



Jim Broadway

Jim Broadway's

Illinois School News Service

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Who wants to stifle advice about the flu?

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

The 2017-18 flu season has been a pretty severe one [by all accounts](#). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention predicted earlier in the year that hospitalizations and deaths from this year's flu would exceed the grim statistics racked up in the swine flu epidemic season of 2009-10. That flu "sickened 60.8 million Americans, hospitalized 274,304 and killed 12,469," Bloomberg reported in Fortune Magazine back in February.

The Illinois Department of [Public Health issued a report](#) at the end of March showing that the state has not been spared. The age group that was hit the hardest was the old folks, like me. That's to be expected. But next in line, getting hit hard, was the 0-4-year-olds. It is truly sad when helpless tykes are distressed.

But it's preventable. [The CDC advises](#): "The single best way to protect against seasonal flu and its potential severe complications is for children to get a seasonal influenza vaccine each year. Flu vaccination is recommended for all children aged 6 months and older." Be prepared. A "[second wave](#)" [may be coming](#).

It's not just our own children who are at risk. "Making healthy choices at school and at home can help prevent the flu and spreading flu to others," the CDC advisory continues. This is particularly relevant at school. Who would want their child to get infected by another child? *Who would want this advice suppressed?*

Well, as you probably know, some folks believe the earth is flat, the moon landing was faked, President Obama was born in Kenya and flu vaccination causes autism. And there are also folks who profit by opposing immunization. One such organization (if it truly is one) is the [Illinois Coalition for Informed Consent](#).

The IC4IC, as it is called for short, was said to be formed in 2016. But their "[Who we are](#)" page doesn't say who they are. They have a "[Donate](#)" page but it is still "coming soon." A donation might not be tax-deductible. ([Guidestar](#) doesn't list them.) They are not registered to lobby. IC4IC looks very much like a scam.

But they've generated most of the [more than 630 electronic witness slips](#) in opposition to [HB 4475](#), a bill that would just add the latest CDC flu advisory to health-related information school districts are already required to distribute to parents. The bill is posted for a [House committee hearing](#) at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

[Rep. Laura Fine](#) (D-Glenview) probably became aware of the severity of this year's flu season and thought of the School Code as a good statute to use to get the word out. But [IC4IC mobilized opposition](#) (see bottom of page) to her bill. The group claims an affiliation with the "[National Vaccine Information Center](#)," an organization whose president seems to be [taking care of her relatives](#) with proceeds from donations.

Selling fear is not just profitable, it's easy. Easier than writing a newsletter.

The House PK-12 appropriations committee convenes at 1 p.m. today to hear testimony on ISBE items: Parenting Mentoring, National Board Certified Teachers, Career & Technical Ed, Special Education, Teach for America, Teacher Mentoring, Healthy Community, P-20 Council, and INCS (charter schools).

[The hearing will be](#) in Room D-1 of the Stratton Building. You may be able to monitor it [at this link](#).

[HB 5074](#) is also posted to be considered. The bill is sponsored by [Rep. Patricia Bellock](#) (R-Westmont) and would authorize, subject to appropriation, an ISBE distribution of grants "to school districts for the purpose of collaborating with community mental health providers to provide mental health services to the students."

Also posted is [HB 5195](#), sponsored by [Rep. LaToya Greenwood](#) (D-East St. Louis), which would allow a school district to provide transportation for children living less than 1.5 miles from their school if it is determined that walking "constitutes a serious hazard to the safety of the pupil due to a course or pattern of criminal activity."

As reported last week, the House PK-12 committee on [Licensing, Administration & Oversight](#) convenes at 8 a.m. Tuesday, and the House PK-12 committee on [School Curriculum & Policies](#) follows at 10 a.m. Tuesday, both with huge agendas. (At either link, you can file a witness slip, just like IC4IC.)

The [Senate Education Committee](#) is scheduled to convene Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. with a hefty agenda of 28 measures, bills and amendments, to consider. This committee hears the full range of education issues, teacher credentialing, pay and



staffing, curriculum issues, district governance - everything PK-12.

Let's talk about politics for a minute now. My friend Jim Nowlan, who truthfully describes himself as a "former legislator and aide to three *unindicted* governors," has framed the gubernatorial battle between incumbent Gov. Bruce Rauner and his billionaire Democrat challenger JB Pritzker as a "[classic capital-labor fight](#)."

Again, it's how Rauner got rich that's his problem. "Rauner made his money as a private equity investor. His company borrows money to buy companies, pumps them up and sells them for a big profit," Nowlan explains. Then he describes the kicker: "Doing so requires a *hard-nose approach to employees*."

Yes, to "earn" the maximum possible on a given deal you usually have to put the screws to the workers. That's how Rauner became a billionaire. It's given him habits he just can't seem to break, such as [lying about almost everything](#). Pritzker got unimaginably wealthy the old-fashioned way, [through inheritance](#).

Seriously, it makes a difference. The Pritzker family was able to turn its attention to philanthropy long before JB was born. So he has a family culture of community involvement, rather than an ingrained sense that workers need to be screwed. If he can get past his [his phone chat with Blago](#), JB will be our next governor.

But that's not the Nowlan article I wanted you to see. There's a more important [package of wisdom](#) from Nowlan's keyboard, something that I believe is essential - but also a major challenge - if Illinois is ever to see democracy again. I refer, of course, to a constitutional amendment on redistricting.

In Illinois, as in most states, the party in control at census time gets to redraw legislative and congressional district maps. The map-makers pack minority party voters densely into "safe" districts, and then draw as many districts as possible that majority party candidates should be able to easily win.

Thus legislators from districts densely packed with voters of their party have no fear of a November general election foe and, therefore, tack to the right (or the left) to head off any challenge from the "fringe" of their own parties. That stiffens the polarization and leads to gridlock and other democracy malfunctions.

Now [Rep. Ryan Spain](#) (R-Peoria, a former student of Jim's at University of Illinois) and [Sen. Julie Morrison](#) (D-Deerfield, another former student of Jim's, this one at Knox College), are lead sponsors of resolutions calling for an amendment to the constitution that would have a less partisan commission draw the maps.

Morrison's measure is [SJRC 22](#). Spain's is [HJRC 43](#). They are similar in that they both would create a commission to draw the district boundaries. And both are pretty complicated, which is necessary. I would urge you to review Spain's proposal for one reason - the [strong bipartisan support](#) in his chamber.

Who would oppose a fairer, less partisan redistricting process? Well, Jim suspects House Speaker Michael Madigan, who also chairs the Illinois Democratic Party, might try to bottle them up. In his article ([here's the link again](#)), Jim gives his readers detailed instructions on how to "have an effect" on this important issue.

Identify your [senator and representative](#). Call their offices and ask for their email addresses. Email them and ask if they will support redistricting reform in HJRC 43. Ask them also if they will vote to "discharge" the resolution from the House Rules Committee for a vote, if necessary. (Good luck on that.)

If you don't get a reply within a week, call the legislators' offices and politely request answers to your questions. Then report the responses (or lack thereof) to Jim Nowlan (his email address is in his article, linked above), so he can relay the information to his former students. Finally, Jim says, "Don't despair."

There is a time element. The House and Senate must adopt a resolution for a constitutional amendment at least six months before the election in which a ratification vote would take place. Election day is November 6 this year. So, Spain's or Morrison's proposal would have to be adopted by May 5.

Links to newsletters posted so far this year are available [at this web page link](#). Please remember that *current* ISNS archives are for our subscribers only; *do not share this link*. Also, all 2017 issues can be found in the [web page at this link](#). You may share the 2017 archives web page link with anyone who wants to see it.

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