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## Fwd: Takes eight guys to replace Jeanne Ives

1 message

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July Board Meeting

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## Takes eight guys to replace Jeanne Ives

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Former state [Rep. Jeanne Ives](#) (R-Wheaton) served just three terms - just six years - as the strident, head-shaking, voice of the far-right, warning that the end is near, in the Illinois House of Representatives. She stood against bills about taxes and guns and many social issues. (Only *six years*? Seemed so much longer.)

When gazillionaire Gov. Bruce Rauner signed into law a bill expanding state support for women's reproductive rights, she decided to run against him in the 2018 Republican primary. In what was surely the most severe of the many embarrassing moments for Rauner, Jeanne came within 3 percentage points of beating him.

Rauner went on to suffer a loss to Gov. JB Pritzker, of course, and Republicans in general took it on the chin, losing enough legislative seats to build super-majority Democratic caucuses in both the House and the Senate. The GOP is "ineffective," [Ives told NPR Illinois](#). She'll be back. Meanwhile, who will stand in for her?

As it happens, it apparently takes eight men to fill her shoes. They've surfaced individually before, on the House floor, giving the talking points they received from such upstanding organizations as the Illinois Policy Institute and the NRA. Individually, they're not much. But as a Gang of Eight, they fill in okay for Ives.

**They came out last week against the infrastructure** renewal plan that passed the House and Senate handily in the final days of the spring session, passed with strong support from the Republican leaders and the GOP caucuses. Votes to spare. It was kind of [an odd message that they delivered](#), but I guess it was their best.

They began by *proving the need for the legislation they opposed*, the transportation elements of the massive capital plan. Only California and New York have more interstate highways than Illinois, they wrote. "There is no question that Illinois, with its location in the center of the country, is a transportation hub in the Midwest."

They seemed to support repairing roads and bridges, but they laced their message with tried-and-true cynicism. "Does anyone really trust Springfield politicians to put real priorities over political priorities? We certainly do not." Then they complained that not every project to be funded was specified in the bill.

They implied, correctly, that the state's gas tax - which was doubled to partially pay for the projects - is regressive. But they did misdirect readers by charging that the tax was doubled "on poor and middle-class families." In fact it was doubled on rich families as well. But it's still a regressive revenue stream.

**The most important - and most misleading - point** they made was about the years since the gas tax was last increased. To the fact that the tax had not increased since 1990, they responded: "What [advocates] fail to mention is that Illinois taxpayers are already burdened with a gas tax that is top 10 in the nation."

The Gang of Eight fails to mention that the *tax is not indexed*. It stayed at the same 19 cents per gallon for twenty-nine years, while costs of road and bridge projects it is imposed to fund rose - and per-mile gas consumption fell - every year. As you can see by [the CPI calculator](#), a 1990 dollar *doubles* to \$2.01 today.

A factual way of looking at it is that Illinois drivers have been given a free ride since 1990, paying no more for the roads even as the cost of repairing them has risen. That's mainly why they are in such miserable shape. The right-wing Gang of Eight diatribe is typical in that they give little or no evidence for their "facts."

Who are these guys? Their news release lists: Reps. [Blaine Wilhour](#) of Effingham; [Brad Halbrook](#) of Shelbyville; [David McSweeney](#) of Barrington Hills; [Darren Bailey](#) of Xenia; [Chris Miller](#) of Oakland; [Allen Skillicorn](#) of Crystal Lake; [Dan Caulkins](#) of Decatur; [John Cabellor](#) of Machesney Park.

But who wrote the rant? I'm guessing McSweeney.

**Occasionally a bill helps define the partisan caucuses.** [HB 2691](#), which Pritzker signed into law Friday, extends financial aid for higher education to students "who may not have had [equitable] educational opportunities" for reasons cited in the bill - which helps them by modifying the Monetary Award Program.

Who benefits? The [bill asserts that all students](#) will have access to higher education, "notwithstanding [their] race, color, gender or gender identity, age, ancestry, marital status, military status, religion, pregnancy, national origin, disability status, sexual orientation, order of protection status ... or immigration status."

HB 2691 then specifies that [1] "African American students and other students of color who are disproportionately impacted by the lack of access to resources" for higher education, [2] transgender students who might otherwise be disqualified for a MAP grant "for failure to register for selective service," and [3] "noncitizen" students who have "not obtained lawful citizenship residence, shall be eligible for State financial aid and benefits...."

