

# FORUM

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER • SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

Ted Wolf,  
day news editor: 788-1522  
ted.wolf@sj-r.com

## Statehouse INSIDER

**G**ov. **PAT QUINN**. Get used to it.  
■ Let's take a poll. How many believe that Gov. **ROD BLAGOJEVICH** will resign because it's the right thing to do for the state? How about he quits when he gets something out of it?

■ Attorney General **LISA MADIGAN** jumped in last week, asking the state Supreme Court to strip Blagojevich of virtually all of his powers, gaining national media exposure in the process. Under her proposal, about all Blagojevich could still do is declare **HANNAH MONTANA** Day in Illinois.

She wants Quinn appointed acting governor until Blagojevich is permanently removed by impeachment or he convinces the court that he's rehabilitated and can govern. You have to wonder how much better that solution is compared to what's going on now.

Quinn would have to run a government populated with Blagojevich loyalists and yet would only carry the title "acting governor." Could he get away with trying to "fumigate" the place, as he has said is necessary? Could he get away with reversing Blagojevich decisions to close parks and historic sites and move state jobs around? Or would he be just a seat warmer until the Blagojevich mess is finally, permanently resolved?

■ Obviously, the most stunning development last week was that Blagojevich — who knew his administration was under federal investigation, who knew that investigation included wire taps, who even warned cronies to expect that their conversations were being monitored — nonetheless yakked on for the federal record about selling President-elect **BARACK OBAMA's** open U.S. Senate seat and shaking down contractors for campaign cash before a new law takes effect banning the practice. There is no logical explanation.

The second most stunning development was a poll showing Blagojevich's approval rating a microscopic 8 percent. No, not that the numbers were that low, but that after all that's happened in the last few days, 8 percent of Illinoisans still like the job Blagojevich is doing.

We can only hope that 8 percent are all people who manage to live their lives without the intrusion of reality, like news. Or that they all currently reside in the Illinois political wing of a federal penitentiary and sympathize with the governor. But to think 8 percent believe it's a perfectly acceptable part of a governor's job to sell a U.S. Senate seat is truly disheartening.

■ Of all of the stuff federal investigators caught on tape, maybe the most disgusting was what Blagojevich wanted to do with Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

The state owes the hospital money, but Blagojevich liked the idea of withholding \$8 million until the hospital administrator coughed up a hefty campaign contribution. Withholding the money would be done under the guise of the state's budget problems.

All we've heard ad nauseam from Blagojevich is how he is the health-care governor and how he wants to expand it to more people. Now we know why. The more state-subsidized health care there is, the more opportunity Gov. Health Care would have to shake down providers for money.

■ Best photograph of the week was taken by the Chicago Sun-Times, which stalked out Blagojevich's Chicago home Wednesday morning, the day after he was arrested.

The photographer was there to get pictures of the governor in case he decided to leave the house and go to work. He got a classic. It shows Blagojevich going into an alley at the rear of his house where his state car is waiting to whisk him away. He looks kind of furtive.

A utility pole in the alley is also in the picture. Attached to the pole is a city of Chicago sanitation poster that says "Warning. Target Rats" with a cartoon image of a rat in a bull's-eye. It was there to warn the neighborhood that poisoned rat bait had been placed there.

"Was" is the operative word. After the photograph appeared, the sign disappeared. No one seems to know who did it.

■ The minor league Las Vegas Wranglers hockey team plans to "honor" Blagojevich next month.

The team will wear prison-style black-and-white striped uniforms in a game Jan. 30. The back of the uniforms will have "ILLGOV" followed by the player's number. After the game, the uniforms will be autographed and auctioned for charity. At least some good is coming of this.

Doug Finke can be reached at 788-1527 or doug.finke@sj-r.com.

# IN THE BEGINNING ...



File/The State Journal-Register

Gov. Rod Blagojevich meets with The State Journal-Register editorial board on April 16, 2003. Journalism students from Eastern Illinois University sat in on the session.

## But ego-driven style brings down Blagojevich

By **MATTHEW DIETRICH**  
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

**L**et's make one thing clear up front: We are not surprised that Gov. Rod Blagojevich is facing federal corruption charges.

