



Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Fwd: Now 'others will want more'? Stop saying that!

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>
To: Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Mon, Aug 26, 2019 at 8:18 AM

September board meeting

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From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>

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To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>

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Now 'others will want more'? *Stop saying that!*

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

[To check on the status of a bill of interest to educators that the General Assembly passed in the spring, [click on this link](#). Bills are labeled by topic and summarized as to their effects. Gov. JB Pritzker has vetoed three bills that we are tracking, signed 47 into law - and *he has until Wednesday to act* on the other 18.]

My best expertise - the most lucrative one - is PR. Framing issues for maximum public agreement, that's my forte. In the late 1980s, I wrote and directed a referendum to *double the property tax rate* for a taxing body that had been infamous for corruption in Madison and St. Clair counties. We *garnered 76% of the vote*.

When I launched ISNS in 1995, one of my promises to PK-12 education leaders was that I would use my commentaries to frame issues in ways that would help them, that I would express arguments that would both be true and would also evoke agreement and support from public constituencies. Perhaps I have let you down.

Long ago, I should have advised you on the teachers' minimum wage issue. If some teachers in your district are making less than the \$40,000 per year minimum [HB 2078](#) will require by 2023 ([now that it's the law](#)), you'll gain nothing by complaining that school employees in higher pay grades will "want more now."

If you have an argument that \$40,000 is too much to pay a new teacher, come out with it. But to say we should hold them down to keep others from wanting raises too is, well, it's not responsive to the issue of whether the teachers deserve the money. It won't help you in bargaining, or in recruiting, or in any other way.

[On a *positive note*, I have not yet seen a media account in which *anyone who subscribes to ISNS* has complained that "now others will want more." You did it right without my meddling. I'm proud of you.]

Will the pay hike solve the teacher shortage? It was sold on the claim that it would help in that regard, but I doubt that it will have any measurable impact in the long run. And, folks, there certainly *will be a long run*. The *causes* of the teacher shortage lingered for decades - and *recovery* will take a very long time.

As [the latest update](#) from the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools reports, the "educator shortage crisis" (their description) was even worse last year than it was in 2017. But it's not just in Illinois. The Economic Policy Institute reports it as "the perfect storm in the teacher labor market."

Sure, the EPI leans left, like me, but they have some exceptional talent on their staff. [Emma Garcia](#) has a doctorate in economics and education from Columbia University; [Elaine Weiss](#) is a Harvard law grad with a doctorate in public policy from George Washington U. Their five-parter on the teacher shortage is stunning.

You can [access their work here](#). Part 1 quantifies the crisis ("worse than we thought"). Part 2 describes the schools' "struggle" to find teachers. Part 3 details the effects of teachers' low pay. Part 4 adds negative "work environments" to the mix of causal factors. Part 5 talks about an erosion of professional supports.

The causes preclude a quick solution. As ISNS readers know, journalists see a "persona" for each profession they cover. The persona of teachers and front-line healthcare providers, for example, is positive and nurturing. Hedge fund managers, not so much. Key point: *people's feelings are tied to their professional personas*.

Here's an example. Years ago, a top St. Clair County trial lawyer asked me to do some image-building to improve public support for his profession. His feelings had been hurt by the laughing [Jurassic Park](#) theater audience that *cheered* when a T-rex pulled the lawyer from the port-a-potty and gulped him down. (Stop laughing.)

Well, educators' feelings get hurt too. Imagine how teachers felt on April 26, 1983 when the Reagan Administration's Commission on Excellence in Education issued a report entitled "[A Nation At Risk](#)," which denigrated the entire profession in [ways that took a decade to unravel](#), leading off with this charge:

"[W]hile we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished ... the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a *rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people*." [Emphasis mine.] Years of teacher-bashing thus began.

The attack on educators had two apparent goals. One was to blame "someone else" for the bad economy corporate leaders had caused in the 1980s. But more than that, it was the start of a corporate *takeover*, an effort to "reform" the educational system and make it churn out passive workers and avid consumers.

Business leaders seemed truly to believe that children are "raw materials" that can be conveyor-belted into a school (factory) and that processes that are the same for each (standardized) will turn them all into good "products" by the end of the assembly line (graduation). The "industrial model" was all they knew.

Rather than having their work evaluated by veteran educators (principals who supervised them), teachers were thereafter vulnerable to adverse assessments based in part on the test scores of their students, despite [out-of-school factors](#) known to hold scores down. "Poverty is no excuse," a former State Superintendent declared.

The security of tenure - a low-cost job-protection that used to be valuable in attracting teachers in spite of the low pay (which most Americans [now realize is too low](#)) - was taken away. The prospect of a decent pension after 35 years or so on the job also has been eroded significantly, and remains under threat.

The job is just no longer so attractive, and other professional opportunities have opened up for women, traditionally the majority of educators. What's the answer? Better pay across the board? Return of tenure? Paid sabbaticals? Full pre-2011 pension plans? Classroom autonomy? Respect? Recovery *may require it all*, folks.

The "Kick-Chicago-Out" effort *is a movement*, even though House [Republican Leader Jim Durkin](#) told veteran political writer Bernard Schoenburg that [HR 101](#) is not a real attempt to separate Chicago from the rest of Illinois. It's "just political rhetoric" by some Republicans who are "[playing the game of reelection](#)," Durkin opined.

He forgot to mention that it's illegal for state officials or employees to use state resources - such as computers and the legal staff of the [Legislative Reference Bureau](#) - for political purposes. That may be one reason why the sponsor of the resolution dismisses his own caucus leader's claim about his motives.

