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Rauner may not enjoy this veto session

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

The legislative "veto session" that begins next week is not likely to be a pleasant experience for Gov. Bruce Rauner, and not just because he recently was reminded that he [may not be the wealthiest candidate](#) on the ballot next year. No, the Democrat J. B. Pritzker is one of the nation's richest 400. Rauner is not.

Rauner will just have to be satisfied that his income was \$90 million last year and that no one seems to be agitating for the tax documents that would show the source of all that money. Is it enough to purchase the office of governor next year? His poll numbers are a bit down. I'd say he's politically quite vulnerable.

Is Pritzker the next governor? I think not. His past cozy relationship with the disgraced former governor Rod Blagojevich will dampen his support in the Democratic primaries - in spite of the labor endorsements and support by party chairman (and House Speaker) Michael Madigan. Money can't buy you love.

But Christopher Kennedy, the more likely winner of the Democratic primary for governor, is a member of a magical political family, nephew of President John F. Kennedy and the son of Robert F. Kennedy, both tragically assassinated in the 1960s. Money he has, but it is not needed; he already has love.

Rauner's problems are in his own party. A bloc of House Republicans, angered and frightened by the two-year lapse in state budgets that Rauner caused, defected in the spring to join the Democrats in enacting budgets for FY 2017 and 2018, plus a tax increase to pay for them and statutory changes to implement them.

That outraged Rauner.

The governor later signed into law a bill that guarantees the availability of abortions for Illinois women even if the 1973 Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*, legalizing abortions nationwide, is overturned by the current Supreme Court.

That [outraged many Republicans](#).

Meanwhile, the extreme political polarization that has intensified during Rauner's first (and possibly last) term in office has taken its toll on incumbent legislators of both parties. At this time, a dozen members of the House GOP caucus have declare that they will not seek reelection next year.

The same number of House Democrats also will not seek reelection next year. Three have already left and have been replaced. But the three newly appointed Democrats and the nine who will be lame ducks for more than a year are most likely to remain loyal to Madigan and the party caucus.

Rauner cannot count on such loyalty from the departing Republicans.

A commission on the Tax Credit Scholarship program (AKA \$75 million/year voucher scheme) is now proposed by state [Rep. LaShawn K. Ford](#) (D-Chicago), a thoughtful and patient legislator who has been a member of the House since 2007. The House Rules Committee received [HB 4089](#) last week.

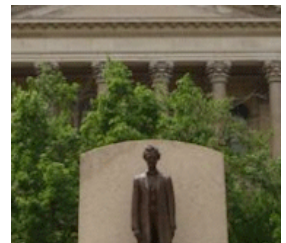
The bill envisions a commission of ten members - two appointed each by the four legislative caucus leaders and the governor - who would serve three purposes:

"(1) with input from members of the General Assembly, school board members, the State Board of Education, and other experts, set standards for the tax credit scholarship program created under the Invest in Kids Act;

"(2) gather information from schools, school districts, parents, the State Board of Education, and legal experts regarding the legality of the tax credit scholarship program and how to make the program function for students and their families; and

"(3) hold hearings open to the public that explain the tax credit scholarship program."

The commission, with administrative support provided by the Illinois State Board of Education, would issue to the General Assembly a report - consisting information it gathers and its recommendations, if any - by January 1, 2019, to be updated annually for four more years - before being dissolved on December 31, 2024.



Typically, legislation surfacing so late in a year is either carried over until the next year or just allowed to die. But this bill could be enacted during six days of the "[veto session](#)" beginning Tuesday. It seems to make sense that a program which could cost the state up to \$375 million in five years should be monitored.

Will Ford's bill be enacted? That depends on the mood of the chamber leaders - House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton - and on the inclination of legislators for whom education policy is a personal interest. It may go nowhere; it may be expedited and passed. We'll see.

A bill that surely will not see the light of day would be [HB 4105](#), a subtly and wonderfully defiant bill sponsored by the irrepressible [Rep. Mary Flowers](#) (D-Chicago). It would designate every September as the "Education of Original National Anthem Month" - whose relevance we (or at least I) will consider momentarily.

Another bill whose future seems uncertain is [HB 4094](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jeanne Ives](#) (R-Wheaton), which would require the State Board of Education to withhold funding from a school district whose top county assessment officer "intentionally fails to properly and accurately prepare assessments" until such assessments have been "correctly prepared." The story behind this bill will be interesting, for sure, but I don't see it advancing.

