



Governor Ryan's Final Budget Address

In his final address to a joint session of the General Assembly on February 20th, 2002, Governor George Ryan offered little consolation that the economic picture would improve dramatically and so offered few new initiatives for Illinois citizens. Budget experts anticipate state revenues increasing about \$480 million, far less than what Illinois has witnessed in Ryan's first three years. In explaining the challenges presented in this budget, Ryan quotes

“the occasion is piled high with difficulty... we must rise to the occasion.”

*Governor Ryan quotes
Abraham Lincoln*

Lincoln “the occasion is piled high with difficulty... we must rise to the occasion.” The Governor made a point to say that tax increases are **not** part of his budget proposal, and not likely in an election year. One revenue enhancement offered is a temporary tax amnesty program (previously done in the 1980s), estimated to bring in \$35 million.

Ryan argues that education, human services, and homeland security are the main priorities in his Fiscal Year 2003 budget address. After introducing his family, (all but two attend this last State of the State), he launched into a preview for his \$52.8 billion dollar spending plan.

In the past few months, the Governor asked the General Assembly for authority to reduce the FY 2002 budget up to five percent to bring it back into balance. Ryan received no emergency budgetary powers, so the FY 2003 recommended appropriation for the General Revenue Fund (GRF) was set at \$22.7 billion, which is five per-

cent less than the FY 2002 state appropriation level of \$23.4 billion. During his speech, Ryan also recapped some of his notable achievements during his tenure as governor. These achievements include Illinois First, the Governor's \$12 billion infrastructure plan, better use of technology, and the continued moratorium on the death

penalty. He also made one more plea for passage of legislation extending human rights protection to gays and lesbians. Of the \$480 million projected new revenues for FY 2003, \$245 million (or 51%) is slated for schools. Governor Ryan has pledged at least 51% of new revenue for schools in each budget he proposed.

In his speech, Ryan called for a “historic” change in school funding, which involves

consolidating 22 categorical grant programs for school districts into a General State Aid Program. Almost \$500 million from the consolidated grants will be pooled into the General State Aid. The foundational level (per student spending) will increase then from \$4560 to almost \$5000. Ryan maintains this change will afford school districts the chance to determine how money is spent at the local level, allowing the districts increased flexibility. Currently, categorical grants can only be used for specific purposes.

Governor Ryan mentioned repeatedly in the address his concern for families. Supporting this idea, he enu-



Photo courtesy of the IIS.

merated a number of programmatic changes affecting every member of a family from the very young to the elderly. He targeted \$6 million to initiate a universal preschool program and offered continued funding for health care coverage to low-income children through KidCare. Ryan also sought implementation of FamilyCare, a program that extends health care coverage for up to 200,000 parents/guardians of children in KidCare. The Governor proposed to implement SeniorCare, which allows low-income seniors to purchase prescription drugs at a low cost, and people receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) will see a 10% increase in the amount they receive under this budget plan.

Other elements of the budget address include the following:

- Reduce State workforce by 3,800
- Closing the Vienna Correctional Center in Southern Illinois and Valley View Youth Center in suburban St. Charles
- Close Zeller Mental Health Center in Peoria and the developmental disabilities unit of the Singer

Mental Health Center in Rockford

- Downsize the Elgin Mental Health Center by 75 beds
- Delay opening date by a year of maximum security prison near the northwestern Illinois town of Thomson
- Cut Medicaid payments by \$757 million
- Add 100 new officers, hire 80 new forensic scientists, and update communications system



Photo from the 1973-74 Illinois Blue Book

Governor George Ryan's State Level Political Career

1973-1983 House of Representatives
 1981-1983 Speaker of the House
 1983-1991 Lieutenant Governor
 1991-1999 Secretary of State
 1999-Present Governor



The Historymakers of Black History

Believe it or not, Americans have been celebrating black history for three quarters of a century. In 1926, Negro History Week was designated at the prompting of a Dr. Carter Woodson, a former slave and Harvard educated scholar. Eventually, Negro History week expanded to Black History Month. Thanks in part to this month-long celebration of African American accomplishments, the average American has become familiarized with Martin Luther King Jr., Frederick Douglass, and George Washington Carver. In fact, Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech has become a literary icon of American history. But is it time to expand the canon of African American historical figures we regularly honor throughout February? Julieanna Richardson, founder and executive director of the Historymakers considered this question and others in establishing the Illinois not-for-profit organization.

Founded in 1999, the Historymakers is the brainchild of Julieanna Richardson, a Harvard educated attorney and seasoned television producer. The primary mission of the Historymakers is to foster awareness of the significant contributions famous and not so famous

African Americans have made to American history. These contributions are recorded by interviewing both the well-known and unsung African American heroes. Richardson's ultimate goal is to create a video archive of 5000 interviews over the next five years.

A strong desire to leave some sort of legacy is what prompted Richardson to initiate this daunting project. She had come to a stage in her life when she started to think about what impact she might have on the world around her. She had become concerned with the images of African Americans available for the public's consumption. Richardson began to explore whether any interest existed for this project and whether an archive already existed. The lack of such an archive led to the development of the Historymakers. Richardson explains the need for an archive in that the African American community has had a long oral tradition, but has not typically documented their stories in any other form of media. She believes this video archiving project goes a long way toward documenting the African American experience.

As of February 2002, over 150 people have been interviewed, and Richardson wants to complete another

500 by the end of the year. She has completed all the interviews herself so far. Eventually, the organization wants to establish eight to ten teams to field 200 interviews each, so that in the fifth year alone, Richardson hopes to complete 2000 interviews. She emphasizes that “we can’t do that right away, we must go gradually into the process.” She wants to make sure that everybody has the proper training to make sure that the Historymakers maintains a high quality of work. Additionally, the Historymakers needs to have the resources to take the project to that level.