Issues relating to all three constituencies [numbered above by ISNS] divide Republicans from Democrats nationally. There are ongoing debates about [reparations](#) for slavery, about "[bathroom bills](#)" and about an influx of "[illegal immigrants](#)." This divide affects Illinois policy, too, as HB 2691 demonstrates.

**While Democrats gathered to co-sponsor the bill**, Republicans avoided it like the plague. The GOP arguments were about the money, but the Illinois Student Assistance Commission estimated that HB 2691 would add at most \$9 million to the Monetary Award Program, whose total appropriation is \$451.3 million.

So it's not about the money, really. Other than the bill's beneficiaries, what else could it be about? There is a monumental [demographic shift](#) occurring in the U.S., a change that has been roiling the nation - and Illinois - politically in recent years. The effects of this change are far-reaching *and they won't end soon*.

As political identification becomes a matter of personal faith (as in, he's a Methodist Republican), it locks in individuals' issue positions. To be a Democrat now, you must embrace "diversity" and "inclusion." Republicans don't like to say they oppose those things, so they try to divert attention (as in, it's the money).

What does it mean? Democrats are accepting social change and the demographic transitions that indicate, as the Pew researchers *linked above* report, by the middle of the century there will be no "single racial or ethnic majority" in America. Meanwhile, the GOP tendency is to fight this trend - and it's playing out in Illinois.

**I received a flattering email this weekend** from an old friend, a district superintendent (now retired) who began to read my newsletter in the late 1990s, when ISNS was young - and so were we. Sort of. Like many excellent educators, he can't stay retired. He's an "interim" superintendent now and reading ISNS again.

The most recent ISNS newsletter "took me back to the time I served as a school administrator," he wrote. "You still have it my friend; a writing ability to say it clearly, directly, and without insult." I share this with you not to brag. Well, *not only* to brag. I also want to talk a bit about "still having it," about the age thing.

Age is an issue among candidates for president 2020. It's [not just Joe Biden](#); there are four (counting the incumbent) in the hunt who are north of 70. But Biden is the target of doubt. He campaigns in the past, is called a "nostalgia broker." Bernie Sanders, another "front-runner," is also long of tooth. And Mike Gravel, the joke.

Should age block the door to the Oval Office? Maybe not ultimately, but I think it should be a significant cautionary factor. All other things considered, I would be more inclined to support someone with more staying power, with more of a stake in the outcome. The "obliviousness" issue is there, too, and it is real.

There it is. *No one my age, or very close to it, should be president. Period.*

**Another reason for old-timers to drop out: it's the math.** Twenty-four Democrats confounds any hope that the ultimate nominee would have beaten each of the other candidates in a one-on-one primary. And that's what you want in a general election candidate - demonstrably the best in your party, right?

Who says? A couple of mathematicians. There's a math professor at Case Western Reserve University and a young guy at Case who's not even a post-doc, just a grad student. Prof. Peter Thomas and student Alexander Strang say having so many on the ballot means ["there might not even be a best candidate"](#) among the Democrats.

They cite a [paper by William Gehrlein](#) at the University of Delaware in which an old idea - Condorcet's Paradox - is applied to voting rules. Only math nerds should get so deep into this, but Thomas and Strang seem to prove that, based on that old idea, there's a *70% chance that no Democrat will gain consensus approval*.

We in Illinois know that there's a better way to nominate Democratic candidates. We don't have the problem of crowded primary election ballots. In fact, for most Illinois House and Senate primaries, there's no contest at all, no confusing ballot clutter. The Illinois Way is this: [let Michael Madigan choose all candidates](#).

**Kudos to the Frank Bertitti Benld Public Library** for recognizing the food insecurity problem faced by Illinois children whose families live below or near the poverty level. As *The Springfield Journal-Register's* feature writer Tamara Browning reported last week, the library in Benld is [doing something about that problem](#).

At the initiative of library director Mary Kay Newman, the [library board](#) has evoked community support for a sack lunch program on Fridays in the summer. "There has to

be kids in town who don't have lunches *because they're not in school*," Newman told Browning. About two dozen children are served each Friday.

The story prompted me to check on the [Illinois Coalition for Community Services](#), the non-profit organization whose board, you'll recall, I was privileged to lead until a few years ago. We had a wonderful summer food program, serving children in many counties, until the state imposed a severe 2014 election-related disruption.

I'm pleased to see that the ICCS has persevered extraordinarily well in recent years. It now has excellent [board leadership](#). It always had [top-notch staff](#), led by a talented and determined Executive Director [Jason Gyuer](#). And, I'm happy to report, the ICCS [Anti-Hunger-Initiatives](#) program is better than ever.

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