



RAISING ILLINOIS STATE INCOME TAX IS POLITICAL KISS-OF-DEATH

By Dennis Constant

Illinois politicians usually get away with small tax hikes, but raising the Illinois state income tax has proven to be a political kiss-of-death. State legislators and governors know it, and, fortunately for taxpayers, this knowledge, for many years, has tempered their desire and ability to hike the income tax.

State Republicans tempted fate by creating, and then raising, the state income tax, and they have paid the price. In 1969, newly elected Richard Ogilvie (R) persuaded Senate President and power-broker W. Russell Arrington (R) to support the creation of a state income tax. Arrington sponsored the bill, which quickly resulted in the Republican's losing the Senate they had controlled for 30 years. In 1972, the Republicans lost the governor's mansion.

June 30, 1989, was the day of the Illinois "Tax Massacre," the day the Illinois General Assembly passed the largest state tax increases in the nation, under the aegis of Gov. James R. "Big Jim" Thompson (R). This assault on taxpayers' wallets included a 20% hike in the state income tax. Thompson, who had been on a roll, winning four terms as governor, judiciously decided not to run for reelection.

In 1990, notorious DuPage County tax-raiser, Jack T. Knuepfer (R), chairman of the Du Page County Board, and scores of other tax-raisers, were defeated in that year's primary.

In 1994, Jim Edgar (R) opposed a state income tax hike and was elected governor. Two years later, he supported a 25% state income tax hike. He also decided not to run for reelection.

The Illinois House approved an increase in the state income tax in 1996, but Senate President James "Pate" Philip (R) killed it in Revenue Committee. Philip publicly admitted that had he supported the increase, he would have lost control of the State Senate.

These events have not been lost on Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D), who has consistently opposed any increase in the state income tax. There have been no income tax hikes in the past 14 years, and taxpayers and the state economy both have benefited.

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