Like just about everyone else who pays any attention to Illinois politics, we had for years now made a parlor game of wondering just when and how it would happen. Smart money was on a complicated, multicoat indictment announced at a press conference in Chicago by U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald. Then the governor's lawyer would hold a competing press conference to announce that the charges were nonsense. We'd have an arraignment, lots of continuances and a protracted jury selection process. Many months later, an anticlimactic trial would lumber its way through federal court, long on legalese and circumstantial evidence and short on smoking guns. If there was a sentence, it would be appealed. More legalese. More delays. Yawn.

We knew the drill. After all, we had just been through this with our previous governor.

Then came Tuesday morning. G-men awakening the sleeping governor to lead him off in handcuffs. Wiretaps. Bugs. A governor profanely auctioneering the president-elect's old Senate seat. Threatening to take \$8 million away from a hospital for sick children if the CEO didn't cough up \$50,000. The first lady — no slouch at profanity herself — getting in on the effort to get members of the Chicago Tribune editorial board fired. Fitzgerald proclaiming that he had to arrest Blagojevich because the governor could have done too much damage if the feds didn't grab him immediately.

Maybe the Inuit language, with all those words for snow, has a word that might accurately describe our reaction to Fitzgerald's criminal complaint. We know of no word in the English language that means "reading this makes us feel like the whole room is spinning very fast."

We'll settle for "shocked," but that hardly begins to convey our feelings on Blagojevich at this point. To better express those feelings, we have to go back to October 2002, when candidate Blagojevich met for the first time with The State Journal-Register's editorial board.

### Reformer with boundless energy

Then-U.S. Rep. Blagojevich was a striking contrast to both his opponent, Illinois Attorney General Jim Ryan, and the governors of the previous 12 years. Ryan had a serious, prosecutorial demeanor. The governor at the time, George Ryan, was grumpy and standoffish (and is now in prison). His predecessor, Jim Edgar, was conservative politically and personally, and earned the nickname "Governor No" for his tight-fisted fiscal approach. Blagojevich, the surprise winner in a three-way Democratic primary, had a name few could pronounce and a personality that was a living example of the danger of over-caffeination. From the front door of the lobby to the third-floor editorial boardroom, he greeted and glad-handed everyone he encountered. This is a pattern that was repeated several times as Blagojevich became a fairly regular visitor to the SJ-R editorial board through 2006.

As a guest of the board, Blagojevich was an eager and engaging subject. The conversations were on the record, and Blagojevich obviously relished the chance to speak in an open-ended forum, even when his statements were challenged by board members and reporters. He didn't earn our endorsement, but he did make an impression as an energetic candidate intent on cleaning up state government.



File/The State Journal-Register

Blagojevich greets journalism students from Eastern Illinois University during an editorial board meeting at The State Journal-Register on April 16, 2003.

When he met with us after his election, he emphasized his desire to break from "business as usual" in state government, most notably in handing out state jobs as political rewards. This, he said, had caused a problem with "my daughter's grandfather" (Richard Mell, a powerful Chicago alderman) who contacted Blagojevich immediately after the election with his requests for political spoils. Mell did not take kindly to being rebuffed by his son-in-law, Blagojevich said.

One of his first acts after being sworn in the following January was to fire dozens of state employees he said had been illegally shifted into protected positions after the election. Many of the employees later sued and won (after lengthy court proceedings), but Blagojevich's move seemed to signal a change in state hiring philosophy.

In 2005, Blagojevich told the editorial board that he was not eager to grant a casino license to the city of Chicago despite the revenue it would generate for Illinois. Why? Because, he said, all that extra cash would make it impossible for him to trim state government the way he wanted to. The pressure to use the money on new or expanded programs would simply be too great.

"We'll never get the cuts in some of the places we want to get cuts. We won't be able to downsize where we want to downsize, won't be able to make a lot of the hard decisions that I think are necessary to get the budgets in a better position," Blagojevich said.

That statement would be unimaginable today.

### Governing by press release

But almost from the start, Blagojevich's actions were betraying his self-portrait as reformer.

