



the

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Blagojevich Delivers His First State of the State Address

Governor Blagojevich addressed the Illinois General Assembly and constitutional officers in the House chamber when he delivered his first State of the State address as governor at noon on Wednesday, March 12. In recent years, governors have combined their state of the state and budget addresses, but the legislature granted Governor Blagojevich permission to delay his budget address until April 9. The Governor promises to “present a balanced budget in full, comprehensive detail” on that date. Nevertheless, the Governor’s audience most likely listened with rapt attention to hear whether or not Blagojevich would discuss the budget during his 45 minute speech. The Governor acknowledged the budget crisis, stating at one point that it is the largest budget deficit in the state’s history at nearly \$5 billion. He also assured his audience that a sales or income tax increase will not be a part of the plan to solve the state’s budget crisis. Thus far, the only insight Governor Blagojevich has offered into resolving part of the budgetary problems is bond issuance. He suggests that Illinois issue \$10 billion worth of bonds to be repaid over 25 years. Of the \$10 billion, approximately \$2 billion would be placed in the pension funds for the next fiscal year for mandated contributions. The remaining amount would be invested to pay off the total of \$10 billion. The bond legislation passed both chambers with the required three-fifths vote and now goes to the Governor for his signature.

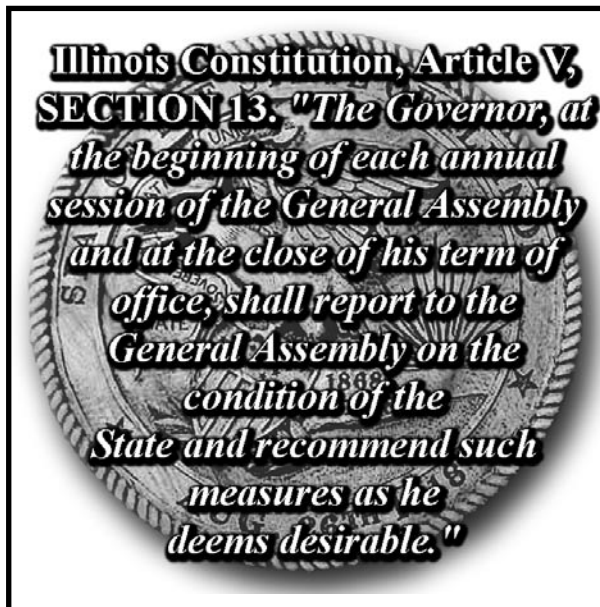
The Governor offered a recap of his accomplishments during his first couple of months in office, namely his efforts to clean up the ethics of state government. Governor

Blagojevich pointed out in his address that he has taken strides to reform and raise the ethical standards within state government. Reducing the size of some boards and commissions, consolidating others, and eliminating the pay for members of 11 boards and commissions all are part of Blagojevich’s plan to change the way government operates. Other recent Blagojevich initiatives include mandating ethics training for state employees; instituting a board of ethics for state employees; offering whistleblower protections for those employees reporting corruption; restrict-

ing compensation for cashed in unused vacation time; and reducing administrative costs at state universities, and asking for a ten percent administrative cut for all departments and state agencies under his control. Touching on a subject dear to former Governor George Ryan, Governor Blagojevich reiterated his support for the death penalty, while also maintaining the moratorium until the system is reformed.

Instead of dwelling on the budget issue though, Governor Blagojevich primarily chose to preview a wish list of new programs he hopes to see implemented.

He seeks to initiate some of the programs and projects in the very near future. The Governor admitted that his agenda has been curtailed somewhat due to the budget crisis. According to the Governor’s office, the projected cost for the proposals total \$88 million. Governor Blagojevich quantified his goals for Illinois under four categories: education, jobs, health care, and public safety. Following are some of the programs or goals the Governor would like to establish in each subject area.



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Jobs

Expansion of emerging nanotechnology (atoms being used in real-world situations) and exploring other new technologies were highlights of the Governor's desire to ensure Illinois' status as the "silicon prairie." To this end, Blagojevich proposes initiating legislation to create the Illinois Opportunity Fund to encourage private investment. His venture capital program would create a \$200 million fund of private investments to promote new businesses in Illinois. He anticipates this program will be up and running in a year.

Entrepreneurship centers or centers providing training, resources, and 400 assistance grants worth \$5000 each to entrepreneurs around the state are on Blagojevich's list of planned projects. According to the Governor, the first center will be operational in two months. Six centers will be established in the following locations: Rock Valley College (Rockford); University of Illinois (Urbana/Champaign); University of Illinois (Chicago); Western Illinois University (Macomb); and Southern Illinois University (Carbondale and Edwardsville). Governor Blagojevich hopes to have 20 such centers in place within two years.

