

OPINION



“The Journal paper
was always my friend...”
— A. Lincoln, June 18, 1864

“We want the Register to
be the people’s paper.”
— Publisher’s statement June 19, 1881

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OUR VIEW

Mark Kirk’s filter problem

History has shown you never know what might come out of U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk’s mouth. It could be a falsehood, a stretch of the truth or a really bad attempt at humor.

Lately, odds are it may be something insensitive. Not good for a Republican who is up for re-election in 2016 and is considered one of the nation’s most vulnerable senators.

Kirk was captured by a live mic on Thursday calling fellow Republican senator and presidential candidate Lindsey Graham a “bro with no ho.” Graham, a bachelor, had joked in an interview about having a “rotating first lady” at the White House should he be elected, and those comments were published Tuesday.

Kirk, whose comments were made during a Senate committee meeting, then added, “That’s what we’d say on the South Side,” apparently a reference to some of Chicago’s racially diverse neighborhoods. “Ho,” for those who may be puzzled, is slang for prostitute.

A spokeswoman for Kirk later said it was a joke between friends, and Kirk apologized for offending anyone. “Anyone” takes in a pretty wide swath of the population: African-Americans, women and everyone else who doesn’t consider such comedy to be funny.

Now do we believe Kirk was the first guy to break out that line or something like it? It’s doubtful that he was. But he’s a U.S.

senator who was caught saying it, and now he has to be accountable for it. In addition, it was uttered by a member of a political party that’s desperate to attract women and minorities to its ranks.

The real problem is that Kirk — a fiscal conservative and social moderate — made another racially insensitive remark earlier this year, when he suggested people drive faster through black neighborhoods.

“With this state and all of its resources, we could sponsor a whole new class of potential innovators like George Washington Carver and eventually have a class of African-American billionaires,” he told the Peoria Journal Star. “That would really adjust income differentials and make the diversity and outcome of the state much better so that the black community is not the one we drive faster through.”

Kirk suffered a debilitating stroke in 2012, and

Kirk was captured by a live mic on Thursday calling fellow Republican senator and presidential candidate Lindsey Graham a “bro with no ho.”



Kirk

he has made a remarkable recovery. The stroke affected his speech, and he sometimes uses a wheelchair and a cane to help him get around.

Some were surprised by his decision to run for re-election, but he’s always been considered a hard worker.

But he was saying controversial things well before 2012, when he served in the U.S. House. He’s exaggerated his military record. He’s called for a mass roundup of Illinois gang members. He’s complained about “political correctness” overtaking climate science. He’s mistakenly claimed Nelson Mandela dismantled South Africa’s nuclear program.

Every once in a while a politician comes along who can blurt out whatever is on his or her mind, and it can be effective if it doesn’t include insulting large segments of the population under the guise of a joke. People love to watch a politician without a filter, but there’s a line.

Kirk has made enough gaffes through the years to leave us wondering if his sense of humor is that bad or if he’s just that insensitive. Either way, it’s beneath him, and it’s just not acceptable in this day and age.

Earlier this year, Kirk told the Associated Press he believes the stroke raised his public profile in a way that could give him an advantage over political challengers in 2016.

“Now I’m definitely a disabled American with a wheelchair,” he said. “That makes me not quite the demonizable Republican candidate that you would think.”

Time will tell how much of an issue voters will make of Kirk’s faux pas.

Our advice to the junior senator from Illinois? Think a bit more before speaking, for heaven’s sake, and assume every microphone is on. These kinds of blunders stand only to damage his reputation and to drag the Republican Party down with him.

ANOTHER VIEW



Edgar says there’s time, but don’t get personal

Former Gov. **JIM EDGAR** said he hopes that neither side in the standoff between Republican Gov. **BRUCE RAUNER** and the Democrats who run the House and Senate wants the govern-



Rauner

ment to shut down due to a budget impasse.

“I have no reason to think they do,” said Edgar, a Republican who was governor from 1991 to 1999 and had to work with a Democratic-controlled legislature during his first two years as chief executive.

“The governor shouldn’t want that because he’s the governor,” Edgar said. “He’s responsible for running state government. And I don’t think the Democrats do. I think you’ve got a little bit of ... testing the new governor, and the new governor is kind of figuring out how the process works.”

Both sides know they have time, Edgar said, as the new fiscal year doesn’t start until July 1. He said things may “really start piling up” by the second week of July if there is no agreed-to budget.

“When I went through it my first year, I mean, it was the third week of July before



Madigan

(MICHAEL) MADIGAN and I finally worked things out,” he said of the then-and-now House speaker from Chicago.

But Edgar said he thinks it is “important that they lower the rhetoric, they stop talking about each other.”

Edgar said he wasn’t pointing fingers at either side. But his comments came the same week that Rauner, at a news conference on the Executive Mansion grounds, spoke of alleged personal conflicts of Democratic leaders, including Madigan’s law firm that helps clients seek lower property tax assessments.

“The lobbyists, the cronies, the patronage workers, the bureaucrats, the government insiders, they’re doing well under Speaker Madigan,” Rauner told reporters, “and Speaker Madigan is leading the pack. He makes



BERNARD SCHOENBURG

millions of dollars from the status quo in Illinois.”

Madigan later met the press and said that for decades he has imposed “strict requirements on myself and on my law firm” to ensure ethical conduct. He said, for example, “If a client requests an intercession with a state agency, I refuse.” And he characterized his firm’s work as correcting errors in assessments. He also said name-calling “doesn’t do any good for the legislative process.”

Madigan said in an interview on WGN-AM 720 at the end of May that Rauner had taken actions that “clearly look like the things that were done by **ROD BLAGOJEVICH** when he was in office, and I just don’t think Illinois needs Rod Blagojevich back on the scene.” He included negotiating positions that Rauner has taken.

“It makes it hard to compromise and work things out if you let this get very personal,” Edgar said last week, “and I just think they need to be very careful on that.”

Edgar said he is encouraged that Democrats are talking about the need to cut spending and that the governor has said he understands a need to raise revenue.

“That’s huge, the fact that they both have acknowledged that they’re going to do what they basically don’t want to do,” Edgar said.

The former governor said back in early 2014 that he agreed with then-Gov. **PAT QUINN**, a Democrat, that the state income tax should stay at 5 percent for individuals. Instead, as Rauner advocated, the increase was allowed to sunset, bringing the level to 3.75 percent Jan. 1 and taking in billions of dollars less per year for the state.

“I think it was a mistake, but both sides were involved,” Edgar said. While Rauner was asking that the tax rollback be allowed, Edgar said, Democrats still could have acted.

Edgar had backed former state Sen. **KIRK DILLARD**, R-Hinsdale, for governor, and during that GOP primary campaign, according to a Chicago Sun-Times story, Edgar said that Rauner’s campaign had appealed to those in the top tier of income.

“You just can’t be governor for a bunch of rich Republicans,” Edgar said then.

Asked about that last week, Edgar, who campaigned for Rauner in the general election, said he thinks Rauner is “very sincere on this economic turnaround that it’s going to help the entire state, not just a few rich businessmen.”

“Saying that, we’re all creatures of our environment, where we came from,” Edgar added. “So ... he’s going to be a little more business oriented.” Edgar similarly thinks Madigan would be committed to “labor guys” and plaintiffs’ attorneys.

Edgar, who had been a lawmaker and secretary of state before becoming governor, said as a “creature of government,” his top priority was “running state government in an efficient manner.”

He said that as crunch times comes, those negotiating a budget need to determine what they “absolutely have to have” while taking into consideration, “What can the other side just absolutely not give you?”

Rauner has sought changes that would erode some union strength, including giving local governments the ability to do projects without paying the prevailing wage.

“There’s no doubt that’s near and dear to the Democrats, anything to do with the unions,” Edgar said. And while Rauner has made it clear he won’t get everything he has wanted, Edgar said there is “no doubt he definitely stirred up a hornets’ nest, to some extent, with labor.”

Rauner has backed off calls for right-to-work zones in the state.

Edgar knows the budget process this year will be hard.

“You can’t cut this budget really without impacting human services and education,” he said. “That’s where all the money goes to. So

there’s going to be some unhappy people, I’m sure, when it’s all said and done.”

But, he added, “I don’t think that either side ought to convince themselves ... that the other guy is evil or doesn’t care about the people they care about.

