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ILLINOIS STATE SENATE



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MEMBER:

APPROPRIATIONS I
APPROPRIATIONS II
LEGISLATIVE AUDIT
COMMISSION-CO-CHAIR

May 4, 2005

Dear Republican Committeeman,

Good for You or Good for All?

Let's put our cards on the table and you decide what is the right thing to do.

Recently I received copies of letters to Republican precinct committeemen sent out by two Republican legislators "sharing their concerns" and "asking for your opinion" about SB600, a piece of legislation that I passed unanimously out of the Senate 56-0. SB600 allows your neighbors who vote in Republican primaries to have a vote in the selection of Republican State Central Committeemen, just like you do. You still have a vote and they do, too.

I hope that it's not true, but these letters could be construed as subtle attempts to create controversy around a simple concept and to oppose efforts to invigorate and reform the Republican Party. As I understand at least one interpretation of these letters, their authors appeal to what could be your "self interest" to control power by being the only ones to vote for central committee party leaders.

However, I believe that the work that you do for the Republican Party is in the spirit of "promoting the general Welfare"...rather than amassing power to yourself.

Evidence in my own life that this is true about your life is the example of my wife, Sarah. She is our neighborhood's Republican precinct committeeman. Sarah organizes our sons' and my efforts each campaign to distribute candidate literature and make personal appeals to "Vote Republican" at our neighbors' doors. She worked and worried herself nearly sick that John Kerry might beat President Bush in the November 2004 Election. She is liked and respected by those who know her in our neighborhood, just like you are in yours. I literally love my precinct committeeman...but I still want a vote! I've asked Sarah for her advice and she's "for" SB600 with everyone's right to vote.

You probably already know that the Republican Party successfully used the method that I'm suggesting for 70 years before power was centralized in 1986 by one of our powerful governors. To this day, this method is used successfully by the Democrat Party which allows all its members to vote.

Although I am slightly surprised and disappointed by one author who "shares" concerns" with precinct committeemen in the second largest county in Illinois, when he was asked for his official opinion on April 14, 2005 he voted "yes" on the Senate Floor. I believe that he appeared magnanimous in that moment. Would he suggest now that you should be less generous to your neighbors than he was, and less magnanimous by opposing this legislation?

And, to say that this legislation was "rushed through the Senate" is factually inaccurate. All normal procedures were used in committee discussion and on the Senate Floor where he had every opportunity to object if he had wanted. In my opinion, he appropriately voted "yes".

I am confident that you also put the general welfare ahead of what might be perceived as your own self interest to horde any type of power to yourself.

Opponents are saying three things:

1. They misconstrue an unintended ambiguity in the language of SB600 to mean that the State Chairman could come only from those who are State Central Committeemen. That is not my intention and even the draft of SB600 refers to selecting chairmen and officers "...from among their own number (or otherwise), as they may deem necessary or expedient." I concede that this detail is not sufficiently clear, so I will be happy to clarify in amendment that the state chairmanship can be held by someone other than a State Central Committeeman.
2. Some claim that these Republican Party leaders will actually have to run for their offices in campaigns. Isn't that the whole idea! They try to scare you by quoting "\$100,000 divisive race", **but you and I both know that the most effective campaigns are mounted at the grassroots level where these candidates must come to you to spread the word in order to avoid greater financial costs.**
3. They say, "Chicago Democrats will infiltrate our ranks in Cook County..." Frankly, this position does not give the Republican Primary voter credit for being too intelligent.

With every constitutional officer but one, the Governor's Office, the Supreme Court majority, and majority control of the House (Speaker) and Senate

(President) already in Chicago Democrats' hands, how could the situation be worse than it is under their current scheme?

If we have to bear the burden of loss, at least give us the comfort of voicing our objection in a vote for different, more effective leadership.

So, the decision is up to you. Do you want what's good for just you or good for all? When more people are energized in the grassroots, your efforts in your neighborhood are made more effective!

Take just a moment to call Representatives Tom Cross at 217-782-1331, "Skip" Saviano at 217-782-3374 and Senator Kirk Dillard at 217-782-8148 and tell them that you want your neighbors included in the vote for party leadership. **The future of SB600 rests entirely in their hands.** After your advice, they can choose to advance this reform or to kill it themselves.

Then, call me at 217-782-0052 and let me know what you advised. Thanks so much. Progress comes one step at a time.

Very sincerely,

Christopher J. Lauzen

P.S. Do you have an e-mail address where I could send you a weekly message regarding some issue of Illinois state government or politics? Just call 217-782-0052 or visit my website at www.lauzen.com.