The Governor also suggested the pursuit of clean coal technology in order to revitalize Illinois' coal industry. The Governor wants power companies to take advantage of \$800 million in financial incentives to invest in clean coal technology. According to Governor Blagojevich, 20,000 new jobs could result from this plan.

Increasing the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.50, making Illinois one of a handful of states above the federally-established standard, and expanding O'Hare Airport round out Blagojevich's hopes to boost Illinois' economy through business ventures and incentives. The Governor maintains that increasing goods and people passing through O'Hare could lead to 195,000 new jobs and \$20 billion in economic growth.

Education

During his first State of the State address, the Governor proposed a number of ways to promote his educational agenda. Fostering communication among parents, teachers, and children by various means ranks high as one of the Governor's goals. Creating a new Web-based system to allow parents to access information from the Internet about their children's classroom activities, homework, and attendance is just one proposed communication tool Governor Blagojevich had to offer. Another suggestion

was providing all teachers with voicemail to facilitate responses to parents' questions and concerns. Additionally, Blagojevich is a proponent of expanding unpaid leave time for parents from eight hours to three days a year to help parents participate in their children's school activities.

The Governor's other ideas dealt specifically with improving the educational system. He would like to see universal preschool implemented; citing the budget crisis, the Governor acknowledged that this idea would be unrealistic at this time. However, he believes, at the very least, all at-risk preschoolers, estimated at 25,000 in number, should receive a preschool education within three years.

His final program would address an impending teacher shortage. The Illinois Future Teacher Corps, a new scholarship program, is the Governor's proposed solution to this problem. Annual scholarships of \$5,000 each would be given to college juniors and seniors who agree to teach for five years in Illinois public schools in shortage subject areas (e.g., science, reading, early childhood) or in geographic areas experiencing teacher shortages.

Health Care

The new governor also addressed ways to improve the quality of life for senior citizens in Illinois during his speech. The Governor urged lawmakers to pursue legislation creating a senior citizens discount card to pool purchasing power for all over-the-counter drug purchases. He also called for expanding the Circuit Breaker program to include more senior citizens. To confront the issue of rising drug costs, the Governor promises to sign an executive order creating a Special Advocate to negotiate better prices on the nearly \$2 billion worth of prescription drugs purchased by the state. Currently, the Governor finds that Illinois has the worst record in the nation in terms of rebates on drug purchases. Illinois gets 1.7% compared to the 10% received by other states.

The final component of his health care agenda deals with health care services in general. This would entail expanding KidCare program coverage to provide health care for more than 20,000 children and Family Care expansion up to 300,000 families within three years.

Public Safety

Governor Blagojevich emphasized the need to step up the fight against drugs as the final item in his State of the State address. Reopening the Sheri-

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dan Correctional Center as a drug offender rehabilitation facility is just one aspect of Blagojevich's war on drugs in Illinois.

Project X is a program the Governor supports to combat drug sales and usage. It involves cracking down on suppliers and users of Ecstasy and other "club drugs" and increasing participation in the Club Drugs Task Force, which consists of federal, state and local law enforcement officials. As part of Project X, undercover state police officers will target club drug traffickers on college campuses. This program will also target parents and children with a statewide awareness campaign exposing the dangers of club drugs. Project X was prompted by a 71% increase in club drug usage by teenagers since 1999.

On the Illinois Homeland Security front, the Governor announced the creation of a Statewide Terror-

ism Intelligence Center to be located in Springfield. It will provide around-the-clock access for terrorism-related intelligence queries for all law enforcement agencies. The Center will centralize and improve terrorism-related information sharing between federal and state law enforcement agencies.

As a final measure, Governor Blagojevich introduced Operation Spotlight, calling for doubling the number of parole agents within the next four years from 370 to 740 and increasing the required meetings between parole agents and parolees after release.