“As I always tell students,” said Edgar, a Springfield resident and a distinguished fellow with the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois, “a lot of folks come at things from a different direction. You just got to figure out where they have some common ground and go from there.”

Remembering Dart

Former Springfield lobbyist **BILL DART** brought others



Dart

agents, engineers and manufacturers.

Dart, who moved with his wife, **CAROL**, to Arizona in the late 1990s, died June 4 at his home in Oro Valley. He was 85.

“He took a lot of folks who were young in the process ... and in many cases were naive ... and he turned us into seasoned professionals in a very short period of time,” said **MARK BIEL**, who worked with Dart at the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association and is now executive director of the Chemical Industry Council of Illinois. “He was a throwback, maybe, to a bygone era where people could be friends at night and fight during the day. But he was less concerned about Republicans and Democrats, and he was much more concerned about defending and protecting manufacturing.”

Carol Dart, who was also a Springfield lobbyist, said her husband, a Marine Corps veteran who served during the Korean War, also had been on a planning commission in Arizona.

“Bill Dart did it his way — kind of like Frank Sinatra,” she said.

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Letters to the editor are welcome and will be considered for print and digital publication. They should be no more than 250 words maximum and include the writer’s full name, address and daytime number. Only original work is accepted, and each writer may submit one per month.

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OPINION

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Huge jolt on highway gives reminder of news impact

It had been a long, frustrating day, and in my mind, I was perfectly justified in feeling quite grumpy.

My flight to St. Louis had been canceled. My rebooked flight left LaGuardia nearly four hours late. The shuttle for airport parking took forever to pick me up. I was tired and all I wanted was to go home.

It was after 11 p.m. when the Farmersville exit flashed past as I drove north on Interstate 55. Only 18 miles to Toronto Road, and at 70 mph I'd be home in less than 30 minutes. Finally.

Then, a huge jolt as I hit the deer, even before my brain could fully register what it was. Airbag exploding, smoke, and oh my God, is that a car flipping in front of me? Please don't let me hit it, I thought, jerking the wheel to the left.

I came to rest in the center median and jumped out of the car, dazed. That's when I saw the young woman running



ANGIE MUHS

away from her car. Thank God, she's moving, she's OK, we're all OK, I thought. And then she began screaming a young man's name in anguish.

"Where are you? He flew out of the car! Where is he?"

He was lying on the side of the road, badly hurt. As The State Journal-Register reported the next day, the young woman, who was from Chicago, had swerved to miss the deer that I hit. She lost control, and her Toyota skidded and flipped. The back-seat passenger was thrown through the back window.

The news feels a lot different when you're in the middle of it.

As I watched another passenger and other motorists work to clear his

airway and perform CPR, I relayed information to the 911 dispatcher. I'm sure I must have told her at least five times how they had to hurry, how badly he needed care. I started to cry, afraid this young man, who I'd never met, would die there in front of us.

After he was rushed away, I talked to one of the other people from the car. He told me about their trip, how they too were tired and heading home. I marveled he had the kindness to ask if I was OK, too. We introduced ourselves and we hugged each other, hard.

I didn't take pictures or take notes. I didn't tweet about the interstate being shut down. I didn't even think about this being a story. In short, I pretty much dropped the ball as a journalist. But I hope I did OK as a human. I've wondered since if there was something more I could have, should have done.

If the young man or his family happens to read this, I want them to know how much I've thought

about him and hope for his full recovery. I'm so grateful for the Farmersville-Waggoner Volunteer Fire Department, the sheriff's deputy who'd just gotten off his shift but came to help, the Illinois State Police, and the other motorists who rendered aid.

I shudder to think how I probably would have felt frustrated if I'd been caught in the traffic jam behind the accident. I hope I've come away with a lasting perspective about what really constitutes a problem. "How awful!" several people have said when they heard I hit a deer. "How lucky I am," I say back, and I mean it.

For this journalist, it was a searing reminder of how even the most "routine" news item is about real people whose lives have been changed, sometimes in seconds. That is something I hope I never forget.

— *Contact executive editor Angie Muhs: 788-1505, angie.muhs@sj-r.com, twitter.com/amuhs.*

Fulgenzi deal worth scrutinizing

This is a rebuttal to the June 7 editorial, "In Ward 4, much ado about nothing."

This matter concerns preferential treatment and reduced representation, and is very much ado about something. At least, the 151 people who have signed a petition so far and the five people who spoke at the May 19 city council meeting think so.

The general public didn't know there was a city law prohibiting someone from holding the office of alderman if they had a liquor license. How could they, since some aldermen didn't know about it either, which is why former city attorney Todd Greenburg had to explain the ordinance to them at the April 28 committee of the whole? Even Fulgenzi didn't know about it, he said in a radio



DAVE VARNER

interview.

Better questions are why wasn't this raised by those in the know during the election so the average voter could be informed? And if changing this law is really no big deal, why didn't the council, mayor or city attorney propose changing the ordinance during the election instead of immediately after?

City ordinance 168-05-15 specifically prohibits Fulgenzi from participating in any "meetings, hearings or decisions on matters impacting the

manufacture, sale or distribution of alcoholic liquor." This language is to prevent perceived conflicts of interest, whether voting at city council or participating in other meetings that might affect voting.

If Fulgenzi wants to accept the protection this ordinance provides him, then he has to accept its conditions and restrictions. He can't have it both ways. Liquor and gaming are common issues that will surface over his four-year term. At his first council meeting May 19, he was restricted from voting on three out of five zoning issues because of liquor implications.

If this doesn't register on city hall's top list of shenanigans, as the editorial asserted, then we all should be ashamed and more watchful of what goes on

there. Changing the alderman eligibility rules the day of the inauguration, and reducing our alderman's ability to represent us after the election? That's not the kind of government we deserve and not the kind those signing the petition will accept.

The petition will continue until Mayor Langfelder enacts a plan to address our concerns, which he promised to do at the May 19 council meeting, or until Fulgenzi divests himself of his liquor and gaming licenses.

Most issues at city hall come with a price tag. This issue is about integrity, trust and fairness. How much is that worth?

— *Dave Varner is a Ward 4 resident and was a candidate for alderman in the spring election.*

YOUR VIEWS

Best Wal-Mart fashion statement? A smile

I greatly enjoyed Lynn McCann's sartorial tongue-in-cheek review of the Wal-Mart associates' fashion parade ("Wal-Mart associates need a fashion intervention," May 31).

At my Wal-Mart in Carlinville, associates wear a dark navy blue, well-fitted, not-ostentatious vest-tunic that clearly identifies them as such and, for the most part, looks quite sharp.

We have one fellow who frequently shops here who is quite a wit. He suggested we employ a greeter in full formal coat, tails and gloves resembling the late-Victorian or Edwardian style. He would be holding a polished silver serving platter, offering guests a chilled glass of French champagne as they enter.

I explained it might offend some of our more conservative shoppers. He pulled a large American flag from his pocket and waved it around, nearly ranting about civil rights and freedom, all while getting louder and louder. Fearing a scene, I quietly explained the valet with the welcoming drink was a most

excellent and original idea, but we'd probably have to triple the price of the feline food his little pets are so fond of.

"Oh," he said quietly, respectfully folded his flag, returned it to his pocket, shrugged his shoulders and went off to purchase his customary four cans of mid-price, good-quality cat food.

So, you see, we have to balance our decisions between not offending customers and trying to keep our prices competitive while trying to keep associates happy and cheerful, even when they might not feel fully up to it. "Brave face," I tell them. "This is who we are, and this is what we have to work with. We will do at least our best with that and sometimes, maybe, even a little better. And remember, children, a smile never goes out of style."

Mark B. Bersch
Carlinville

Weak arguments against raising minimum wage

Opponents of raising the minimum wage have only weak arguments at best.

To suggest jobs will be lost

is historically not true and comical when these same people watched hundreds of factories move overseas, taking thousands of jobs away from American workers. To say the Earned Income Credit is a better fix is a contradiction when these same people preach about smaller government and sounds socialistic. If the government pays the wages, why not give the entire business to Uncle Sam?

In the 1960s and 1970s, the rule of thumb was that one month's rent should not be more than one week's salary. To rent a small house or apartment for \$500 per month would require a wage of \$12.50 per hour.

