

## How Does AG Madigan Feel About a Tax Increase?

Written by Rich Miller  
Sunday, 28 June 2009 06:21

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Every Republican governor this state has had in the past 40 years has raised taxes.

Republican legislators and most of their leaders have always been involved with those tax hikes.

So it's probably not fair that nobody bats an eye when every Republican candidate for governor -- announced and unannounced -- is allowed by the media to get away with saying that taxes shouldn't be raised to balance the state's horribly deficit-ridden budget.

But, that's life, I suppose. George Ryan said he wouldn't raise taxes when he was running for governor, either. The Republican candidate didn't get a lot of grief for that, even though his public-works plan was so big that everybody at the Statehouse figured there was no way to avoid a tax hike.

They were right. Ryan flip-flopped right after he was elected. Taxes went up, and so did fees.

Once again, pretty much everybody at the Statehouse knows that taxes will have to rise to

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balance this massively out-of-whack budget.

Some Republican gubernatorial candidates have talked about various budget "reforms," even though many of those reforms are illusory at best.

Some talk about deep cuts then quickly skip over the intense hardships those cuts would produce.

At least one is talking about borrowing to balance the budget, but the state's bond rating has already taken multiple hits, and it's doubtful that anybody would want to buy several billion dollars of bonds from a state that cannot show it can responsibly balance its own budget.

Luckily for the Republican candidates, taxes will almost assuredly have been raised by the time next year's fall election rolls around. And the Republican candidates who are now state legislators will not be forced to vote for a tax increase this year because they belong to the minority party, so a handful of others in their party will likely be obliged to take the plunge.

What will likely happen is that a tax hike will pass long before the campaign even starts to heat up. And then watch all those candidates pontificate about how they would've done things differently. Most will also probably say they'll roll back those tax hikes, even though that probably won't be possible until the economy has had a chance to fully recover, whenever that may be.

Surveying all this political posturing, is it any wonder that Democratic Governor Pat Quinn has found it so difficult to convince the Democrat-controlled Illinois House to go along with an income-tax hike? That rhetorical question is not, by the way, intended to defend the House Democrats and their leader, Speaker Michael Madigan. They knew what the right thing to do was, and they didn't do it. I won't defend that behavior.

And even though I think it's unfair to let Republican gubernatorial candidates off the hook on the tax issue just because they're Republicans, I do believe it's high time that Democratic Attorney General Lisa Madigan comes out of hiding and expresses her views on this crazy mess.

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We don't know for sure as I write this what office Attorney General Madigan will seek. She could run for governor, she could run for U.S. Senate, she could run for re-election.

We do know, however, that every single poll taken in the past year has shown Madigan to be, by far, the most popular politician in this state.

Other statewide Democrats, such as Comptroller Dan Hynes and Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias, have said they were open to a tax hike. Hynes laid out a plan last week, although wholly inadequate, that included major cuts, expanded riverboat gaming, and an expansion of the sales tax to some "luxury" services.

But Lisa Madigan has been mum. She said months ago that a tax hike would hurt people who were already hurting, yet she's been silent ever since. A group of protesters opposed to massive budget cuts marched to her Springfield office last week to try to get an answer out of her. No luck.

If the Republican candidates are being irresponsible, well, that goes double for Madigan. As the most likely of all candidates to win whatever office she seeks, she owes us all an explanation of her views on this crisis.

Come out of hiding, attorney general. The sooner the better.

*Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax (a daily political newsletter) and [TheCapitolFaxBlog.com](http://TheCapitolFaxBlog.com)*