For starters, he did not live in Springfield. That was fine by us — Jim Thompson didn't live here full time either, though he was here during legislative sessions and generally spent a lot of time in Springfield. But Blagojevich usually wasn't here even during General Assembly sessions. He did not work with legislators, preferring to dictate to them and then criticize them when they ignored his wishes. State government offices here became extremely Chicago-centric, with important agency posts being filled by Chicagoans who commuted here every Monday and left on Friday.

He became notorious for publicity stunts funded by

Illinois taxpayers.

In 2004, with the nation facing a shortage of flu vaccine, Blagojevich announced he would get Illinois its own supply from England. He ordered \$2.6 million in vaccine despite being told the federal government would not allow it into the country. When the federal government wouldn't let it in, Illinois got stuck with the bill. The vaccine expired. Blagojevich then tried to send it to Pakistan to help in earthquake relief. But even a disaster-ravaged country won't inject its citizens with expired medicine, and the vaccine was destroyed.

Blagojevich also embarked on a plan to import drugs from Canada in violation of federal law. Hardly anyone used the plan, called I-SaveRX, but it got Blagojevich face time in the national media. He used state employees to promote the plan, requiring some to attend, with pay, an after-hours meeting on its marketing strategy. Using state workers to advance his programs would become a common practice for Blagojevich.

He spearheaded a patently unconstitutional effort to ban some video games from sale to minors. It earned him lots of headlines. The law was later struck down.

And his acumen for fundraising seemed to take precedence over actual governing.

In one particularly embarrassing episode in 2004, Chicago's WLS-TV videotaped Blagojevich's state police security detail stopping traffic at an intersection in California, where Blagojevich was holding a fundraiser.

Embarrassment aside, Blagojevich entered the 2006 campaign with an astounding \$17 million war chest.

### Into the bunker

Blagojevich's relations with this page cooled abruptly in 2006. His visit on Oct. 24, 2006, when he stopped by after the newspaper's annual First Citizen breakfast, was his last. A few weeks earlier, Blagojevich was identified as the "Public Official A" in the first of many federal indictments that would come from kickback schemes involving state boards and the Teachers' Retirement System.

Blagojevich told the editorial board the scandal, which involved his confidant and fundraiser Antoin "Tony" Rezko, "will never touch me" because he was never involved in any discussion about such a "ridiculous and blatantly illegal" scheme.

Around this time, Blagojevich's staff began carefully choreographing his every public appearance, often scooping out back exits to avoid any contact with the press.

The one-time populist candidate who marched in the Illinois State Fair Twilight Parade and greeted every available bystander would now retreat from public view except in controlled settings.

Blagojevich had earlier refused to meet with the SJ-R editorial board for an endorsement interview for the 2006 election. Editorials critical of his governing style led his staff to decide in advance that he would not get our endorsement. They were correct.

"The governor's increasing reluctance to engage the public via the media also bothers us. It is troubling, to say the least, that Blagojevich literally sneaks out of the state Capitol on the rare occasions he is here to avoid questions from reporters," read part of our Oct. 29, 2006, endorsement of his opponent Judy Baar Topinka.

Despite an easy re-election, Blagojevich's aversion to public appearances became even more pronounced.

In November 2007, WBBM-TV Channel 2 in Chicago

See **STYLE** on page 14

## ROLL CALL REPORT ■ How your lawmakers voted

Week ending December 12

**DETROIT BAILOUT:** Members voted, 237-170, to provide General Motors and Chrysler with \$14 billion in loans to keep them solvent through March 2009. In return, all three Detroit-based auto firms would have to restructure their operations under federal direction. A yes vote was to pass HR 7321.

**HOW THEY VOTED:**  
**PHIL HARE (D-17): YES**  
**RAY LAHOOD (R-18): YES**  
**JOHN SHIMKUS (R-19): NO**

**WALL STREET BAILOUT:** Members voted, 403-0, to amend HR 7321 (above) to require more accountability of firms now receiving bailouts in the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP), the \$700 billion Wall Street rescue plan enacted by Congress last month. A yes vote backed the amendment.