Are we there yet?

Dan Lutkowski
Springfield

Double standards in policing and media

The mayhem in Waco, Texas, which also took place in Ferguson, New York and Baltimore, to some extent pictures the racial divide that plagues this country.

Treyvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray — all black males,

all now deceased at the hands of zealous (perhaps too kind a description) police. And for what?

Now turn your eyes to the biker brawl in Waco, where the carnage left nine dead and scores wounded. There, the police reacted only to gang members who threatened their lives. The aforementioned black men, also known as "thugs" on social media, posed no physical threat to anyone.

The Bandidos, Cosacks and Hell's Angels are, more often than not, portrayed as counterculture and are, in fact, often romanticized. Seldom mentioned is their involvement in narcotics trafficking, prostitution and other criminal rackets. Make no mistake, these gangs are not harmless social clubs. Rather, they are organized crime syndicates.

The way events are covered by the media often creates stereotypes, which, as in the coverage of these events, exacerbates the racial divide in these, supposedly, United States.

Bernard Hirsch
Springfield

An interesting approach to negotiating

By Doug Finke
State Capitol Bureau

People on the outside of this slow-motion train wreck in Springfield, who nonetheless are paying attention, may have noticed the almost schizophrenic aura surrounding the thing.

Take last Tuesday. House Speaker **MICHAEL MADIGAN** and Senate President **JOHN CULLERTON**, both Chicago Democrats, met with Republican Gov. **BRUCE RAUNER**. At a news conference later in the day, Madigan said the meeting was cordial and productive.

But between the meetings and Madigan's news conference, Rauner held his own availability, at which he accused Madigan and Cullerton of making millions in their private law practices off of high property taxes. It was very close to calling both men crooks.

Madigan called his news conference to rebut Rauner, to explain that his law practice deals with property assessment errors, and to make clear that there is a firewall between his law practice and his position as a public official. He said that during his meeting with Rauner, the governor made no mention of his problems with Madigan's law practice.

Rauner also made a series of visits last week to areas represented by Democratic lawmakers. They were accompanied by news releases from the Illinois Republican Party calling on lawmakers in those areas to choose between Madigan or Cullerton and supporting taxpayers.

During one of those visits near the Quad Cities, Rauner repeated his attack theme of the week. Then, according to news accounts, he also said talks continue among staffers and they are keeping cool heads about them.

It just seems like the opposite of the way people usually operate. Normally, they say nice things in public and save the vitriol for private discussions. In this case, the governor apparently is very pleasant and cordial in private meetings before holding a public news conference to label the top two Democrats in the legislature as corrupt insiders.

It is, to say the least, an interesting approach to negotiating a compromise. And remember, the governor says he's still willing to engage in talks to reach a settlement.

■ For those who can't wait for the next installment of this futility, both chambers return to Springfield on Tuesday.

You probably won't lose any money betting on "more of the same." You also could probably just let your money ride on that for a while.

■ "That's la-la-land." Rauner budget director **TIM NUDING**, when asked a hypothetical question based on state money — or lack thereof — not being an issue.

■ "I've already been there. I wish not to return." Rep. **RON SANDACK**, R-Downers Grove, a former state senator, after asking if the House would follow the Senate schedule for June and being told he could return to the Senate if he wanted a schedule. The House later announced it would meet every Tuesday like the Senate.

■ Sandack, who often leads the House Republican debate on bills, later asked again about the schedule. Rep. **LOU LANG**, D-Skokie, who was presiding, said they would get back to him.

"Should I hold my breath?" Sandack asked. "The body would appreciate that," Lang responded.

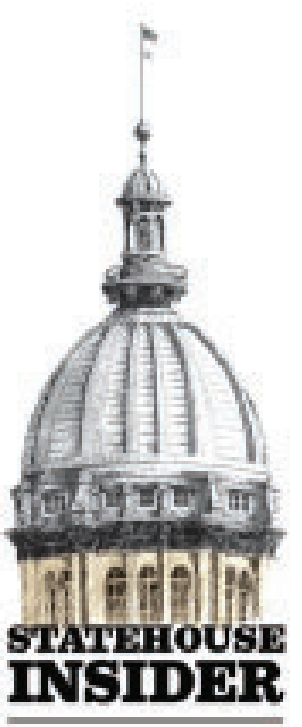
■ With lawmakers facing an open-ended schedule for returning to Springfield this summer, Rep. **RITA MAYFIELD**, D-Waukegan, acted as an impromptu ambassador for the city last week.

She spoke on the House floor, extolling all of the things there are to do in Springfield, specifically citing the various activities available at Knight's Action Park. It was a sort of "don't be depressed if you have to spend a lot of time here this summer rather than back at your homes" pick-me-up to her colleagues.

It prompted Rep. **TIM BUTLER**, R-Springfield, to say he'd be happy to have someone from the local chamber of commerce come in and brief lawmakers on summer entertainment options in the city.

No one took him up on the offer, but it's only two weeks into overtime.

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OPINION

Online at www.sj-r.com/opinions

Reader panel tackles journalism ethics

What would you do? That's the question I threw out three times this week to members of our reader advisory board. The question sparked intense debate, and in most cases, those discussions didn't lead to consensus.

For the board's second meeting our program was "You Be the Editor: Ethical Decisions." I presented to the panel three scenarios involving judgment calls, all of which actually have occurred at The State Journal-Register in the past year. Divided into two groups, their job was to figure out what factors should be considered and what the newsroom should have done and why. And, oh yes, I gave them a tight deadline.

One case study was particularly relevant, as it occurred just this week. President Obama, during a wide-ranging interview about race in America, discussed the use of a well-known racial slur. He used the actual word.

The Associated Press



ANGIE MUHS

used the president's quote in its entirety, rather than conveying it by strategic dashes or the "n-word" euphemism. An editor's note warned about the word's use. The Washington Post used the full word in its quote, while not using it elsewhere. The New York Times used the full word not only in the quote, but in a paragraph describing the president's remarks.

The SJ-R, along with many other papers, did not repeat the word. Our story about the president's interview, which ran on page 2, said this: "Racism, we are not cured of it," Obama said. "And it's not just a matter of it not being polite to say n----- in public." The story did note that the president had

used the actual word.

My take on this is that everyone knew what President Obama actually said. In my judgment, repeating that hurtful slur was not necessary to convey the news of what had happened, which is what we're trying to do. Several panel members agreed. One noted she would hold the SJ-R to a higher standard than using the slur. Others agreed that they fully understood what had been said, even with the use of dashes.

Others disagreed, wondering if the paper should be shielding readers from reality. The fact that it was the president who had said this made some feel we should have quoted him exactly. We discussed some whether "political correctness" is hampering frank conversations about race.

It was a thoughtful discussion. I respect the opinion of our panel members who disagreed, but I'm still comfortable with how the newspaper handled the story. I'd love to hear what other readers think.

The panel tackled a couple of other real-life examples involving decisions about whether to print a potentially sensitive story and whether to use a particular photo. Again, I was impressed with the thoughtful questions and well-reasoned arguments on both sides. As one panel member observed, in many of these cases, it's nearly impossible to reach unanimous agreement.

What we can do, though, is to talk. We try to talk through questions and implications before making our decisions. And in cases like this, even discussions after the fact can be helpful.

You may not agree with every decision we make or every editorial we write. But know that much conversation and consideration goes into creating them.

Our readers deserve nothing less.

—Contact executive editor Angie Muhs: 788-1505, angie.muhs@sj-r.com, twitter.com/amuhs.

GUEST COLUMN

Good-government bills await Rauner's signature

Most of the Capitol news this year has centered on Gov. Bruce Rauner's battle with House and Senate Democrats over budgets, taxes, pensions and a "turnaround agenda" designed, the governor says, to save Illinois from fiscal ruin, limit the power of public employee unions and improve the business climate.

The spring legislative session is now in overtime, and the two sides are digging in for what may be a long power struggle under the Dome.

Fortunately, their failure to resolve the big issues didn't poison the entire legislative well. Lawmakers were able to address numerous issues on the Better Government Association's reform agenda, which is built around shining a light on government and holding public officials accountable.

