

## Illinois Legislative Leaders Look Out for Number One

Written by Rich Miller

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You'd think that all four state legislative leaders would have busted their humps this fall to win every possible race. But it actually looked like a couple of those leaders threw some races, albeit for different reasons. And another leader appeared to just about give up a few months ago.

Let's start with the most obvious example: House Republican Leader Lee Daniels.

Frankly, I don't blame Daniels all that much for ignoring some hot prospects. As you might know, scandal has forced Daniels not to run again for leader, but he is backing Representative Art Tenhouse of Liberty to replace him. Tenhouse is up against Representative Tom Cross of Oswego in a super-tight contest. Some House candidates have already decided which side they're on, and the outcome of the Tenhouse/Cross battle depends on which of those candidates win their races.

So, Daniels can't really be blamed for not helping some candidates, like Bob O'Connor of Aurora. O'Connor is in a hot and very winnable race against Linda Chapa LaVia, also from Aurora. But O'Connor is a Cross ally, so after initially pledging his support, Daniels withdrew everything but a part-time staffer from the race.

It's not like an O'Connor win would give the Republicans the House majority. They have zero chance of that. But an O'Connor win could hand Cross the leadership mantle, and Daniels would then suffer the humiliation of failing to choose his own successor.

House Speaker Mike Madigan appeared to do the same thing, but for a very different reason. Madigan won the right to draw the new House map, and he designed it to be as loss-proof as possible. He didn't have to do much of anything to keep control – and he didn't.

Madigan's daughter, Lisa, ran for attorney general, and that's where the speaker's priorities were all year. The money, the organization, and the talent all were focused on the First Daughter's contest. Several closely contested House races that would usually be assigned

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experienced, full-time staff in May or June didn't get those people until sometime in September.

The new map gives Madigan the possibility of winning well over 70 seats, but the more members he has, the more difficult his life becomes.

His lonely, powerless two-year stint in the minority aside, the worst time for Madigan was when he had a veto-proof majority for two years at the beginning of the 1990s. House Democrats were so buoyed by their huge majority that the rank-and-file wanted to push through every liberal program imaginable. Madigan wanted to keep those sorts of bills from seeing the light of day, knowing that too many votes on stuff like that could create a voter backlash and endanger his majority. But his members often ignored him, which they had never done before (and haven't since).

Madigan treats the speaker's office like it was a Chicago ward operation. Members constantly stream through his office suite demanding everything from Bulls tickets to state jobs for their in-laws. The more members he has, the more favors he has to do. It's a needless headache.

Then there's Senate President "Pate" Philip, who allowed his longtime chief of staff and his deputy to leave a few months ago to run Jim Ryan's campaign. That was a signal that Pate really wasn't all the way in this thing.

Toward the end, though, Pate began putting big money into a couple of campaigns, suggesting that his head was still somewhat in the game. Still, he could have done a lot more this year. But Pate has believed for months that that if Rod Blagojevich was elected, the Republicans would have a decent shot at winning the Senate back in two years when voters grow disgusted with one-party rule and a bumbling governor. So it wasn't necessary to spend too much money this time around.

The only legislative leader who actively fought in every possible contest this year was Senate Democratic Leader Emil Jones. Jones wants to be Senate president in the worst way, and he knew he would need more than just the bare minimum 30 seats to do that, because he has alienated at least one of his members enough that he might not be elected if that guy went turncoat. So Jones worked harder than ever, raised more money than ever, and did a better job than he ever has.

When you talk about legislative leaders, it all comes down to what's best for them, personally. This year was no different.

*Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax, a daily political newsletter. He can be reached at (<http://www.capitolfax.com>).*