**HOW THEY VOTED:**  
**HARE: YES**  
**LAHOOD: YES**  
**SHIMKUS: YES**

**AUTO RESCUE PLAN:** The Senate failed, 52-35, to

reach 60 votes needed to end GOP blockage of a bill designed to prevent the collapse of General Motors and Chrysler while requiring all three Detroit-based auto firms to promptly adopt restructuring plans. A yes vote backed HR 7005.

**HOW THEY VOTED:**  
**DICK DURBIN (D): YES**

### KEY VOTES AHEAD

The 111th Congress is scheduled to convene Jan. 6.

## OBITUARIES

### Joseph E. Blane

SPRINGFIELD — Joseph Eldon Blane, 69, of Springfield died Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2008, at St. John's Hospice.

Staab Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

### Klebert D. Bourlard

PAWNEE — Klebert D. Bourlard, 67, of Pawnee, formerly of Tovey, died Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008, at Taylorville Care Center.

He was born Sept. 25, 1941, in Tovey, the son of Arthur and Amelia Baillieu Bourlard.

Klebert was preceded in death by his parents and a sister, Marylouise Pop.

Klebert was a member of the Pawnee United Methodist Church. He was also a former member of the Polyannas group in Tovey. Klebert enjoyed camping, family functions and sporting events, and he was an avid fan of the Chicago Bears and Chicago White Sox teams.

Klebert is survived by a brother, Eugene (wife, Carol) Bourlard of Tennessee; a sister, Helen Aymer of Pawnee; and several nieces, nephews and cousins.

The family will meet friends Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2008, from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Pawnee United Methodist Church, with the funeral service beginning at 11 a.m. The Rev. Dr. Troy D. Benitone will officiate. Burial will follow at Oak Hill Cemetery in Taylorville.

Memorial contributions may be made to, Special Olympics Illinois, 605 E. Willow St., Normal, IL 61761.

Curry Funeral Home in Pawnee is in charge of arrangements.

Please sign the guestbook at [www.sj-r.com/obits](http://www.sj-r.com/obits)

### Gary L. Davis Sr.

SPRINGFIELD — Gary L. Davis Sr., 65, of Springfield passed from this life on Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2008, at his home.

Gary was born Oct. 10, 1943, in Metropolis, the son of the late Essic and Helen Davis.

Mr. Davis lived in Metropolis, Indianapolis and Louisville, Ky. Gary worked for the state of Illinois as a printer and at Allis-Chalmers as a welder. Gary also worked at the Sangamo Club for more than 20 years. Gary was also employed as the personal assistant to A.D. Van Meter at INB. Gary's last job was at the Sanitation District as lead operator for 21 years.

Gary was most proud of his military service, having served

in the U.S. Navy stationed in France. Gary was the first African-American to pilot a ship. Gary was a member of Second Timothy Baptist Church, serving as a member of the deacon board and the church choir. Gary leaves to cherish his memory wife, Beatrice Davis; four daughters, Gwendolyn Davis, Patricia Davis (Louis Britton), Angela Davis and Beatrice Gailles (Fernando), all of Springfield; three sisters, Lawanda Grier, Cheryl Payne and Cynthia Chambers, all of Springfield; a brother, Larry W. Davis (Janice) Springfield; six grandchildren; an aunt, Evelyn Austin of Louisville; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2008, at Second Timothy Baptist Church, 1122 E. Pine St. Visitation will be held one hour prior to the funeral service. Burial will immediately follow the funeral service at Camp Butler National Cemetery. Walker Funeral Service & Chapel is in charge of arrangements. Please sign the guestbook at [www.sj-r.com/obits](http://www.sj-r.com/obits)

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### Gene T. Fox

HILLSBORO — Gene T. Fox, 80, of Hillsboro died Friday, Dec. 12, 2008, at Memorial Medical Center.

Bass, Patton, Dean Funeral Home in Hillsboro is in charge of arrangements.

### Evelyn A. Haupt

HILLSBORO — Evelyn Alice Williams Haupt, 88, of Hillsboro died Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008, at

Montgomery Nursing and Rehabilitation in Taylor Springs.