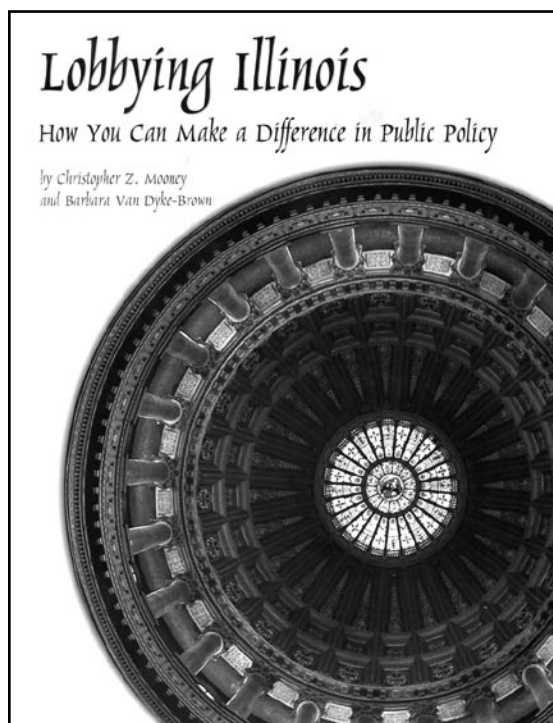


A New Resource For Lobbyists and People Interested in the Political Process

Lobbying Illinois: How You Can Make a Difference in Public Policy is the recently published collaborative effort of Barbara Van Dyke-Brown and Christopher Mooney to explain the field of lobbying Illinois' state government. *Lobbying Illinois* offers the reader clear direction, a road map of sorts of forms, processes and traditions of the statehouse. *Lobbying Illinois* includes the do's and don'ts of lobbying, the various types of lobbying, and different tactics and strategies at a lobbyist's disposal. One chapter provides a discussion of how the administrative rulemaking process should be a part of lobbyists' repertoire in pursuing their agenda. The last chapter contains a thorough list of resources available to a lobbyist or anyone interested in state

government. Perhaps, most importantly, this work offers the laws and ethics applicable to lobbying.

Lobbying Illinois: How You Can Make a Difference in Public Policy is published by the Institute for Legislative Studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield, now part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Center for Governmental Studies. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of *Lobbying Illinois: How You Can Make a Difference in Public Policy* can call (217) 206-6574. The book can be purchased for \$20. Payment can be made by check and sent to the Institute for Legislative Studies, PAC 466, One University Plaza, Springfield, IL 62703-5407.



Blagojevich Names Agency Directors

Timothy Martin – Department of Transportation

Michael Fenger – Department of Labor

Michael Rumman – Department of Central Management Services

Brenda Russell – Department of Employment Security

Gary Wright - Department of Nuclear Safety

Carol Adams – Department of Human Services

Brian Hamer – Department of Revenue

Jack Hartman – Illinois Toll Highway Authority

Rocco Claps – Department of Human Rights

Barry Maram – Department of Public Aid

Jack Lavin – Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (formerly Department of Commerce and Community Affairs)

Charles Johnson – Department on Aging

Renee Cipriano - Environmental Protection Agency

J. Anthony Clark – Department of Insurance

Roy L. Dolgos – Department on Veterans' Affairs

Joel Brunsvold – Department of Natural Resources

Larry G. Trent – Illinois State Police

Dr. Eric E. Whitaker – Department of Public Health

William Burke – Illinois Emergency Management Agency

Thomas Jennings – Acting Director of the Department of Agriculture

Edgar Lopez – Acting Director of Department of Financial Institutions



Blagojevich Appointees

Alonzo Monk – Chief of Staff

Bradley Tusk – Deputy Governor for Policy and Communications

Cheryle Jackson – Communications Director

Susan Lichtenstein – General Counsel

John Filan – Budget Director

Margaret Houlihan – Deputy Chief of Staff for Intergovernmental Affairs

Joe Handley – Deputy Chief of Staff for Legislative Affairs

Louanner Peters – Deputy Chief of Staff for Social Services

Carl Hawkinson – Deputy Chief of Staff for Public Safety

Former Representative **Julie Curry** – Deputy Chief of Staff for Economic Development and Labor

Dennis Ruth – Chair of the Illinois Industrial Commission

Edward Hurley – Chair of the Illinois Commerce Commission

Former Director of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency **Mike Chamness** – Chair of the Illinois Terrorism Task Force

Former Congressman **David Phelps** – Assistant Secretary of the Department of Transportation

Jacqueline Kinnaman – Member of the Illinois Industrial Commission

Velma Butler – Member of the Illinois Housing Development Authority

People In Transition

Representative **Joel Brunsvold** (D-Milan) is retiring after 20 years in office to become the Director at the Department of Natural Resources. **Patrick Verschoore**, a business manager for the pipe trades union in the Quad Cities, has been named to take the vacant House seat.

