



Dan
Hynes

Daily Chronicle questionnaire: Dan Hynes

Election primary: Illinois governor (Democrat)

Hometown: Chicago

Bio: Illinois comptroller, 1999 to present; lawyer at Hogan, Marren & McCahill prior to becoming comptroller; graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.A. in Economics and Computer Applications from Notre Dame in 1990; received a Juris Doctor with honors from Loyola University Chicago's School of Law.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich vowed to clean up corruption in a state famous for it, but instead became the fifth governor to be indicted in recent history, and the first ever to be impeached. What do you plan to do to clean up Illinois government?

If elected governor, I would continue the work I have done to clean up Illinois government by improving the recently signed ethics legislation to include a stronger push for public financing of our Supreme and Appellate Court campaigns. I also would move to reform our redistricting process by making sure that districts are drawn based on relevant data rather than politics. Additionally, I would continue to make government more transparent by providing additional information in a digestible format on the Web for every citizen to access. This includes increasing the regulations on bundlers or conduits to disclose their role in gathering contributions.

Is an increase in the state income tax necessary to help balance the budget? Any other tax increases? Why or why not?

Before we ask taxpayers to pay more money, we must first make strategic cuts to state government to ensure the people of Illinois that they have a government that is economical and efficient. By focusing on management and bureaucracy and not front line services, we can cut more than \$1.6 billion out of the budget to help reduce our growing budget deficit. However, I do not believe the deficit can be closed without generating additional revenues. As my budget plan outlines, I believe the best way to secure more resources to eliminate our deficit and fund our priorities is to implement a graduated income tax in Illinois. By instituting this progressive tax, we can help reduce the regressive aspects of our tax structure that adversely impacts lower and middle income families. Additionally, the new tax structure would provide billions of dollars in new revenue for the state to help address our fiscal crisis that is growing worse by the day.

What specific spending cuts do you propose to help balance the state's budget?

As stated above, I have set forth a budget plan that will make spending cuts of \$1.6 billion. I will accomplish this by cutting state operations back to 2005 levels; firing half of the Blagojevich political hires making more than \$70,000 a year; slashing non-essential contracts for professional services; and, reducing discretionary grants. I also believe we can effectively merge the Comptroller and Treasurer's Offices and eliminate the Lieutenant Governor's Office for additional savings.

Any attempt to balance the state budget will be difficult without addressing reform of the state pension system. How do you plan to do so?

First and foremost, we need to end pension system abuses and lower pension system costs. Specifically, we need to put an end to the practice of double dipping. Either you are retired from government service or you are not. Also, we need to end the pension sweeteners that allow individuals to artificially inflate their final salary determination. It is time that we put an end to the early retirement initiatives that not only cost the state hundreds of millions in pension obligations, but also create a lack of institutional knowledge of state government. Additionally, we need to ensure that the cost of living adjustments are truly pegged to an inflationary index. However, I believe that the state needs to honor its obligations and make scheduled pension payments. For far too long, Springfield has become reliant on taking pension holidays and borrowing to make our pension payments.

The state Legislature recently passed a campaign finance reform bill that for the first time in Illinois caps the amount of money that individuals and businesses can donate to candidates for state office, with some exceptions. What do you think of the legislation?

I would sign the recently passed ethics legislation because I believe it is a step in the right direction to restore trust in government. However, it is important to understand that capping political contributions are not a panacea to the problems we face in Illinois. All of the caps in the world would not have stopped the previous administration from driving our state into a ditch. The people of Illinois deserve competent leaders who place the interests of the people ahead of political expediency. I believe we currently are lacking that leadership from the current administration and that is why I am running for Governor.

What will you do to promote job creation in Illinois?

In order to spur the economy and create jobs immediately, the state must undertake several initiatives simultaneously. My jobs plan aims to redefine our manufacturing base for the 21st Century, which means investing in innovation. We can do this by providing innovation-targeted research and development funding, eliminating state taxes on new patent and software royalties, forging partnerships between our university faculty and private industry to pursue entrepreneurial ventures and commercialize research results. Additionally, small businesses are the engine of our economy and job creation, so we need to create an environment where they can thrive. A few ways we can do that include expanding the New Markets Tax Credits to entice more investments to underserved areas, deferring the taxes of qualified startup businesses for the first three years and establishing a micro-lending fund to make capital available to businesses that do not have access to the traditional commercial banking sector.

Why are you the best candidate to lead this state for the next four years?

Our budget deficit is a symbol of our leadership deficit and after two disgraceful governors and a government that is dysfunctional, people deserve better than what they are getting right now. We were supposed to get stability, yet all we've received are constantly changing positions. We were supposed to get tough choices, yet all we've received lately is one politically convenient choice after another. Our most pressing problem, the one that affects our businesses, job creation, schools, and health care, is fixing the budget. It affects every other issue, every person across this state, and every son or daughter born tomorrow. I know better than anyone running in this race that we must address this problem honestly and immediately. This is because our budget deficit is a statement of who we are and whether we can meet the challenges of our time. I know how to fix it.

Distinguish yourself from the other candidate in this race.

When I announced my candidacy for governor, I didn't have the typical announcement pep rally with hundreds of adoring supporters. Instead, I announced my candidacy by offering a detailed and comprehensive plan to help our state deal with its top issue, our current fiscal crisis. Everything and everyone is affected by our budget mess, and because we are more than \$10 billion in the hole, people all across Illinois are suffering as a result. I am the only candidate who has set forth a comprehensive budget plan to return our state to fiscal prosperity, reform our tax structure to make it fairer, and allow for substantial reinvestment in our priorities.

Why should voters trust you to fix this state's many problems?

As comptroller of Illinois since 1999, I have been the leading voice on fiscal responsibility for the past 10 years. Not only did I stand up to George Ryan and Rod Blagojevich about their irresponsible budgeting practices, but I also engineered the creation of a Rainy Day Fund, which attempted to limit state spending and ensure that the state can meet its financial obligations during difficult economic times and revenue slowdowns. If elected governor, I will continue to make the budget my top priority. I know that we must address our fiscal crisis immediately, and I am the only candidate who has the experience and a comprehensive plan to do just that.