

Illinois Governor Avoids Looking Bad – Again – on ComEd Bill

Written by Rich Miller

Tuesday, 09 December 2003 18:00

- [Buy OEM DivX Pro 7 MAC](#)
- [Download Adobe Creative Suite 3 Design Premium](#)
- [Buy Autodesk AutoCAD MEP 2014 \(32-bit\) \(de,en,fr,it,ko\)](#)
- [29.95\\$ Infinite Skills - OS X Server 10.6 Snow Leopard Training MAC cheap oem](#)
- [Buy GraphiSoft ArchiCAD 13 MAC \(en\)](#)
- [Buy OEM Nik Software HDR Efex Pro](#)
- [239.95\\$ Autodesk AutoCAD Raster Design 2011 cheap oem](#)
- [19.95\\$ Acala DVD Creator 3 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy VMware Fusion 4 MAC \(en\)](#)
- [Discount - Microsoft Project Standard 2013](#)
- [29.95\\$ 4Media DVD Ripper Platinum 5 cheap oem](#)
- [Discount - Adobe Creative Suite 5 Production Premium MAC](#)
- [Buy Cheap Autodesk AutoCAD Mechanical 2015 \(64-bit\)](#)

Without a doubt, it was way past time that a giant corporation was rebuffed in Springfield. Every year, at least one of the big boys hires every available contract lobbyist, signs up a PR firm, cuts a deal with some pliable and influential third parties, and descends on the Illinois statehouse with a clever proposal in hand.

And every year the big boys win. The media screams, reformers lament the influence of money on the legislative process, and nothing changes.

It's no wonder that Commonwealth Edison thought it could walk away with whatever it wanted during last month's fall veto session.

Consider, for a moment, the sheer gall of the company's original proposal.

ComEd's Chicago-area consumers would have had to pay an additional \$2 billion every year for their electricity so that ComEd could avoid laying off 400 downstate Illinois Power (IP) employees when it purchased IP's assets. That's a whopping \$5 million per saved job per year, and yet the proposal attracted immediate bipartisan support.

ComEd's final proposal was denounced as both a lie and a backdoor rate increase by House Speaker Michael Madigan, yet it received 39 votes in the Illinois Senate.

Governor Rod Blagojevich supported the bill, according to Senate President Emil Jones. If Speaker Madigan hadn't refused to allow a vote, it would almost certainly have passed the House, where it had lots of support, and been signed into law.

We are left with a strange result in which one of the truly big players lost badly at the statehouse, but nothing appears to have changed.

And then there's Governor Blagojevich.

After his merciless public hammering for the way he handled the SBC bill last spring –

Illinois Governor Avoids Looking Bad – Again – on ComEd Bill

Written by Rich Miller

Tuesday, 09 December 2003 18:00

comically claiming he had to sign a bill that potentially increased long-distance rates for thousands of Illinois consumers because he was worried that SBC might leave the state – the governor's top priority in the ComEd deal this fall was almost certainly about positioning himself as a reformer.

But ComEd is a very important political player in this state. The governor couldn't just shaft the company.

Just before the final week of the veto session, the governor's aides engaged in a marathon bargaining session with ComEd. The company dropped its proposal for an explicit rate hike and pledged to not lay off more than 25 Illinois Power employees.

The next morning, Blagojevich held a press conference. But he didn't announce the agreement. Instead, he declared he would veto any proposal that included a rate hike and which led to the layoff of more than 25 IP employees. ComEd quickly issued a statement agreeing to the governor's terms, and some media outlets went gaga over the governor's impressive use of the bully pulpit.

At that point, the governor's office began defending the still-unacknowledged agreement against criticism that the company was, in reality, planning to use the bill to raise rates. That lasted one day, until Speaker Madigan alleged that ComEd was lying and was, indeed, planning a rate hike.

Madigan's statements didn't hurt the governor because, as far as the media was concerned, Blagojevich's only involvement was his thunderous press conference. Blagojevich responded to Madigan's assertions by saying he'd support any pro-consumer changes Madigan could negotiate, then tiptoed away.

But then Senate President Emil Jones figured he might be able to use the ComEd bill to help break a last-minute logjam involving a Chicago pension bill. Senate Republican Leader Frank Watson was holding the Chicago pension bill hostage until the ComEd bill passed.

Blagojevich, always sensitive to the wishes of Mayor Daley, told Jones to inform the Senate that he supported the bill. Watson knew the bill was dead in the House, however. The ComEd bill passed but the pension bill stalled.

Even so, the governor was able to avoid being tagged, yet again, as a utility lackey. After ComEd and Illinois Power announced that their buyout plan was dead, the gov fired off a blistering press release.

"Trying to force the government to raise electricity rates by threatening the jobs of honest, hardworking men and women is worse than cynical; it's repugnant," the governor stated.

The governor's statement seems to indicate that the bill his own office negotiated was a rate hike. But, since nobody ever reported that he had negotiated the bill, or noticed his subsequent flip-flops, the governor came out of this smelling like a rose. And that's exactly where he wanted

Illinois Governor Avoids Looking Bad – Again – on ComEd Bill

Written by Rich Miller

Tuesday, 09 December 2003 18:00

to be all along.

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