Hough and Sons Funeral Home in Hillsboro is in charge of arrangements.

### Harry Martin

JACKSONVILLE — Harry Martin, 78, of Jacksonville died Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008, at Barton W. Stone Home in Jacksonville.

Buchanan and Cody Funeral Home in Jacksonville is in charge of arrangements.

### Helen L. Maxwell

SPRINGFIELD — Helen Louise Maxwell, 82, of Springfield died Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008, at St. Francis Hospital in Peoria.

Arrangements are pending at Kirlin-Egan and Butler Funeral Home.

### Helen L. McKinney

SPRINGFIELD — Helen Louise McKinney, 87, of Springfield died at 6:45 a.m. Friday, Dec. 12, 2008, at Heritage Manor. She was born Nov. 1, 1921, in Petersburg, the daughter of Louis and Louella (Sutton) Hess.

She married Ralph S. McKinney on April 8, 1950; he preceded her in death in 1992.

She was also preceded in death by a daughter, Ruth Rossiter, and sister, Lucille Payne.

She is survived by a daughter, Patricia (husband, Donald) Sutherland of Springfield; two sons, Earl (wife, Pearl) Throop of Springfield and Charles R. (wife, Kathy) McKinney of Georgia; 12 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren; six great-great-grandchildren; and sister, Dorothy Albright.

Helen was a resident of Springfield for three years. She worked at Olin Factory in East Alton, retiring in 1983.

Visitation will be held from 9 a.m. until the time of funeral services at 10 a.m. Monday, Dec. 15, 2008, at Staab Funeral Home. Burial will be at Farmington Cemetery in Farmingdale.

StaabObituary.com  
Please sign the guestbook at [www.sj-r.com/obits](http://www.sj-r.com/obits)

### Gerald F. Murphy

FARMERSVILLE — Gerald Frances "Jay" Murphy, 80, of Farmersville passed away Friday, Dec. 12, 2008, at St. John's Hospice.

He was born Dec. 13, 1927, in Harvel, the son of John and Marie Langen Murphy.

He is survived by his wife, Sandra of Farmersville; a daughter,



Lisa Murphy of Champaign; two sons, Brent Murphy of Manistee, Mich., and Shawn Murphy (wife, Melissa) of Potomac; four grandchildren, Ellen, Nancy, Bradley and Colton; five step-daughters, Laura Wainwright, Andrea Silva, Stefani Henderson, Shawna Henderson and Nicole Mitts; three brothers, John Murphy and Harold Murphy, both of Farmersville, and James Murphy of British Columbia; a sister, Dorothy McGuire of New York; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

He is preceded in death by his parents and two brothers, Carl Murphy and Roy Murphy. He was a member of St. Mary's Church and Knights of Columbus in Farmersville and was also a volunteer for Meals on Wheels in Farmersville.

He was owner of Murphy Insurance and Real Estate for many decades and a member of the Illinois Board of Realtors.

Visitation will be held from 3 to 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008, at St. Mary's Church in Farmersville, with a prayer service at 3 p.m.

Funeral Mass will be at 10 a.m. Monday, Dec. 15, 2008, at St. Mary's Church. Burial will be at St. Martin's Cemetery in Farmersville.

Memorials may be made to St. Mary's Church or to a charity of the donor's choice.

Hough Memorial Home in Farmersville is in charge of arrangements.

Condolences may be left at [www.houghfuneralhome.com](http://www.houghfuneralhome.com).

Please sign the guestbook at [www.sj-r.com/obits](http://www.sj-r.com/obits)

### David R. Ridenour

SPRINGFIELD — David R. Ridenour, 53, of Springfield died Wednesday, Dec. 3, 2008, at St. John's Hospital.

Ellinger-Kunz and Park Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

### Russell Sparks

HILLSBORO — Russell Sparks, 96, of Hillsboro died Friday, Dec. 12, 2008, at Hillsboro Rehabilitation and Health Care.

Bass, Patton, Dean Funeral Home in Hillsboro is in charge of arrangements.

### Christopher A. White

HILLSBORO — Christopher Allen White, 24, of Hillsboro died Friday, Dec. 12, 2008, at Memorial Medical Center.

