

OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF ILLINOIS' POLITICS:
BROAD CORRUPTION AND LEGISLATIVE ACTION

REMARKS MADE TO THE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

BY
THE STUDENTS OF BENEDICTINE UNIVERSITY AT SPRINGFIELD

MARCH 31, 2009

Good morning, my name is Ethan Morrissey. Joining me is Becky Barton. Thank you for giving us the time to express our views concerning the need for political reform in Illinois. We are students at Benedictine University in Springfield, Illinois, and represent students taking Political Science 102, State and Local Governments.

One hundred years ago the Irish-American bard, Mr. Dooley, explained to his political sidekick, Hennessy, "There is no difference between what I do with my money in New York and what the aldermen do with your tax money in City Hall. The difference is that I am caught and they are not. It happens that my nabors can see my work and no one watches the aldermen."

We can appreciate Mr. Dooley's frustrations today for we have the same difficulties: No one is effectively scrutinizing the work of elected and appointed officials of governmental bodies in Illinois. The problem here is governmental obstruction in filling F.O.I.A. requests at any level. For example, students at Benedictine have read about the machinations of the Springfield Park District recently in denying requests for information on the DUIs of the park director as well as the obfuscations of ex-Governor Blagoevich, who stonewalled requests for information on his administration. We all know that this is not right and that the legislature will need to draft strong FOIA legislation, with strong enforcement provisions. Citizens of Illinois expect that anything that has to do with **our** tax dollars must be public information and access must be enforced.

We are here today also representing a sizable number of students from central Illinois and expect to join with others from colleges and universities throughout the state to witness the passage of a strong FOIA bill and to make progress in changing the way money is used in political campaigns. What we **don't** want to happen after this legislative committee folds its tent is nothing. Many of us have participated in President Obama's election campaign and believe in the strength of the sovereign people of Illinois to get things done. We know that persistence will pay dividends, and we also know that the continued existence of our democratic institutions demands careful and effective action from all of you.