



## Jim Broadway's Illinois School Policy Updates

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### Time for Madigan to resign as Democrat chairman

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, State School News Service

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Illinois House of Representatives Speaker Michael J. Madigan owes it to his party – to all Illinois citizens who value democracy – to resign as chairman of the Illinois Democrat Party. He's clearly lost his focus.

Sure, others are culpable in the nomination of [Scott Lee Cohen](#), a pawnbroker and an apparent slug, as the Democrat candidate for lieutenant governor. Columnist Mark Brown of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, referenced Cohen's brush with the law - his arrest on charges that he threatened to cut his prostitute girlfriend's throat – back in March of last year.



Brown's now [blaming the voters](#) for voiding the gubernatorial election. When he learned, from Cohen himself, the candidate had a violent charge in his past Brown was too lazy to check out the police report. His excuse is that he didn't think Cohen had a chance to be nominated. He has no excuse for not reprising the story when he found out he had thought wrong.

Thomas Jefferson saw a free and aggressive press as essential to democracy, as the ultimate insurance that voters will be informed. Brown apparently does not.

Gov. Pat Quinn is also culpable. Not vetting the candidates who could potentially become his "running mate" in November was inexcusable. But apparently Comptroller Dan Hynes, Quinn's opponent in Tuesday's primary, dropped the ball as well. If he'd garnered just 7,000 votes more, Hynes would be on the ballot tied to the unelectable Cohen.

So who's the more incompetent, Hynes or Quinn? Clearly, it's a tie.

Madigan is the ultimate culprit. Under his "leadership" the Democrat Party has evolved from an organization that existed to give its candidates a "brand name" they could be proud of to a money-laundering machine with no other substantive identity. You can't even find a party platform statement at the [IDP web site](#). What does the party stand for, just dysfunction?

This fiasco is not unprecedented. [It also happened back in 1986](#) when two followers of political cult leader Lyndon LaRouche gained Democrat nominations. Gubernatorial candidate Adlai Stevenson III acted on principle, formed a third party (Illinois Solidarity), essentially conceding the general election to Gov. Jim Thompson. Madigan, also then Speaker, learned nothing.

Madigan has been too busy shaking down campaign contributors to be concerned if candidates reaching the ballot are worthy to carry the banner of the Illinois Democrat Party. As he has guided the institution, apparently anyone with a pulse is worthy of the IDP.

Let's pause for a moment and consider the fact that none of the three men nominated as candidates for lieutenant governor this year are worthy of the office they seek. By that I mean we can only shudder at the possibility that any of them would become governor.

Cohen is the worst of the three, of course. He has to be delusional to think the voters will just ignore his "mistake" and put him first in line to be governor.

Republican nominee Jason Plummer, a favorite [of the NRA, the Tea Baggers and Eagle Forum](#), is a good match with the GOP's gubernatorial nominee Sen. Bill Brady. But he has not one day of experience in government. He's a blank slate potentially in a position to do great harm.

Green Party candidate Don Crawford, a school teacher, is also seeking to be a heartbeat from the governor's office, hoping to be the copilot without having gone through flight school. He doesn't even have a 2010 web site. His [2008 site](#) suggests a feeble grasp of state issues.

What can be done to make the 2010 gubernatorial election meaningful?

Quinn says Cohen should "step aside." Cohen says that won't happen. Former Gov. Jim Edgar says the General Assembly should just abolish the office of Lt. Governor. The Constitution says that won't happen, either. There is no way to keep Cohen off the ballot. Is Quinn doomed?

There seems to be one way to calm voters' worries about Cohen.

While the office of Lt. Governor cannot be abolished without a constitutional amendment, it can be marginalized. The office has no duties under the constitution except those assigned to it by the governor or by statute. The legislature also sets the lieutenant governor's pay.

So the office, which has been abandoned in the past by lieutenant governors who found it too boring, can be zeroed out. Assign all its statutory duties to the governor. Cut the pay down to fifty bucks per annum, with no housing allowance. Put the office in a storeroom.

Cut the quality of the office down to the quality of its current aspirants – and then hope the governor, whoever he is, can stay healthy for at least four years.

After that, take a more thoughtful approach. Consider eliminating the office constitutionally. Or consider letting a party's nominee for governor simply pick his or her running mate, as we do in presidential elections.

Or go back to the system that allowed the voters elect all constitutional officers without regard to party affiliation. It happened only once, in 1968, that the voters chose candidates of different parties to be governor and lieutenant governor.

That year, the voters elected arguably the best governor (Republican Richard Ogilvie) and the best lieutenant governor (Democrat Paul Simon) in modern history. Why did we change that?

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