

SNG-The straw that breaks-4-16-18

Illinois political parties morally bankrupt

By Jim Nowlan

The two major political parties in Illinois are morally bankrupt. We need a serious, credible new party to challenge them and provide an alternative for voters. Creating a new party is easy in concept, yet incredibly difficult, though not impossible, to pull off.

The straw that broke this camel's back came in the past week. I was shown to be incorrect in my belief that an extraordinary majority of lawmakers could wrest a bill from the clutches of the Illinois House Rules Committee, which is controlled absolutely by Democratic House Speaker Mike Madigan.

In fact, in the Illinois House, a single, solitary objector to a motion to discharge a committee kills the effort.

When a discharge motion—to free a bill for consideration by the whole body—is proposed in the Illinois House, Madigan's chief henchwoman, majority leader Barbara Flynn Currie, simply stands up to say she objects, which kills the effort. Unbelievable.

If 95 percent of Illinois House members favored the idea of actually voting on a proposal that the Speaker has buried in Rules Committee, the Speaker alone can keep it from ever reaching members for a vote.

[This makes an absolute mockery of democracy (from the Greek *demos* [people] and *kratia* [power]).]

Ironically, since Democrat Madigan is seen by most as the fount of all political devilry, it should be noted this capacity of the Speaker to dictate outcomes was put into House rules in 1995 by Republicans, during two short years the GOP had a majority. Madigan simply kept that rule when he returned to power, which he has held since.

This means that the current idea of taking the redistricting process out of the hands of Speaker Madigan is doomed, no matter what a supermajority might wish to do.

It's no better on the Republican side. Gov. Bruce Rauner has literally bought the state Republican Party apparatus, lock, stock, and barrel. He has contributed a hundred million dollars or so to take over the staff and elected membership of the Illinois Republican State Central Committee.

There is a Rauner Party, but no longer a true state Republican Party.

Illinois politics offers but an illusion of democracy.

So, what to do?

Some months ago, I floated the idea of creating a new political party in Illinois. My premise is that neither major party in Illinois, nor those at the national level, represents the broad swath of us located somewhere between the Left and the Right.

The idea isn't so far-fetched. Columnist Matt Tiabbi, writing recently for a national audience in *Rolling Stone*, says the present two-party system is ripe for a re-ordering: "... huge pluralities of voters on both sides of the aisle feel unrepresented and even insulted," seeing both parties as tools of the very rich.

The biggest challenge in launching such a venture is to find a compelling message.

In 1854, the nascent Republican Party started the process of replacing the feckless Whig Party. The new party had a clear, focused, emotional rallying cry and objective: Stop the extension of slavery into Kansas-Nebraska and beyond.

[Organizers of this new party had other attractive planks: “free soil” (which meant both free land and no slavery) for farmers moving West, and railroads and infrastructure to build the expanding continent.]

By 1858, in just four short years, the Republican Party had morphed from nothing to a national force.

But what might be the name and rallying cry of a new party of the middle? Peoria friend and very smart fellow Jack Gilligan came up with a great name: The Party for the Common Good.

Yet, we all have our own definitions of what that common good might be. Some might see the common good in more government spending, others in less.

Maybe the common good can be defined instead as problem solving in the long-term interests of our children and grandchildren. Our political party leaders posture a lot, but they avoid tough decisions. They don't solve problems.

For example, there hasn't been a legitimate, timely budget at the national level in years; worrisome, multi-trillion-dollar debt keeps piling up under both Republican and Democratic presidents. Social Security and Medicare need attention if to survive for the long term.

In Illinois, from 2015-2017, we lacked a state budget, the fundamental task of elected officials. This has made us a laughingstock nationally among government watchers.

A new political party is easy to set up. A compelling name and message by which to build a credible party are harder to come by. Reader suggestions appreciated.