

## SNG-Illinois primary last stand for GOP Establishment-3-7-16

### Illinois primary last stand for GOP Establishment

By Jim Nowlan

The March 15 Illinois primary election will serve as a desperate last stand effort by the GOP Establishment to slow the Trump bandwagon, which appears headed to the party's nomination.

Just a few short months ago, Republican operatives would have given Donald Duck as much chance as Donald Trump, a one-time Manhattan liberal, of winning the GOP nomination.

What has happened?

This past Tuesday, Trump won all Southern states but Ted Cruz's Texas decisively. His juggernaut can now be slowed only by wins for Gov. John Kasich and Sen. Marco Rubio in their home states of Ohio and Florida on March 15 (where both trail Trump in recent polls), combined with something less than Trump domination in Illinois.

Little has been written of the Illinois primary thus far for the understandable reason that the media focus has been on the rollout of primaries up to this point. A February 24 We Ask America poll did find Trump leading both Rubio and Cruz in Illinois by nearly 2-1 margins, with Kasich trailing in single digits.

Illinois offers two concurrent contests for the presidential candidates. At the top of the ballot is the "beauty contest" preferential vote. Whoever wins a plurality here picks up 10 delegates.

Down the ballot is the more important contest for three delegates in each of the state's 18 congressional districts. Voters will find names of people they have never heard of running for delegate, followed by the names of their preferred presidential candidates in parentheses.

To win, delegate candidates must garner more votes than anyone else, so if delegate candidates who prefer Trump best the others with, say, 33 percent of the vote, the Trump delegates win.

Barring dramatic changes in voter attitudes in the next few days, it looks as if Trump may run the table March 15 across Ohio, Florida, Illinois and Missouri, which would make Trump's nomination almost unstoppable.

In an incisive piece in the February 27 *Wall Street Journal*, former Reagan speechwriter and now columnist Peggy Noonan decried a "protected" class that has become insulated in their gated communities, insensitive to the struggles of the unwashed and "unprotected" outside.

Noonan sees immigration as "the issue." The unprotected have suffered from low-wage job competition while the protected benefit from having more low-wage workers available.

Maybe even worse, the protected, coming from both parties, are insensitive to the vulnerability and anxiety that immigration imposes on the unprotected.

I would add the issue of the corporate out-migration of jobs to other shores. This may make all the sense in the world to business leaders seeking to compete globally, but it appears callous, indeed cruel to those whose job futures are bleak.

[Trump reminds me a bit of the Gracchi brothers in the late Roman Republic, who went around the Roman Senate and directly to the masses with programs of land for the landless.

[Great tumult ensued, and the brothers ultimately were assassinated by the senatorial class, which owned most of the land, yet the days were numbered for the Republic and the Senate.]

The 2016 election realities also hammer additional nails into the coffins of political party organizations.

Flawed though they surely have been, political party organizations have served the useful purposes throughout our history of recruiting and supporting candidates who were generally safe, that is, who would return favor to their party and not rock the boat unnecessarily on the social and economic fronts.

Today, the old “labor model” of political parties, in which precinct captains and local party leaders would carry the campaigns for their candidates, has been pushed aside by a “capital model.”

The latter model relies on big money to recruit candidates and conduct their campaigns from centralized offices, relying on television and digital media in place of people.

I am talking about shifts, not absolutes. There are still people rallying to campaign work, though mostly to candidates rather than to party organizations, and money has always been important, though much less so in the past than today.

A pedestrian illustration. In my three contested campaigns for the state legislature, I remember never spending more than \$4,000 (\$26,000 in today’s dollars). I had to raise the money myself and run my own campaigns, with the help of local party folks.

This year in Illinois there are state legislative candidates who have already received more than \$1 million for their contested campaigns!

The candidate is but a pawn in this game, with the money contributed and then spent centrally by big money political elites or by remnants of old political machines.

Tumultuous, troubling times in American politics.