (from 1868 to about 1877) was very soft,” he says. “In order to get something to hold it all together, they used horse hair religiously. They had an abundance of it... In some places they used straw... You take the original plaster down and you’re going to find horsehair in every square foot.” The building has “a lot” of original plaster, he adds.

The House chambers also had a functioning skylight at one time. “Up above the chambers, there’s still a frame for a skylight in the ceiling,” he says.

Another secret is the Statehouse had open sewers. While the idea is well, gross, Hildebrand jokes, “It beat having a bunch

of outhouses all over the capitol lawn!” The three feet wide, 12 to 16 inch deep, trough-like sewers were in the basement (which was originally the cellar). They ran out to Monroe Street to connect with the city’s main sewers, according to Hildebrand.

“When they had indoor plumbing then (in the 1870s), it really wasn’t more than an indoor outhouse. We found an old well around the crosswalks in the basement; it still had water and we had to fill it in. We ascertained that it was in close proximity to what were the men and women’s restrooms on the first and second floors when the capitol was first built. So they would pump the water (from the well) to wash out the open sewers into the street. Not pretty!”

The “old girl” frequently puzzled Hildebrand. “You never knew what you were going to find when you’d do a renovation or project,” he says. Once, when working on Senate offices, they tore a wall down to the original bricks. There, in the middle of the wall, was “an 8 by 8 by 12 horizontal oak beam, almost like a railroad tie,” he says. “No other wall had it.” To this day, no one knows why it was there, though Hildebrand believes it must have



Photo courtesy of Jay Barnard, Senate Staff Photographer

been for support. “They said, ‘What do you want to do with it?’, and I said, ‘Leave it alone!’”

Then there were the open channels in the exterior walls that ran from the basement to the attic. “For 25 years we wondered what in the world these things were,” Hildebrand says. They worked with an engineer and did some research and realized this was the building’s original ventilation system. There were no heating or air conditioning systems in the 1800s, so Statehouse planners built long open spaces in the exterior walls to circulate the air. “Warm air moves to the top, so it naturally helps the air keep moving,” he says.

Hildebrand says he’s “amazed” at what the building’s architect, John Cochran, and the builders accomplished. “They didn’t have laser saws, laser survey equipment, or diamond-tipped stone cutting tools, none of this stuff. They didn’t have cranes to lift 2,000 pound stones up and put them in place.” They built an earth ramp on the east lawn (now

facing Second Street), hauled stones up there, then used rope pulleys, horses, and wooden derricks to lift stones into place.

The original workmanship “cannot be equaled today,” Hildebrand says. “This is nothing against the trades people out there, but we do not have the craftsmanship today. If we do, it is in such limited supply.”

For example, the ornate plaster decorations in the capitol were originally made from hand carved, wooden molds. “During the 1970 restoration we brought back some of the old craftsmen to teach new craftsmen how to do (some of these skills),” he says. But now, most are “a lost art.”

During decades of overseeing the Statehouse, Hildebrand “had a love affair with the building,” he says. “It was the job of five lifetimes.”

A search is being held for his successor.



Capitol Matters

While construction on the new statehouse began in 1868, it wasn’t completely finished for nearly 20 years, according to an article by Mark Sorensen in the “Capitol Centennial Papers,” published by the Illinois State Archives in 1988.

The General Assembly met for the first time in the building on January 3, 1877. But, “the interior of the dome and rotunda were unfinished, and walls and ceilings throughout were drab and not yet decorated,” Sorensen writes.

The construction money was gone, however. At least a half million more dollars were needed to finish. Citizens voted on the matter in 1877 and refused the request, and did so again in 1882. Finally, the voters’ mood changed and in 1884 Illinoisans okayed the expenditure.

“The building was reopened to the public on January 1, 1887, as 144 gas jets illuminated the dome decorations while other lights above the stained glass allowed people to see clearly the state coat of arms,” Sorensen writes.

The statehouse had cost \$4.5 million.



Web Sightings: Voting Early?

If you want to vote early, need to vote absentee, or have other questions about voting in the state’s elections, call the Illinois State Board of Elections (217-782-4141) or check its Web site (www.elections.il.gov/).

The Web site has instructions for how to vote early for this year’s general election at: <http://www.elections.il.gov/VotingInformation/DownloadAbs.aspx>. This section also provides information about absentee voting and voting for those overseas, in the military, or in the hospital.

The Board of Election’s Web site has voter registration forms in English and Spanish, information about campaign disclosure, and it can determine your elected officials by your address.

www.elections.il.gov

For a Laugh: Ode to a Legislative Spouse

The following poem was published in the 1881 "History of Sangamon County, Illinois" (page 558). It was a parody of a popular temperance song that went, "Father, dear father, come home to me now." Supposedly it was written by the wife of a rural legislator who thought session was taking too long and needed her husband back home at the farm.

"Husband, dear husband, come home to me now,
From the city and State House so warm,
'Tis lonely without you, why do you not come
And see to the things on the farm?
You told me when you were elected last fall,
If I would but once let you go,
You'd surely return before April was past,
And I really believed 'twould be so.
Come home! Come home! Come home!
Dear husband, kind husband, come home.

"Husband, dear husband, come home to me now,
Come home e're the spring time is through;
The old brindle cow has got a white calf,
And the young lambs are bleating for you.
The hens have been setting a fortnight or more,

They soon will be off with their broods,
The old speckled turkey has stolen her nest
Away in the brakes or the woods.

"Husband, dear husband, come home to me now,
The garden needs spading for peas,
The boys should be picking up stones in the lot,
And you should be trimming the trees.
When will you get through with the bills and re-
solves,
Stop talking of license and rum,
Of railroads and tunnels, and other such things,
And tend to your business at home?"

"Husband, dear husband, don't write to me more
Of the theater, lobby and club,
Nor dinners you have eaten at Parker's and Young's
But hurry away from the hub.
Yes, hurry back home, your Betsy is sad,
Her heart so honest and true...

"Husband, dear husband, come home to me now...
The voice of your Betsy is calling you now,
Come home; for you know what it means,
I'm getting quite nervous about you -- come home!
And we will have cow-slips for greens.
Come home! Come home! Come home!
Dear husband, kind husband, come home!"



Transitions

On March 15, 2006 the Illinois Senate confirmed **Charles Box** as Chair of the Illinois Commerce Commission. He will serve until January 2009.



Tornado Relief

On March 12 two F2 category tornadoes ripped through Springfield and left many without homes or electricity. Hundreds of businesses were also devastated.

To help the storm victims, Springfield-area legislators are encouraging contributions for local relief efforts. If you wish to contribute, contact Rep. Raymond Poe's office at: 217/782-0044, Rep. Rich Brauer's office at: 217/782-0053, or Sen. Larry Bomke's office at: 217/782-0228 for more information.