That starts by safeguarding our Freedom of Information Act, the public's most important tool for keeping an eye on government. A top priority was to stop a bill that would have diluted FOIA by allowing governments to hide some of the financial details of their contract negotiations for events at public entertainment venues.

Following the money is key to preventing sweetheart deals



ANDY SHAW

that benefit connected insiders, so it was heartening that our call to action prompted hundreds of emails from constituents to elected representatives, effectively halting the bill's progress through the legislature.

The BGA also backed numerous proactive transparency, accountability and efficiency measures; law enforcement and criminal justice reforms; and a major civic engagement initiative. Many of those bills made it through the legislature and on to the governor's desk. We hope they'll be signed ASAP. Among them:

Transparency. One bill mandates more timely reporting of independent expenditures by groups trying to influence political campaigns, and another requires organizations that want to open charter schools to reveal ongoing investigations of their operations or board members.

Accountability. Lawmakers



extended the time period for citizens to ask the attorney general to review possible violations of the Open Meetings Act and authorized the secretary of state to accept online submissions of disclosure statements that help flag potential conflicts involving state officials.

Efficiency. The legislature took a few more baby steps toward trimming the state's excessive number of taxing bodies by facilitating the elimination of a suburban Cook County sanitary district, a DuPage County fair and exposition authority, and Belleville Township, which shares boundaries with the eponymous municipality. They also imposed a four-year moratorium on the creation of new governmental units.

Civic engagement. Lawmakers approved a bill requiring one semester of civics education in high school.

Criminal justice and law enforcement. The legislature ended the automatic transfer of some juvenile offenders

to adult court, which gives judges and prosecutors more discretion. They also approved a sweeping police accountability bill that prohibits choke holds, requires more training, expands crime reporting and data on stop-and-frisk searches, enhances the ability to track officers with histories of disciplinary problems, and mandates two independent investigations when cops shoot and kill civilians.

Unfortunately, some other good government initiatives never made it across the finish line, so we'll resume the push for their passage next session.

Meanwhile, a shout out to the dedicated state lawmakers who blocked bad bills and enacted good ones at the same time they were facing enormous pressure from their leaders to hew the party line on high-stakes, high-visibility issues. Our hope now is for the governor and General Assembly to find common ground on budget-related issues in time to avert a government shutdown. Stay tuned.

—Andy Shaw is president and CEO of the Better Government Association. Email him at ashaw@bettergov.org.



Rauner surprises by signing education budget

By Doug Finke

State Capitol Bureau

At least Gov. **BRUCE RAUNER** is good for a few surprises.

It's fair to say just about everyone was caught off guard last week when he signed into law a budget bill that contains money for general state aid to school districts. The bill has some other spending in it, too, but the school aid money was the key thing.

General state aid money is pretty much the backbone of state assistance to many school districts, especially the poorer ones that don't have a lot of property wealth to keep their schools going mostly with local property taxes. And that's why the budget bill Rauner signed was so critical. The first school aid payment under the state's new fiscal year is due to go out in mid-August. Without a budget in place, that payment could not have been made. And with any number of school districts already teetering on the financial brink, a missing state aid payment could have been devastating.

A lot of lawmakers and other observers figured Rauner would either veto the school bill — like he did the rest of the budget — or at least hold off on signing it to get some leverage in ongoing budget discussions. But then he signed the bill, meaning school districts should be able to open on time this fall.

Education advocates praised Rauner for his action and for not jeopardizing kids' educations in the budget impasse. Of course, Rauner also left hanging his fellow Republicans in the General Assembly, most of whom voted against the budget bills because the budget was not balanced.

■ There hasn't been a lot of public talk about pension reform lately. Not since the Illinois Supreme Court shot down the state's big pension overhaul bill as unconstitutional.

The ruling was so ironclad that Rauner started making statements that even his own pension reform plan might have trouble in the courts. Before the court ruling, Rauner was adamant that his plan was constitutional, based on input from his legal experts.

But while a great many lawmakers still think something needs to be done about pension costs, the issue has sort of faded from public view, what with the budget battles going on and Rauner continuing to press his "turnaround agenda."

Last week, though, as part of an op-ed piece in the Chicago Tribune, Rauner again cited pension reform, along with other parts of his agenda that he has said must be addressed before he'll talk about revenue to balance the budget. He said pension reform "is not a prerequisite to signing the budget, but it should be completed this year."

Exactly what the new plan would look like is unclear. He mentioned melding revised portions of his own plan with some ideas from Senate President **JOHN CULLERTON**, D-Chicago, to come up with a money-saving alternative. The bottom line would be moving workers into a less generous pension plan.

It will be interesting to see how that is accomplished. When the Supreme Court says people are guaranteed the pension benefits in effect when they join one of the state pension systems, how exactly do you convince them to move into a plan that pays less?

■ Democrats wanted to hold a hearing on whether Rauner is paying his executive office staff more than former Gov. **PAT QUINN** did. They think his payroll is \$1 million higher than Quinn's. The administration says it is \$500,000 less.

So a hearing was scheduled last week to purportedly get to the bottom of it. Republicans promptly labeled the hearing a sham, as they have most other things this spring.

Alas, the hearing didn't happen because the administration didn't send anyone to testify. Disappointed Democrats said they aren't giving up.

It's getting to the point you can't have any fun around the Capitol anymore.

—Contact Doug Finke: doug.finke@sj-r.com, 788-1527, twitter.com/dougfinkesjr.

YOUR VIEW

A historic step forward

As an ordained member of the Unitarian Universalist clergy, I wholeheartedly support Friday's majority decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that has accorded equal dignity and rights to all same-sex couples who already have married or may do so in the future.

The verdict was a long time in coming and never certain. What an amazing turn of events during these past few years. We have seen DOMA and Don't Ask Don't Tell repealed, "conversion therapy" has fallen into disrepute, and now the high court has extended the principle of equal protection for same-sex couples.

I join with so many people of different faith communities in celebrating this historic step forward in the struggle for human rights.

The Rev. Martin E. Woulfe

Springfield

The writer leads the Abraham Lincoln Unitarian

Universalist Congregation of Springfield.

A prayer for lawmakers

I ran across this prayer (plea) and thought it was something our state representatives, senators, governor and his staff could start each day with:

"God, inspire us today with the qualities of good leadership. Give us the insight to make wise decisions, integrity to face the truth, courage to make difficult choices and compassion for the needs of others. Make us a model of justice and honor to the people of Illinois and let us never forget that our job is to serve the people of Illinois."

Mike von Behren
Springfield

CEOs need all the help they can get

As recently reported by the Chicago Tribune, salaries for CEOs of Illinois' 100 largest companies increased by

13 percent in 2014, while national average increases for CEOs was less than 1 percent.

Average pay for those Illinois CEOs was \$5.7 million in 2014.

Yet Gov. Rauner wants to make Illinois more business-friendly by limiting the ability of workers to organize and bargain for fair wages. He continues to campaign against labor while promoting the special interests of his CEO peers.

I know \$5.7 million won't buy what it used to, but if the top businesses in Illinois can afford to give executives a 13-percent increase, they should be healthy enough to bargain in good faith with workers who simply are trying to keep the cupboard full and the mortgage paid. Right-to-work zones would keep wages low, which likely would bring more profits and even higher CEO salaries.

But at least the governor will have limited the clout of all those union bosses.

Brian Moore
Springfield

Congress dropped ball on disaster aid

Following the devastating tornadoes that ravaged Washington, Illinois, last fall, FEMA denied disaster relief to the community.

Our U.S. senators, with requisite fanfare, announced the introduction of Senate Bill 1960, the Fairness in Federal Disaster Declarations Act of 2014. This legislation, we were told, would correct the disadvantage that effects smaller communities in populous states when applying for federal disaster relief funds.

It languishes in some committee room today. Illinois now is faced with a similar situation in Coal City, and again federal relief will not be forthcoming because of FEMA regulations. Should we expect to see our senators tour the devastation and propose a 2015 Fairness Act as they did after Washington and in 2013 after the tornadoes that swept through Harrisburg and Ridgeway?