Bass, Patton, Dean Funeral Home in Hillsboro is in charge of arrangements.

## Ball-Chatham building options

Possible building options for the Ball-Chatham School District include:

1. New pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade elementary school

■ Size: 87,500 square feet  
■ Capacity: 700 students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade in the district overall

■ Projected cost: \$17 million  
■ Adjustments: This option would require the district to move fourth grade from Glenwood Intermediate School to the elementary school buildings. Remaining grades would be reconfigured between Glenwood Middle School and GIS buildings.

2. New middle school

■ Size: 115,000 square feet  
■ Capacity: 700 students for the new building, 1,700 students for fifth through eighth grade in the district overall

■ Projected cost: \$21.4 million for stand-alone building, cost could go up if district needs to acquire land and develop infrastructure

■ Adjustments: Fifth grade would move to the middle school level, and fifth through eighth grades would be divided into two 650-student facilities. Remaining grades would be reconfigured.

3. Convert Glenwood Intermediate School to a second middle school with an addition to its current building and build a new elementary school

■ Size: 30,000 square feet for the GIS addition and 87,500 square feet for the elementary school

■ Capacity: 650 middle school students for the converted GIS (1,850 in the district overall) and 700 students for the new elementary building (2,100 elementary students in the district overall)

■ Projected cost: \$5.5 million for the GIS addition, \$17 million for new elementary building

■ Adjustments: One adjustment would involve redistricting elementary students to three 700-

student schools, and fifth through eighth grades would be divided between two 650-student facilities. Fourth grade would be moved to the elementary school buildings.

\*\* These building projects could be built on 43 acres of the district owns along South Second Street in Springfield or an undetermined location.

Other possible building projects:

■ Demolish and replace the 1926 section of Ball Elementary School for \$2.4 million (it would cost \$1.2 million alone to bring this section up to code).

■ Add 30 classrooms to the south side of Glenwood High School, increasing capacity to 1,800 to 1,900 students. Estimated cost: \$9 million.

■ Expand GHS with a 24,000-square-foot addition included in the original plans for the high school, which was built in 2001; facilities could include a pool, fitness center, classrooms and locker rooms at a cost of \$6.2 million.

■ Displace pre-kindergarten students from classrooms at Ball Elementary to another, undetermined location.

■ Expand the school district office to accommodate needs associated with the district's likely departure from the Sangamon Area Special Education District.

Contingency plans if the district does not build a new facility:

■ Increase class sizes

■ Relocate the district's pre-kindergarten program out of Ball Elementary to another location

■ Use modular classrooms

■ Reassign elementary students to balance class sizes regardless of district boundaries for the two elementary schools

■ Establish a floating boundary that's re-determined by the incoming kindergarten class each year

Source: Ball-Chatham School Superintendent Bob Gillum

## BAKKE

### ■ From page 11

displayed at a museum in Hannibal, Mo. The legacy from Art's life that echoes loudest today comes from his ventriloquism. He carved his own ventriloquist's dolls, the best-known being a buck-toothed character named Harry O'Shea. Art and Harry regularly performed around Springfield on TV shows and for Gov. William Stratton's children's Christmas party, held in the 1950s at the Illinois State Armory.

When Art was in his 70s, he received a letter from an aspiring ventriloquist. Jay Johnson was just a teenager at the time. He had come across Art's name in a magazine and written to him. Art responded, and the two struck up a friendship.

Johnson became one of the most famous ventriloquists in the country. He and his wisecrack dummy, Bob, were regulars with Billy Crystal and Katherine Helmond on the TV show "Soap."

In 2004, Johnson told the story to Playbill's Roger Maxwell.

"I called (Art Sieving) on the phone," Johnson said. "We talked for an hour. I was 17, he was 71."

"He told me he was retired, didn't know how I got his telephone number, but said he'd send me pictures of his work as a sculptor of ventriloquist's dolls. I got the pictures, and it was indeed what I was waiting for. When I called back, he told me he had already started. Art Sieving. Just a sweet, sweet guy. He's gone now. He used to say his act was very 'die-sieving.'"