Richardson defines a historymaker as an African American by descent who has made important accomplishments in his or her own life or someone who is affiliated with a movement, organization or association that is important to the African American community. With the Historymakers, she wants to get outside the typical experience of what has been written about African Americans thus far. “There are a lot of slave histories – records about the slave experience.” Richardson wants to go beyond the scope of well-known persons we all have learned about and the slave histories or records. She wants “to find the little known but important person in African American communities.”

The Process

Each interviewee goes through the same process. They fill out a questionnaire, sign a release and bring 15 to 20 photos to the interview. The photos are videotaped and returned to the person during the interview. The interview typically lasts from 2 ½ to four hours. Julieanna has developed an effective system for interviewing. First, she has the interviewee reflect on childhood experiences; she asks about sights, smells, sounds reminding him or her of childhood. The Historymakers maintains a small crew at the interview to help put the person at ease. She believes the successful interview occurs when she just

disappears and “it is the person there and he or she is brought back into the moment, and tears of remembrance come to their eyes when they recall something poignant or maybe something painful. I am looking for that magical moment.”

The next stage of the interview focuses on the parts of history the people being interviewed have observed, as well as their particular contributions or their role in history. She then asks a philosophical question – for every person it will be different depending on whether they are writers or politicians. The question will reveal something about their belief systems or possibly their hopes for the future. She concludes with a legacy question – what they want to be remembered for. What she wants “is the people telling their story in their own words, captured on video, where their personalities come out and you can actually see the twinkle in their eyes.” Parts of the interviews, as well as biographies, a timeline, and glossary of terms, are available over the Internet at www.thehistorymakers.com.

The Historymakers is funded by a variety of sources, including the State of Illinois, Illinois Humanities Council, the Chicago Community Trust, the Joyce Foundation and the Knight Foundation. So far \$1.7 million has been raised, \$700,000 of it from the State of Illinois. As a not-for-profit, the Historymakers is always seeking ways to gain support for the project. Ultimately, after all the interviews are completed, she would love to see the video archive established in Chicago. Another of her long-term goals is the creation of digital archives at various locations around the country at historically black institutions. Richardson expresses tremendous enthusiasm and a great sense of satisfaction from this experience. “Hearing all the stories and meeting these people has enriched my life in ways I couldn’t imagine.”



Pioneers in the Struggle - Illinois' Rich Legislative Heritage

In addition to the monumental task of creating a video archive, the Historymakers has also undertaken to document the history of black legislators who have served in the Illinois General Assembly. Only one other state to date, Maryland, has made such a tool available to the public. The project titled *Pioneers in the Struggle* evolved from conversations Richardson had with Senate Democratic leader Emil Jones, Jr. He had developed

an educational pamphlet celebrating the long history of black legislators in Illinois from 1877, when the first black legislator John W.E. Thomas served (See February 27, 1998 Cook-Witter Report – Volume 13, Number 12.) to 2001. At this time, sixteen representatives and eight senators are black legislators serving in the Illinois General Assembly. Jones’ pamphlet has been brought to life with the creation of the video *Pioneers*

in the Struggle. The project also includes an interactive CD-ROM and classroom curriculum guide. Eventually, the video will be distributed at no charge to schools throughout the state. Currently, the Chicago Metro History Fair is conducting teacher training sessions around the state to make sure information is disseminated correctly.

For this video project, the Historymakers interviewed 26 legislators and five scholar consultants. The video highlights the challenges blacks have faced in trying to gain a voice in the political process, as well as the milestones that have paved the way for increased power and influence for black legislators. *Pioneers in the Struggle* discusses the gradual formation of the black caucus, the events surrounding Cecil ParTEE's appointment as the first black Senate President, and the increasing presence of black legislators in the General Assembly. The video deals with general shifts in how politics has changed, as well as specific anecdotes about various politicians. The screening of this documentary, which chronicled the careers of 117 state legislators, took place

in October 2001. The event was hosted by such political leaders as Governor George Ryan, Mayor Richard M. Daley, County Board President John Stroger, Jr., and the four Illinois legislative leaders.

According to Richardson, more original research was necessary than she thought would be needed prior to the making of *Pioneers in the Struggle*. "It involved much more work because there just wasn't anything at the State Archives on these legislators. Leading up this project, Richardson kept hearing stories about parents struggling to find subject matter on African Americans for their kids and "the same names in history were mentioned repeatedly." According to Richardson, when parents discover that the history of black legislators actually goes back to the 19th century, they are surprised, expecting it only to go back as far as the 1920s or 30s. *Pioneers in the Struggle* reveals that students today have access to an abundant supply of Illinois African American figures, past and present, which have been and remain a force in shaping our communities and forming the policies that govern our lives.



Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration

Illinois' Comptroller Daniel W. Hynes met with various Lincoln experts and scholars on February 11, 2002, the eve of Lincoln's birthday, to discuss the coming bicentennial of Lincoln's birthday. Governor George Ryan appointed Hynes chairman of the state's Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, the group in charge of organizing the festivities. Governor Ryan serves as honorary chair. All current and former senators and governors were also asked to serve in an honorary capacity. Hynes is planning statewide celebrations and will be working with the federal Lincoln Bicentennial Commission to plan for the event to be held in the year 2009.



PEOPLE IN TRANSITION

Former Cook-Witter intern **Jeremy Lloyd** is an Assistant States Attorney working in the Randolph County States Attorney's office.

Former Cook-Witter intern **Scott Hallaron** now works on the Senate Democratic staff.



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