Dennis Kelly
Rochester

OPINION



“The Journal paper
was always my friend...”
— A. Lincoln, June 18, 1864

“We want the Register to
be the people’s paper.”
— Publisher’s statement June 19, 1881

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DEBATE REMINDER FOR MONDAY

Join us Monday for the Republican debate in the primary race for Illinois’ 18th congressional district. The three GOP candidates — Mike Flynn of Quincy, Darin

LaHood of Peoria and Don Rients of Benson — will face off at 6 p.m. in the auditorium of The State Journal-Register at Ninth Street and Capitol Avenue. The event is

open to the public, and seating is on a first-come basis. It also will be live streamed at sj-r.com, at wmay.com and on the radio at 970 AM.

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor are welcome and will be considered for print and digital publication. They should be no more than 250 words maximum and include the writer’s full name, address and daytime number. Only original work is accepted, and each writer may submit one per month.

OUR VIEW

Don’t shutter our natural, cultural history

Throughout much of Springfield’s history, the now 138-year-old Illinois State Museum has offered steady reassurance that while people and politicians come and go from the capital city, the state’s natural and cultural history are worthy of preservation, study and protection.

That apparently is no longer a given, as a budget impasse between Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner and the Democratic-controlled legislature prompted the governor to threaten closure of the state museum.

The importance of protecting Illinois’ history was evident back in 1877 when the editors of the Illinois State Register lauded the 80th General Assembly for establishing a state historical library and geological museum, the precursor to the Illinois State Museum, to care for a large and valuable array of minerals, fossils and other artifacts that had been collected during the first geological survey of the state in the early 1850s.

Editors called it one of the best pieces of legislation state lawmakers approved that year.

The new facility, to be called the Illinois State Historical Library and Natural

History Museum, had a board of trustees, including the governor, who would establish rules for managing the facility and appoint a curator. Until that point, the specimens had been stored somewhat haphazardly in various locations.

“If the trustees and the curator who they shall appoint intelligently and energetically carry out the spirit and intent of the act, there will be, in a very little time, a collection of the history, geology, botany and zoology of the state, which shall be worthy (of) Illinois,” editors wrote.

The museum’s first curator, Amos Worthen, immediately set about his work, which included accepting donations of artifacts from around the state and the world. Among the first contributions: 180 flint and 20 stone prehistoric tools and fragments of ancient pottery from Monroe County on the Mississippi River, where indigenous peoples lived long before Europeans arrived.

By April 1878, Worthen reported 50 to 100 people were visiting the museum daily. Donations continued flowing in. Mounted birds, a buffalo head and spear heads came from Hancock County, and a



In this 2012 file photo, Isaiah Nickey, 3, adds a bone to the Build-a-Beast mastodon display with help from his mom, Rachelle, at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. FILE/THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

stone ax found in Clear Lake near Springfield was considered “one of the finest specimens of Indian workmanship there is in the museum,” according to the newspaper.

The museum moved around through the years. Early on, it was in the Statehouse, which was under construction at the time, causing the museum to be moved to different locations throughout the building. In 1903 it moved to the Arsenal building and later to what now is called the Howlett Building.

In 1963 the museum found a permanent home in a new building at Spring and Edwards streets, which cost \$2 million to construct

(more than \$15 million in today’s money). Museum directors through the years have expanded the facility, changed and modernized exhibits and imparted their vision for how best to enlighten visitors about Illinois’ natural and cultural history.

Today, the Illinois State Museum has more than 12.5 million items at its main site, at its collection center and at the Dickson Mounds Museum, which was absorbed by the state museum in 1965.

Nearly 200,000 people visited the free-admission museum and its research and collections center in Springfield in 2014. Among them are thousands of

schoolchildren and their teachers, eager to supplement classroom instruction with hands-on learning.

Visitors learn how Illinois’ landscape has changed through time. They study the museum’s mastodon skeleton and talk to scientists about native species. Most youngsters who tour the building never forget the life-size dioramas depicting how indigenous Illinoisans probably lived. Visitors explore exhibits showing how Illinois households have looked through the decades and consider the works of Illinois artists on display. Parents take their children for afternoons in the play museum and for Super Saturday discovery activities. Preserving the Illinois’ history and sharing it with the people of this state has been a priority for Illinois leaders for generations. The museum’s value is immeasurable.

But today, Illinois’ elected leaders are so entrenched they can’t come to an agreement on a new budget, and the Illinois State Museum is in the cross hairs. The budget expires Tuesday, and there’s still no signal that Rauner and lawmakers are on the brink of a deal.

Closing a museum is complicated business. It’s

impossible to simply lock the doors and walk away. The accreditation the Illinois State Museum has had for 40 years could be revoked if it closes. Donations of money and artifacts will be affected. Collections will have to be returned to rightful owners. Research will come to a halt. The museum could go into legal default on federal grants and contracts. Private collection donors could sue the museum for failing to live up to its promises. Local tourism would take a hit.

All of this upheaval just to save the state of Illinois \$4.8 million a year in operating costs for a facility that generates an estimated \$33 million in visitor spending throughout the state each year, based on Illinois Office of Tourism minimum estimates of visitor spending.

For 138 years, the Illinois State Museum has been a priority for the state, through wars, economic downturns and tough times. If leaders choose to close the museum, Illinois will invalidate decades of valuable and meaningful research and preservation work, as well as people’s interest in the state’s history and culture.

And Illinois will be a failure on yet another front.

Candidates spar on way to special Congress primary

The special primary elections to pick major-party candidates to replace former Republican U.S. Rep. **AARON SCHOCK** in the 18th Congressional District are just more than a week away.

So perhaps it wasn’t a surprise that an opponent would find fault after a news conference last week at the Illinois Chamber of Commerce office in Springfield to announce endorsements



LaHood



Flynn

of state Sen. **DARIN LAHOOD**, R-Peoria, by that group and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. **MIKE FLYNN**, a Quincy native and now a resident there who has lived in

the Washington area for 20 years and who founded the website biggovernment.com with **ANDREW BREITBART**, criticized the endorsement. “If you love big bank bailouts, loved the (**BARACK**) **OBAMA** stimulus, love corporate welfare for big defense contractors, and loved Obama’s executive amnesty, then evidently, you should vote for Darin LaHood,” Flynn said in a prepared statement aimed at what his campaign indicated were chamber policies. “If you’re for limited government, lower taxes, free market competition, and securing the border first, then it’s clear: You should



BERNARD SCHOENBURG

vote for me.”

ROB ENGSTROM, senior vice president and national political director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who was at the endorsement event, later responded: “Mike Flynn’s comments are confusing, given that he actively sought the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s endorsement on May 18. In doing so, he affirmed that he supports the U.S. Chamber’s mission, which is to advocate for American free enterprise.

“Washington has enough politicians who say one thing in private and do another in the public arena,” Engstrom continued. “The fact is that Mr. Flynn’s nonexistent campaign isn’t gaining any traction, and he is getting desperate.”

Flynn later said LaHood would “do what they want down the line and vote for more of the same instead of an end to big government doing the bidding of big business to the detriment of ordinary Americans.”

LaHood said at the endorsement session that he has been a strong advocate for “creating a better business climate in Illinois.”

“I think you’ve got to have a strong voice on the overreach of the current administration, in terms of regulation, in terms of

federal government doing too much when it comes to executive power” in departments including those overseeing the environment, agriculture and labor, he said.

“Freeing up small and medium-sized businesses to not be constrained by the federal government has to be the foundation of growth in this country,” LaHood said.

At the endorsement, Engstrom lamented what



Rients

he called the “massive overregulation of America’s job creators.” Also in the Republican primary is **DONALD RIENTS** of Benson, who does computer work for State Farm Insurance. Rients said last week that he had raised just \$650 from other people for his “grassroots” campaign.

“My endorsements will come from the voters of the district,” Rients said.

Meanwhile, the Big Government site at breitbart.com — from which Flynn is on leave — published a story last week calling it “crony capitalism” that LaHood voted in 2012 on a bill for an East Peoria tax increment financing district while the law firm where he works — Miller, Hall & Triggs in Peoria — represents East Peoria.

“There was nothing improper done on that,” LaHood said, adding that as an associate of the firm and not a partner, he’s a contract employee without ownership.

“Secondly, if you look at the ethics laws that are in place, there’s no provision in there for me to put forth a conflict or to disclose that in any way,” he said. “If I had the opportunity to do it again, I would vote for it. I did not engage in anything that was a conflict of interest.”

He also said to “consider the source” since the Breitbart publication is where Flynn works.