Sieving carved a puppet named Squeaky for Johnson. That was to be the puppet Johnson used on "Soap" until the executives on the show decided Squeaky was too nice. So Bob got the job and became famous instead of Art's puppet. Whenever Johnson performs his stage show "The Two and Only," he still tells the story of how he was influenced by Springfield's Art Sieving.

Dave Bakke can be contacted at 788-1541 or [dave.bakke@sj-r.com](mailto:dave.bakke@sj-r.com).

## STYLE

### ■ From page 13

reported that Blagojevich had made an average of one public appearance every five days in the previous four months. The station staked out the governor's home (where he was arrested on Tuesday) in an effort to track his work habits.

"With the knowledge of his state police body-guard detail, CBS2 news watched for several days over three weeks, repeatedly finding the governor at home during normal business hours with no one other than his family coming and going," reporter Mike Flannery said in his report.

### Government breakdown

By early 2008, Operation Board Games had become the defining element of the Blagojevich governorship. Yet you would not have known that listening to his budget address in February. Nor would you have known that Illinois was in serious money trouble, as Blagojevich spoke of new programs, child tax credits for families and a \$25 billion capital construction program.

Idealistic to the point of delusion, Blagojevich spoke of leasing the state lottery (an idea already rejected twice by lawmakers) and a variety of other novel schemes to pay for his many ideas.

Blagojevich's big plans hit walls on two fronts. First, lawmakers predictably rejected all his money-making plans (which included leasing the lottery, moving hundreds of millions of dollars out of dedicated funds in the budget and "securitizing" state assets for quick cash). Second, despite provisions intended to largely remove the governor from the money-handling process of the capital plan, lawmakers still didn't trust Blagojevich being anywhere near such a huge pot of money.

The session ended on May 31 with the General Assembly sending the governor a budget he claimed was \$2 billion out of balance. That began a standoff that endures today.

On Nov. 30, Springfield's historic Dana-Thomas House, along with dozens of historic sites across the state, shut its doors because of cuts Blagojevich made to the budget.

Throughout all of this, Blagojevich refused to entertain any talk of a sales or income tax increase.

Before Tuesday, lawmakers were hoping that a new session in January with a new Senate president might break the stalemate.

### It all changed Dec. 9

For many people in Illinois, the morning of Dec. 9 provided a 9/11 moment. We remember exactly where we were when we heard of Blagojevich's arrest. Though we expected an indictment of Blagojevich in Operation Board Games at some point, we weren't prepared for the suddenness or the tawdry details that emerged that day.

Nor did we ever anticipate the utter stupidity of a governor who knows he is in the sights of arguably the nation's top federal prosecutor yet openly flaunts his desire to sell the most famous vacant seat in Washington.

We all knew Blagojevich was transparently vindictive. In May, he decided abruptly to close Pontiac Correctional Center — a move that would destroy the economy of an entire county — to punish a senator who voted for a bill that would have allowed voters to recall public officials from office. Yet we had no idea he would take \$8 million from a children's hospital because its CEO failed to make a \$50,000 campaign donation.

We knew he was vain (tales of his Illinois State Police hairbrush detail are legendary), but we had no idea his image-consciousness would lead to scheming for the firing of editorial writers who criticized him. (Despite our best efforts over the years, we didn't make the governor's hit list.)

The national media have fixated on Blagojevich's non-existent ties to Obama and on the amazing details contained in Tuesday's criminal complaint as they pertain to selling Obama's Senate seat. They miss the real story in doing so.

First, Blagojevich had been poison to Obama for years. Tuesday's complaint, in which he fantasized about a Cabinet position with Obama, only confirms the delusional nature so many Illinoisans had long suspected of Blagojevich.

Second, those terrifically salacious details may be fascinating, but they're only a small part of the Blagojevich story. That is a story of five-plus years of ego-driven, inept government that has left Illinois in its worst financial shape in decades — perhaps ever.

It's the story of a vibrant, young candidate who in 2002 had the world in front of him. All he had to do was not make the mistakes of his prison-bound predecessor and, presumably, the sky would be the limit.