Now, about Rep. Flowers' bill and how it relates to a current national controversy, a rhetorical altercation involving race and a sport so popular that it is considered by many to be the true "national passtime." For this segment you will have to keep an open mind to the end - *or else just drop out now*.

I raised the question last week: Was ist Aufklärung? Yes, translated that means, "[What is enlightenment?](#)" The essay by that title was written in 1784 - just five years before the adoption of the United States Constitution - by Immanuel Kant, a philosopher who's had a powerful influence on most other deep thinkers ever since.

Kant and other Enlightenment philosophers - particularly, before him, [John Locke](#) - guided the thinking of our nation's most instrumental founding fathers; truly, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin were steeped in the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Our Constitution reflects that philosophy.

What was the gist of Kant's essay? It was simply this: Enlightenment requires that any citizen must be free to express his own ideas and opinions, *in public and without fear*. Any society in which that is *not possible remains in the Dark Ages*. In that respect, where does America reside today? That's right, in the Dark Ages.

This unfortunate truth is illustrated by the reaction of many to the trend begun last year by an NFL quarterback in which players "take a knee" - rather than standing as league rules require - during the playing of the National Anthem. It's been called a "[teachable moment](#)." There must be a reason. What is it?

The rule-violator is San Francisco 49er [Colin Kaepernick](#). He is wealthy, of course, and is a highly-rated quarterback. He has since lost his job, but [he explained his reasons](#) for not standing for the anthem:

"I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color," he told NFL Media. "[T]his is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder."

Kaepernick was referring mainly to the high-profile incidents in which police officers shot and killed black men, often without any apparent threat to the police, and seemingly without any criminal or civil, or even any professional, penalties that the shooters had to face. Here's a [database you can search](#).

Now other black athletes are joining in the protest. What is their problem? They're all making millions just for playing a game. Shouldn't they be happy, and even grateful, to have been given such a privilege? Let's take a look around.

It is true that armed police have killed more white people than African Americans, but when proportions of the population are taken into account, black men are 2.5 times as likely as white men to have the lives ended this way. But that's not the only dismal statistic undermining black Americans' faith in the country.

Research has found that young whites and blacks wear "illegal smiles" at about the same rates (whites just a tad more), but blacks were "four times as likely to be arrested" for marijuana use. [\[See slides 3 and 4.\]](#) Prison? Blacks are ten times as likely to be incarcerated as whites - and that's [just the Illinois data](#).

Black American men are typically [twice as likely to be unemployed](#); they are [paid less than any other racial](#) group; they hold [just one-sixteenth of the wealth](#) of an average white. Why don't they close the gap through higher education? That [door has been closing on them](#) in recent times of "austerity."

Could they still be carrying a grudge about the [centuries of slavery](#), and [all the subsequent lynching](#), and the segregation in housing, in employment, in education - in public facilities - legally imposed on them for most of the 20th century? Could that be what's gnawing at them now? Why don't they just get over it?

Could the racism of the anthem itself be an issue? You didn't know about that? Francis Scott Key wrote the lyrics (later set to the tune of a German beerhall song) during the War of 1812. The war began with a U.S. attempt to take Canada from the British, who resisted successfully with the help of slaves they recruited.

The slaves were subsequently freed by the British. Key *refers scornfully to the slaves*, with joyful optimism that they would be killed; this message is in the anthem's third stanza:

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,

*That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a Country should leave us no more?
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.*

A 2014 [article in Harpers](#), written by a proud descendant of one of the British officers, tells the story of that war, of the role of the recruited slaves, of his ancestor who freed 6,000 of them. This article should be part of any teachable moment about this matter. Looks to me like Kaepernick may have a point.

But what about Mary Flowers' recently filed bill? [HB 4105](#) is a simple bill containing no anger about racism nor any mention of football. It merely designates each September as "Education of Original National Anthem Month" in order to "promote the study of the history behind [the anthem], *including its original lyrics and the individuals represented* by those lyrics." [Emphasis by ISNS.] Very slick, Mary Flowers.

More about the Janus "fair share" litigation: As we reported, Rauner has succeeded in getting a case before the U.S. Supreme Court, a case that could very well overturn a 40-year-old precedent and lead to the end of public employee unions as we know them. I'll let a [retired teacher tell you about it](#).

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