LaHood, Flynn and Rients will meet in a public debate at 6 p.m. Monday in The State Journal-Register auditorium at Ninth Street and Capitol Avenue. Doors open at 5:30. The debate will be live-streamed on SJ-R.com and wmay.com and broadcast live on **WMAY-AM 970**, the co-sponsor of the event with the **SJ-R**.

The primary is July 7, and the special general election is Sept. 10.

Fish story

Democratic congressional candidates



Lopez



Mellon

ADAM LOPEZ of Springfield and **ROB MELLON** of Quincy fielded questions on many issues at their debate at the **SJ-R** last week, but each seemed to be swimming upstream in response to one.

The debate, hosted by the newspaper and **WMAY**, had

candidates take questions from reporters including **CHRIS KAERGARD** of the Peoria Journal Star. Peoria is the home of Schock, whose resignation from the 18th Congressional District seat has yielded the special election to fill out his term.

Hitting on a Peoria-area issue, Kaergard asked, “What should the federal government’s role be, if any, in dealing with invasive species such as Asian carp in (the) Illinois River?”

It’s not a trick question if you have heard of the issue of the rapidly reproducing fish that is crowding out other species. The fish jump a lot, and the **SJ-R** has reported about the Original Redneck Fishin’ Tournament in Mason County. Participants can’t use fishing poles, so many people, some in costume, used nets and their hands to capture carp. The question caused some chuckles from each candidate.

“I know that we want to protect our species, we went to protect our planet,” said Mellon, an Advanced Placement history teacher at Quincy Senior High School and a captain in the Army Reserve. “What we have to do is work collectively, see if there’s methods that we can find to protect the Asian carp and other species. ... We have to be very cautious about what the cost would be so we can protect wildlife. At the same time, there has to be a balance to protect our workers and our farmers.”

Lopez then called the question interesting and said it was one “you can’t prep for.”

“Environmental is huge,” he said, in the largely rural, agricultural district that takes in all or part of 19 counties.

“All animals and all species of anything are important to protect in this country,” Lopez said. “Our environment’s No. 1 to me and protecting the environment and protecting Asian carp.”

The next day, Mellon called me to say he realized he didn’t exactly hit that one out of the park.

“To be honest, I was trying to avoid the Asian carp situation because I didn’t know enough about it, and I don’t like talking about things I don’t know about,” Mellon said.

He said he’s “relatively new to the process” and called it a “live and learn” situation.

I called Lopez later, and he joked that he wants to take some baseball bats to Bath and go fishing.

“Actually, I was a little confused” during the debate, Lopez said, saying he might have misunderstood the question but also heard Mellon talking about protecting the species.

“I think we all know Asian carp’s a bad thing for Illinois,” Lopez said. “I guess the joke of the day (was) that we didn’t know about Asian carp. ... We need to find a way of getting rid of it.”

Hey, nobody said being a congressional candidate is easy.

—Contact Bernard Schoenburg: bernard.schoenburg@sj-r.com, 788-1540, twitter.com/bschoenburg.

OPINION



“The Journal paper
was always my friend...”
— A. Lincoln, June 18, 1864

“We want the Register to
be the people’s paper.”
— Publisher’s statement June 19, 1881

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OUR VIEW

CWLP ratepayers want truth and a voice

Given last week’s vote by the Springfield City Council to restructure municipal electric rates with pitifully little debate by aldermen or input from ratepayers, it’s little wonder there is a renewed push for citizens to play a larger role in oversight of City Water, Light and Power.

And why shouldn’t CWLP customers have some kind of representation at the table? After all, it’s a public utility, and they have a stake in its future.

Yet calls for citizen oversight, by a panel independent of the city council with understanding of utility management and power markets, largely have fallen on deaf ears by city leaders who for years lacked the will or the knowledge to get a handle on the utility’s finances and anticipate future needs.

Aldermen voted 8-1 in favor of a rate restructure plan that will be phased in for electric customers over four years beginning Jan. 1. They and the public had two weeks to review the plan prior to Tuesday’s vote — a fact that only one alderman, Ward 7’s Joe McMenamin, acknowledged at the meeting. In the end he voted “present.” Ward 5’s Andrew Proctor was the only alderman to vote no, on the grounds that the plan is unfair to low-income ratepayers.

CWLP leaders and Mayor Jim Langfelder said restructuring is necessary to stabilize the utility’s electric fund. The approved plan increases the monthly fixed customer charge and drops the energy usage rate, making bills — and the utility’s revenue — less susceptible to fluctuations in weather and usage.

Critics say the plan reduces the incentive to conserve electricity because it penalizes those who don’t use much, such as senior citizens, and rewards those who use more, such as businesses. They also say it encourages people to use more electricity by lowering usage charge while raising customer charge, and that it negates CWLP’s laudable past efforts to get customers to purchase energy-efficient appliances, better insulate their homes and take other steps to use less electricity.

It’s not entirely clear how the change will affect customers’ bills. Smaller residential customers may see their monthly bills increase by 2019, when the phase-in is complete, from 30 cents to as much

as several dollars. Other customers may see little difference or a reduction.

To its credit, CWLP created an online bill calculator to try to help customers get an idea of how their bill might change. But, as is often the case with utility-related matters, it’s complicated. And it requires those who may be most adversely affected — senior citizens and low-income customers — to have Internet access.

Two weeks simply was not enough time for ratepayers and aldermen to digest the plan. It certainly did not give city leaders enough time to communicate with their constituents and explain what the effects on their monthly household budgets could be.

And there wasn’t enough time for citizens to investigate if this truly is a rate reduction or if it’s actually a considerable rate increase for customers when it’s all said and done.

At this point the rate restructuring will happen whether customers like it or not. City leaders are correct to try to address CWLP’s finances, but it appears this may be another example of kicking the can down the road, especially considering the large amounts of money the city has had to spend over time to fix and upgrade the utility’s aging coal-fired plants. Other than restructuring customers’ rates, the factors that most affect CWLP’s finances have not changed.

Certainly, this restructuring shouldn’t make anyone believe CWLP is out of the financial or regulatory woods. The issues CWLP and the City of Springfield will be forced to wrestle with in the coming decades are only going to get more complicated and expensive. Ratepayers deserve more clarity about CWLP and its challenges. That means having someone without political ties or re-election concerns represent their interests at city hall.

Mayor Langfelder and CWLP are urged to establish an oversight panel of people who understand the complicated nature of power markets and regulation; who have the time, desire and expertise to get involved; who can withstand political pressure; and who can effectively communicate between the utility and frustrated ratepayers (taxpayers) who demand transparency about the utility, its finances and its future.



GOP talker Ingraham to headline Lincoln dinner

Following a financially successful formula used in some recent years, the Sangamon County Republican Party’s Lincoln Day Dinner on Feb. 11 will have a nationally known speaker.

This time, the \$100-per-person event at the Prairie Capital Convention Center will feature **LAURA INGRAHAM**, a national radio talk-show host who



Ingraham

is also a regular Fox News contributor and sometimes is substitute host for “The O’Reilly Factor” on that channel.

“The Laura Ingraham Show” debuted in 2001 and is heard on hundreds of radio stations.

Ingraham, who lives in the Washington area with her three children, has also written five books. They include “Shut Up & Sing: How Elites from Hollywood, Politics, and the UN Are Subverting America.”

“We wanted somebody who had some recognition,” said Sangamon County Circuit Clerk **PAUL PALAZZOLO**, chairman of the dinner. “Every time they are on a show or a radio program and we’re promoting her coming, that’s good PR. And she’s a positive speaker.”

Celebrity speakers at the event have included rocker **TED NUGENT**, who drew a big crowd in 2012 and told reporters that President **BARACK OBAMA** was an “America-hating punk.”

Negative rhetoric didn’t reach that level in subsequent years. **MICHAEL REAGAN**, son of late President **RONALD REAGAN**, took to the microphone in 2013, and in 2014, Dr. **BEN CARSON**, now a GOP presidential candidate, appeared to a crowd of about 1,200.

Early this year, the keynote address was delivered by Gov. **BRUCE RAUNER**, the first Republican to hold the office following a dozen years of Democratic governors.

There is also a predinner reception including getting a picture taken with Ingraham. The cost of the reception is \$50 total for as many as four people, Palazzolo said.