[Rep. Brad Halbrook](#) told Schoenburg his resolution is a way for downstate legislators to express their constituents' "frustration with a lack of respect for our values and our way of life." Rural county residents are "tired of these far-left policies being forced on those of us who simply have a different point of view," he said.

Halbrook didn't get into the details with Schoenburg, but the [text of his resolution](#) asserts that "The majority of residents in downstate Illinois disagree with City of Chicago residents on key issues such as gun ownership, abortion, immigration" and other issues. He may be right. Most rural counties are pretty red.

A [TV station reaching rural residents](#) in three states claims the movement to separate Chicago is "gaining momentum." The station has posted video that reveals just how stark the divisions are in the way people think in Illinois, and nationally. *Why is this?* That is a topic of great importance and we will examine it - but later.

HR 101 has drawn national attention. [Governing Magazine](#) went into great detail, pointing out that Halbrook's proposal is not unprecedented; Maine used to be a part of Massachusetts and West Virginia used to be part of Virginia. [Governing](#) interviewed Halbrook, who expanded his list of grievances.

And there is an organization. It is called [New Illinois Inc.](#), and it has been holding meetings that have drawn large crowds to rural Illinois venues. It posted a calendar of events ([Capital rally, July 4, 2021](#)), instructions on how to "[get involved](#)" and "spread the word" and (of course) how to "[donate](#)" to the cause.

On its web site, New Illinois calls itself "a grassroots organization [whose mission] is to educate Illinois citizens about their RIGHT to seek to form a new state from the State of Illinois and to separate from the tyranny existing there [using] the procedures established in Article IV, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution...."

"The separation issue is rural America telling folks in Chicago how much they disapprove of the policies they have forced on this state," Halbrook told Schoenburg. "And the fact that their views are being ... dismissed as political rhetoric is only going to serve to fan the flames...." [This is more important than I thought it was.]

Although Halbrook has emerged as the spokesman for the separation movement, it was apparently initiated by Collin Cliburn, 33, of Athens, who now reportedly wants to run for the Illinois Senate. For several reasons (none of which are Chicago's doing), that probably won't happen. [Cliburn's had his 15 minutes](#).

My take on it, at this time, is this: Separation of Chicago from the rest of Illinois will never happen. That's a certainty. The differences between rural and urban citizens are also a certainty. They represent a dynamic that can be used for political purposes, can be fed more fuel to elevate feelings of animosity on the part of a demographic that a particular politician aligns with toward the "other." It's socially dark and dangerous, but that is what I think is most likely to be going on.

The long and detailed report on "Investigations, Analysis & Recommendations Regarding Workplace Culture" in the office of House Speaker Michael Madigan, [recently](#)

[released](#), gives credibility to charges of bullying and harassment against two former employees - and against Madigan for failure to make corrections.

As [WTTW has reported](#), the report describes "a culture of fear, intimidation and bullying under Madigan's fired former chief of staff Tim Mapes" and describes sexual harassment charges against a key political staffer, Kevin Quinn. Both have been fired, but an investigation relating to Quinn continues.

The investigation was done by Maggie A. Hickey, who was Illinois Inspector General for the Bruce Rauner Administration. Hickey was hired by Madigan to do the work, which involved hundreds of interviews of House staff and others. Madigan has taken responsibility for the "culture" of his office workplace:

"I take responsibility for not doing enough previously to prevent issues in my office, and continue to believe that we, collectively, need to do more in the Capitol to improve our workplace culture and protect the women and men who work here who want to make a difference in the world," he [said in a statement](#).

I've watched Madigan closely since 1981. Like his first political mentor - the late Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley - he is intolerant of "moral" lapses. He's surely embarrassed by the report, and it would be a serious mistake for an employee of his office to obfuscate in any way in relation to the report's findings.

Snippets:

The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued [a policy statement connecting "racism"](#) with negative health impacts on children and adolescents: The entire document is important, but ISNS readers will be particularly interested in the section entitled: *"Racism at the Intersection of Education and Child and Adolescent Health."*

The Academy there recites the grim statistics on truancy, poor academic performance and low graduation rates to which racism is a causal factor in shaping a life of social struggle, including numerous health deficits associated with educational failure.

Illinois Trump enabler Joe Walsh now attacks Trump and [tells The Hill](#) he will run in a Republican primary against the president. "He's nuts, he's erratic, he's cruel, he stokes bigotry," said Walsh, a right-wing radio talk show celebrity and former congressman said - while apologizing for having *helped Trump get elected*.

"He lies every time he opens his mouth," Walsh said of Trump, just a week after he, himself, was so coy when he lied to WTTW in Chicago about "not being coy" on the question of whether he would take Trump on in a GOP primary. The video at WTTW is 10 minutes long, but it's [revealing and worth the time](#).

Back when I taking care of my mother, I subscribed (it's free) to Dr. Leslie Kernisan's web blog entitled "Better Health While Aging." I still get it, by email, so I'll learn important stuff *before* I get old. I'm sharing her most recent message with you. I know her source and it is the [clearest writing about memory](#) that you'll find.

Working memory, semantic long-term memory, episodic memory, procedural memory - it's all involved in the education process. So even if you're young, like me, and not caring for a senior citizen, you'll find Dr. Kernisan's writing applicable in many ways to schooling. If you are a care giver, I hope you find this helpful.

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State School News Service, [347 S Durkin Dr, Springfield, IL 62704](#)

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Mr. Jason Bauer
Superintendent - Pana CUSD #8
14 E. Main Street
Pana, IL 62557
Phone: (217) 562-1500
Fax: (217) 562-1501