For this page, the contrast between the enthusiastic candidate we met in 2002 and the sullen figure sneaking into an SUV in an alleyway on Wednesday is jarring. But in the big picture, it's not surprising.

## VOTE

### ■ From page 9

mation available and evidence of our conditions," he said Thursday. "I'm somewhat pleasantly surprised that the public understands that we can't dedicate all of our reserve resources into any one project because our needs are kindergarten through 12th. It's not just elementary or secondary, that's the message they're giving us."

Building options on the table include a new \$17 million pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade school, a \$21.4 million school for fifth through eighth grades or a \$5.5 million addition to Glenwood Intermediate School that would convert it into a middle school along with a new elementary building.

All possibilities would involve reconfiguring how grade levels are grouped and probably would require expansion or renovations to existing buildings.

After attending Thursday's forum, Dawn Bergschneider of Springfield said she favors converting Glenwood Intermediate School, which currently houses fourth and fifth grades, and Glenwood Middle School, which has sixth through eighth grades, into two 5-8 middle schools. The second part of that plan calls for building a pre-kindergarten through fourth grade building on 43 acres of land the district owns along South Second Street in Springfield.

Bergschneider, the parent of three students in the district, says the district's space crunch is evident.

"I'm very concerned about their education and especially overcrowding in the classrooms. That's a big issue that you see first-hand from your kids. And we moved from the Springfield district to the Chatham district for smaller class sizes," she said.

Andrea Parker of Chatham attended Wednesday night's meeting concerned about any of the plans would affect her taxes.

Gillum says there is no solid figure for the tax impact because a building proposal has not been developed. With reserves in the district working cash and education

funds expected to exceed \$4 million and \$20 million, respectively, in 2009, Gillum said cash reserves could also be used to pay for some of the construction.

Though he's loosely given the figure of \$10 million, he said it will be up to the board to decide how much the district can afford to contribute.

If a building project goes forward, Parker, whose five grandchildren will go through the district, hopes the district contributes as much as it can.

"We've got a lot of people in our community that are older people. ... They're on Social Security, and they can't move, and they can't afford any more tax increases," she said.

Parker also is concerned about whether the district might decide to spend a disproportionate amount on sports venues and equipment, as opposed to instructional space.

"I think in this economy, we have to stick to bare bones and do the best for education and let the people who are involved in sports worry about providing sporting equipment and stuff like that," Parker said.

Hope Gooding of Springfield also attended Wednesday's forum and said she was struck by how tight classroom space has become in all five of the district's buildings.

She and her husband, Chris Ryan, are the parents of four children, three of whom are students in the district. The couple agreed a new elementary school would be the best building option.

"Our kids will be past that point once it's finished, but it just makes more sense the way the students are now reallocated to go that route," Ryan said.

Gillum told attendees the district's K-3 enrollment has grown by 28 percent since 2001, a trend he attributes to the greater amount of affordable housing for young families in Chatham and southern Springfield, which also is part of the Ball-Chatham district.

"I know several elementary parents that are upset about art and music lessons being held in the cafeteria," Gooding said.

While Gooding and Ryan thought Gillum's presentation was helpful, they wished more parents would have attended.

## PAYDAY

### ■ From page 9

be put in place for "economic development and to spur future growth on MacArthur Boulevard."

"It's predatory lending at its best," she said. "The state legislature provides statutes that govern these kinds of businesses. Our hands are tied. The only way we can utilize more balanced economic development in business is to place these zoning restrictions on these type of businesses."

The MacArthur Boulevard Association sent out 2,800 pre-addressed "Enough Is Enough,"

postcards designed to be sent to the aldermen who voted against the ordinance, as well as one who was absent.

Cory Jobe, chairman of the association, said the group wants the city to help prevent the payday loan and title companies from being "piled on top of each other."

He said the presence of so many payday loan and title stores along MacArthur Boulevard hurts their ability to attract additional retail or niche businesses. "We're not asking to shut them out of business," Jobe said. "They're a viable business in the city of Springfield. ... All we're doing is asking for a simple zoning procedure."