The 2016 event is on a Thursday, and Palazzolo said there’s a chance Ingraham will do her radio show from



BERNARD SCHOENBURG

Springfield the next morning.

Tickets can be reserved by calling Sangamon County GOP headquarters at 528-6267.

‘Chickenman’

Speaking of Republican gatherings, there was a good turnout last week at Knights of Columbus Council 364 for the \$20-per-person Taste of Sangamon County fundraiser for the Sangamon County Board Republican Election Committee.

Now that it’s over, I will say I enjoyed the radio ad for the event, which was from California-based Radio Ranch. That’s the firm of radio personality **DICK ORKIN**. When I was growing up in the Chicago area, his “Chickenman” and “Tooth Fairy” comedy episodes of the ’60s and ’70s were staples on the radio. They ran on stations across the country.

The back-and-forth banter to advertise the Springfield GOP event fit in names of Republican countywide officeholders, with a general theme that they are tight with a dollar.

“They probably won’t even serve pretzels,” one man says.

Sangamon County Board Chairman **ANDY VAN METER** noted that the same firm does the local ads for helpwanted-springfield.com. He said the political ad cost about \$4,000 to produce.

Orkin’s daughter **LISA ORKIN**, the Studio City, California, firm’s creative director and another voice on the ads, said they write the ads for the job site, but only voiced — and did not write — the one for the local GOP.

Orkin said she and her father are both very political and they are Democrats. But they took the job for the single local event and met the asked-for 24-hour deadline.

She said the family also has Illinois roots: She was raised the Chicago suburb of Mount Prospect.

Van Meter said he used the same firm for an ad four years ago, and this year, he said, the firm edited the script.

“In politics, it’s laugh or

cry,” he said. “Right now, we need a laugh.”

Van Meter estimated that 450 people attended the county board GOP event and about \$25,000 was raised.

Watch party

Sangamon County Democrats are hoping to have a nice gathering of their own on Tuesday.

The county party, the Westside Democratic Club and the Sangamon County Young Democrats are having a rally and watch party for the first Democratic presidential debate, airing that night on CNN.

The free event at Plumbers and Steamfitters union Local 137 hall, 2880 E. Cook St., starts at 6:30 p.m.

“We’re encouraging supporters for all five of the Democratic candidates to come out,” said **DAN KOVATS**, president of the Young Dems and second vice chairman of the county party. There will also be a straw poll at the event.

The debate will include former Secretary of State **HILLARY CLINTON**, U.S. Sen. **BERNIE SANDERS** of Vermont, former Maryland Gov. **MARTIN O’MALLEY**, former U.S. Sen. **JIM WEBB** of Virginia and former Rhode Island Gov. **LINCOLN CHAFFEE**. As of this writing, Vice President **JOE BIDEN** wasn’t part of the plan.

Kovats, 33, of Chatham, was downstate regional field director on U.S. Sen. **DICK DURBIN**’s 2014 campaign. He started work in January for new state Treasurer **MIKE FRERICH** as an outreach assistant, working with a college savings program and also with I-Cash, which reunites people with unclaimed property.

“Things are going well,” he said.

Kovats is paid \$38,004 annually in the state job.

Tracy sets announcement

Former state Rep. **JIL TRACY**, R-Quincy, plans to formally kick off her campaign for state Senate on Oct. 26 with a tour of the 47th District, joined by Senate Republican

Leader **CHRISTIE RADOGNO** of Lemont. Incumbent Sen. **JOHN SULLIVAN**, D-Rush-

ville, isn’t seeking another term.

Tracy, a lawyer, served in the House from 2006 until January. Last year, she ran for lieutenant governor in the GOP primary as running mate of then-Sen. **KIRK DILLARD** of Hinsdale.

Tracy said she is “uniquely qualified” to represent the 47th given that she represented seven of its 11 counties in the House. And though her ticket with Dillard lost last year’s primary to now-Gov. Rauner, she thinks the governor is seeking needed changes.

“Certainly I applaud the governor because what we’ve done is kick the can of all our problems too far down the road, and the root of our problems is seated in the ‘turnaround agenda,” she said.

Like the governor, she said she thinks reforms to workers’ compensation, political remapping and lawsuits are all necessary.

“And we need to address the corrupt reputation” of the state, Tracy said.

Rauner is also seeking term limits for lawmakers. Tracy said she’s for limits for legislative leaders and is open to the idea of limits for others.

“I’ve seen some very good legislators serve a long time,” she said. But she also said it “seems to be a public notion right now” that term limits should apply to all lawmakers, and “I’m open to anything that’s going to bring better government because it’s time.”

In arguing to start limiting terms of leaders, she said, “From the inside, I’ve seen that that is really what cripples the ability to move certain agendas forward in Springfield.”

Tracy said she needed more study of some aspects of Rauner’s turnaround agenda, but the prevailing wage “has been a crippler” of public works project and driven up costs.

“Everything is up for examination,” she said. “We just can’t keep going like this.”

Tracy is the sister-in-law of Springfield lawyer **DON TRACY**, who voiced independent expenditure campaign ads advocating Rauner in last year’s general election. Rauner appointed him chairman of the Illinois Gaming Board.

—Contact Bernard Schoenburg: bernard.schoenburg@sj-r.com, 788-1540, twitter.com/b schoenburg.

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OPINION

Online at www.sj-r.com/opinions

IN MY VIEW

Players' attitudes reflective of youth coaches' attitudes

Perhaps it is true in any sport: you can learn much about the character of a coach from the behavior of the team he or she coaches.

It is certainly true in high school soccer. As I have watched my son's team play different opponents from Sangamon County and beyond, it has become evident that players' actions on the field reflect the training they have received from their coaches.

I do not know the names of any of these coaches, but I have learned much about them from how their teams play. When I see a player repeatedly fouling intentionally and losing control of his emotions without consequences, I know that his coach at least permits and sometimes encourages that kind of behavior. Winning is everything to such coaches.

My son is one of a half dozen young men from New Berlin High School who play soccer through a co-op with Pleasant Plains High School. Proud of their identity as New Berlin Pretzels, they also are proud to be Cardinals on the soccer field. Thanks to Coach



Members of the Pleasant Plains soccer team play against Riverton in 2010. FILE/THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER



Bryan

Greg Bryan and Assistant Coach Bill O'Connor, they have learned far more than soccer skills.

Several times this season, my son and I have had conversations about how a particular opponent played. Each time, my son has affirmed that had he played that way Coach Bryan would have benched him, and I assure him that Coach Bryan would have had my full support.

Do not misunderstand.

Coach Bryan is passionate about soccer. He has devoted a considerable portion of his life to the game, both as a player and as a coach. The difference is perspective.

While some other coaches scream and yell at their players and the referees, coaches Bryan and O'Connor focus on their players' performance on the field. They remind their players, and those players' parents, that referees are part of the game. Like a bad bounce on a hard field or cross winds on the Illinois prairie, the calls a referee makes or fails to make are

variables in the game. Getting upset about things you cannot control only harms your game.

This season has been an average year for Pleasant Plains soccer — about the same number of wins and losses, and an unusually high number of ties. Do not mistake my perspective as loser's lament or rationalization. I would not exchange a single loss for a win and give up the valuable lessons my son has learned. He and his teammates have learned to love the game, to enjoy the competition and to walk away from the field with their heads held high. They are proud to be a team with class.

And long after anyone can remember the won-lost-tied record for any season, my son and his teammates will remember the lessons about life they learned on the soccer field.

Thanks, Coach Bryan and Coach O'Connor, for teaching my son how to be a passionate competitor, a good sport and a man of integrity.

—Daniel W. Stowell lives in Loami.

YOUR VIEWS

Global warming debate rages on

The president's recent visit to Alaska seems to visually confirm that human activity may be causing global warming. The debate goes on!

If human activity causes global warming, as some scientists believe, what can we do to prevent ecological disaster? Abandon the use of fossil fuels? What then is left? Solar power and windmills? But what happens if the wind stops or the sun hides behind the clouds?

Earth's elliptical orbit brings us intermittently closer to the sun, increasing gradual global warming, I believe. The result produces the four seasons.

Therefore, fossil fuels may be only one cause of the warming trend. We do, indeed, face a dilemma. Casting aside our limited knowledge about celestial and human existence, perhaps a bit of humility might produce a recognition of some supreme source many people call God as the creator of all things. We may be on to a partial explanation for global warming. The ultimate answer may become obvious when we're stiff and horizontal.

Good stewardship of Earth's natural resources makes sense to most caring people. Either a superior intelligence will continue to sustain earthly life or a just god may allow proud human beings the privilege of writing their own epitaph in the dust of our burned-out cinder: "We did it our way!"

May sanity and humility nullify such an end.

Ben Gaston
Athens

Short-term parking needed for farmers market

It would be interesting to read a discussion of parking meter enforcement on the Wednesday mornings when the downtown farmers market is in operation. I wonder if it would be feasible for the city to concentrate enforcement somewhere else on those mornings.

My wife received a parking ticket Aug. 19 when parked at the corner of Fourth and Adams streets. The citation was issued at 8:41 a.m. She arrived at the market about 8:30 a.m. and returned with her purchases

about 20 minutes later.

We consider the market an asset to the quality of life in Springfield and frequently stop by in the morning to pick up a few fresh items. We are aware of other retirees who do the same. It would seem to benefit the city if the farmers market were as accessible as possible, including the availability of short-term parking.

Although I don't understand the pros and cons of parking meters, I do wonder how much harm would be done if enforcement were concentrated until 10:30 a.m. in locations other than the two-block area around the market.

James M. Ewan
Springfield

Money is no politically correct object

Now the Obama administration plans to waste more taxpayer dollars by changing our \$10 bill.

The plan: take Hamilton off and replace him, a founding father of our nation and banking system, with a woman's portrait. That really worked out with Susan B. Anthony and Sacagawea currency, didn't it?

They say the \$10 is the most counterfeited bill. That's their fault. Simply update the bills the same as the \$20, the \$50 and the \$100 with new security threads and inner prints.

This whole idea is just a politically correct and asinine attempt to pull women's votes and waste tax dollars. Why don't they expend those efforts and dollars on updating the cybersecurity on government computer systems and stop North Korea, China, Russia and other enemies from hacking into our personal information and government intelligence? You want to see the missing Hillary Clinton emails off an unsecured server? North Korea and China have them for a price. Give them a call.

If they do change the \$10 and remove Hamilton from it, at the same time they had better print up a lot more \$5s and \$1s because I, for one, will no longer carry a symbol of this country's stupidity and disregard for our founding fathers.

Paul Forgas
Petersburg

Rauner's one-track mind bad for Illinois

Hasn't it become increasingly obvious that electing Bruce Rauner our governor was a huge mistake? We badly needed change, but not what we received for our votes.

He and his administration almost daily have shown a lack of concern for the lives of the people of Illinois. Instead, there is a one-track-mind agenda to obtain, develop and sustain industry and commerce, all creating investment opportunity.

While I believe the organized union community has developed too much power, the union relationships in Illinois are vital and should remain a leading stake for Illinois workers. The Rauner administration should not be allowed to diminish it.

Further, there is a political governance that exists in every state and requires persuasion and compromise to bring people to accept and agree on a position. Gov. Rauner and his administration are neither of these. They are pursuing only their demands, which have nothing to do with the budget or balancing it. Forcing the demands against his Republican colleagues has created the impasse, which can only become more dangerous and must be stopped.

Legislators must develop a reasonable budget and pass it. Gov. Rauner will veto it. They will override the veto. And then we can get on with the state's business. After that, they can sit down and attempt to address his demands.

Edwin Bryan
Sherman

USPS unfairly targeted by misinformation

This is a reply to the Washington Post article in Sunday's paper, "Should the Postal Service be sold to save it?" (Business section, page 30).

It amazes me every time I read one of these articles about the postal service and how it loses billions of dollars every year. This is pure misinformation and part of a shell game to mislead the public.

Since 2006, the U.S. Postal Service is mandated by Congress to pay \$5.5 billion to \$5.8 billion yearly into a special fund to prefund retirees for the next 100 years. This is a major part of the shell game they don't want the public to know. Without this prefunding payment, the postal service would make money.

Now let's put this same prefunding mandate on UPS or FedEx. We can't because no other entity has to do this. What would their bottom line look like if they had to take away almost \$6 billion a year?

On thing article's author did get right is that the postal service provides universal service to every home. UPS and FedEx do not. What they do is have the postal service deliver those packages for them. The postal service delivers millions of packages from UPS and FedEx daily. Why? Because they don't deliver to every address and are more interested in the bottom line than in delivering to every address like the U.S. Postal Service does.

Look under all the shells in this game and not just the one they want you to look under.

Donald Van
Chatham

Time for more public input into CWLP

Last week's letter by Peter Lazare was very useful in beginning to identify specific concerns about a possible CWLP rate hike and offering one concrete alternative to the utility's unpopular proposal ("CWLP rate proposal bad policy," Your Views, Sept. 28).

His letter presents the type of perspective that can be provided to our decision makers and discussed in a public process that our ratepayers — public utility owners — deserve. A rate hike is only one of many issues that affect CWLP owners. Others include the controversy over Hunter Lake, unlined coal ash pits, environmental impacts and difficulties raised by aging coal plants.

It's time for a public process to help guide our public utility.

Diane Lopez Hughes
Springfield

Day 100 without a budget. And 101, 102 ...

By Doug Finke
State Capitol Bureau

Illinois passed a milestone of sorts last week, cruising past the 100-day mark with no permanent budget.

It's one of those things people feel compelled to make a deal out of (Oh my gosh, it's been 100 days!) but which doesn't make a difference in the end. Things are bad, and they didn't get suddenly worse because the state passed 100 days. Money is going out the door faster than it's coming in. Nobody notices much because 90-some percent of the budget is still being spent. The people on the outside were on the outside at day 50 and day 80 and every other day since the impasse started.

So we've had the 100th-day-without-a-budget observance. Start planning now for the 200th-day activities.

■ Illinois Department of Human Services Secretary **JAMES DIMAS** said last week that the 2017 fiscal year state budget might be introduced before lawmakers ever approve one for this year, fiscal 2016.

Ugly as that would be, he wasn't the first person to suggest that possibility.

■ Can you remember when you were a kid and first became aware of the commerce opportunities in comic books?

You could raise a herd of sea monkeys or you could own a genuine X-ray viewer that would open up all sorts of worlds currently hidden.

You can probably also remember the crushing disappointment if you ever bought into that stuff and saw the actual product.

We mention this because Gov. **BRUCE RAUNER** last week delivered a modern political version of the X-ray specs and the sea monkeys in the form of a speech that was billed as one thing but was disappointing when it arrived.

The occasion was a speech Rauner delivered in Oak Lawn to the Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce. It was a big deal because the official schedule from Rauner's office that day said, "Governor Rauner Delivers Speech about the Path Forward for Illinois Government."

Well, all right then. We've had more than three months of gridlock, so maybe the governor is offering some new compromise or new approach to resolving the impasse.

Sorry, no. It was back to the same old, same old that's been around for months. Rauner zeroed in on his demands that public employee unions largely be neutered before he'll talk about the budget. It's stuff that majority Democrats in the General Assembly have repeatedly said is unacceptable because they say it would hurt the middle class.

Rauner's "path forward for Illinois government" was the same road the Democrats have so far refused to travel and have shown no inclination of ever traveling.

Like the kids who bought the sea monkeys, we probably should have known better.

■ While that event was going on, someone with the Senate Republicans sent out a tweet regarding Senate Minority Leader **CHRISTINE RADOGNO**, R-Lemont.

"Sen. Radogno: Gov. Rauner offered two things today — reforms and compromise. Democrats have to compromise if we are to avoid their tax hike."

Really? Because Rauner has said he's open to revenue enhancements (also known as take hikes) to balance the budget. He wants the legislature to adopt his pro-business and anti-union proposals before he'll talk about it, but he hasn't ruled it out.

Someday there may be an end to the impasse, and tax hikes could well be part of the solution. Some Republicans may well be called on to support them. Until then, the GOP might want to show some restraint before dismissing any tax hike as something being foisted by the Democrats alone.

■ "The path forward on the budget is entirely up to legislators in the supermajority," Rauner, absolving Republicans from any obligation to participate in ending the impasse.

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