



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

### Martin Luther King, Jr: Nonviolence in Action

Although he led America’s civil rights movement for only 13 years, Martin Luther King, Jr. was the driving force behind the largest gains in racial equality that the country had ever seen. Using principles of nonviolent protest and the power of words, he became a powerful and effective advocate for all oppressed people.

Born in 1929 in Atlanta, King graduated from seminary in Pennsylvania in 1951 and received a doctorate from Boston University in 1955. He returned south to Alabama to become a pastor, but he was also deeply involved in the burgeoning civil rights movement. In 1955 he became the leader of the Montgomery bus boycott against segregation on the city’s buses. During the 381-day boycott, King was arrested and his house was bombed, but he attained his goal; in 1956 the U.S. Supreme Court declared laws requiring segregation on buses unconstitutional.

In 1963, King led a massive protest in Birmingham that sparked a national outcry against segregationist officials in the city. He intentionally allowed himself to be arrested, and then wrote his well-known “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”—a reply to a public statement by eight Alabama clergymen cautioning him against civil disobedience. In response, King defended his type of nonviolent protest as creating “the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and

*(continued on p. 2)*



*Photo by David Miller: This statue in front of the State House depicts a young Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the move.*

#### Inside This Issue

Jesse White Biography and Interview: A Lifetime of Public Service .....	3
Cecil Partee Biography .....	6
Abstracts of Reports Required to be Filed With General Assembly .....	15

## Martin Luther King, Jr: Nonviolence in Action

(continued from p. 1)

brotherhood.” He expressed hope for the future, despite his setbacks, writing that “right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.”

Later that year, King led the March for Jobs and Freedom (more commonly known as the March on Washington), which drew over 250,000 people to the National Mall. There he delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. It emphasized the importance of continuing the momentum that the civil rights movement had gained: “Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.” But he also counseled against physical violence in pursuit of freedom: “Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred . . . . Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.” He ended with his dream for a future of harmony and justice: “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’”

In 1964, at age 35, King became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize. His acceptance speech described a vision

of hope and peace: “I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. . . . I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality.”

The civil rights movement resulted in enactment of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964—making segregation and employment discrimination illegal—and the Voting Rights Act, designed to eliminate barriers to voting for minority citizens. King went on to lead campaigns for economic justice and international peace, and spoke out against the Vietnam War.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968. □

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Sources:

The King Center, “About Dr. King.”

Nobelprize.org, “Martin Luther King, Jr.—Biography.”

“Letter from a Birmingham Jail”: downloaded from The King Center website. Quotes in the article are from pages 5 and 13 of the letter.

“I Have a Dream Speech”: downloaded from National Archives website. Quotes in the article are on pages 2, 3, and 5.

Nobel Prize acceptance speech: downloaded from Nobel Prize website.

## Martin Luther King, Jr. Quotes

“Faith is taking the first step even when you can’t see the whole staircase.”

“There comes a time when silence is betrayal.”

“Only in the darkness can you see the stars.”

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: Only love can do that.”

“That old law about ‘an eye for an eye’ leaves everybody blind. The time is always right to do the right thing.”

“We must come to see that the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience.”

“I have decided to stick to love .... Hate is too great a burden to bear.”

“Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

“Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a constant attitude.”

“We must build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear.”

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

“We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope.”

“We must live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”

<http://www.inc.com/marla-tabaka/31-martin-luther-king-jr-quotes-to-inspire-greatness-in-you.html>

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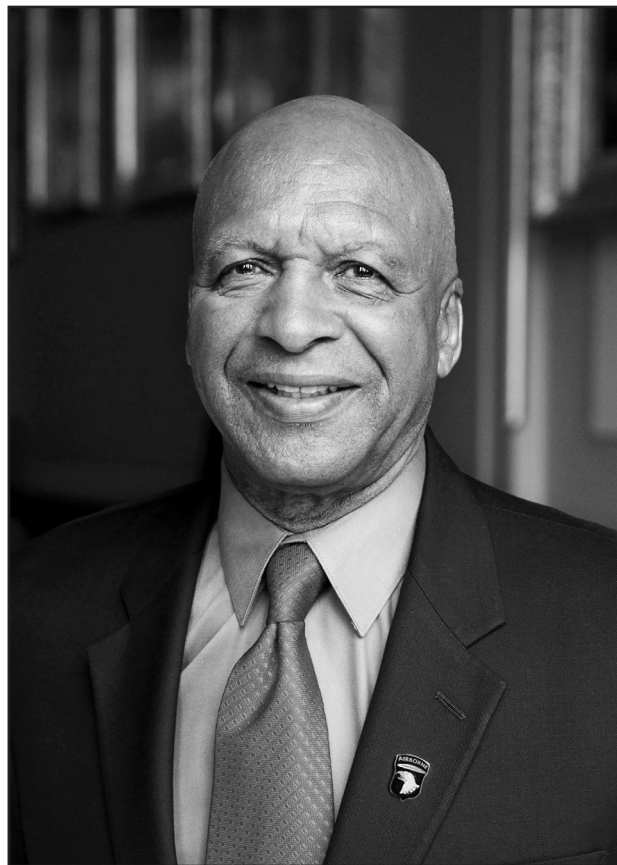
# Jesse White Biography and Interview: A Lifetime of Public Service

Jesse White was born in 1934 in Alton, Illinois. When he was 7, his family moved to Chicago, where he grew up. He attended Alabama State College (now University) and earned all-conference honors in baseball and basketball. He was an Army paratrooper and a member of the Illinois National Guard and Reserve. Afterward, he played professional baseball with the Chicago Cubs, then served for 33 years in the Chicago public school system as a teacher and administrator. White spent 16 years in the General Assembly, then became the Cook County Recorder of Deeds. He was first elected as Illinois Secretary of State in 1998. He has been re-elected four times and is Illinois' longest-serving Secretary of State.

The LRU asked Secretary White to reflect on his career. His answers are printed below.

**Q:** You spent most of your childhood in Chicago, then went to college in Alabama. They must have been radically different places, especially in the 1950s. How did you adjust?

**A:** I was born in Alton, Illinois and when I was 7 years old my family moved to the near north side of Chicago, in what was then a largely Italian neighborhood that eventually became Cabrini-Green. I attended Waller High School (now Lincoln Park Academy), the most ethnically diverse school in the city, and where I excelled in basketball and baseball, winning All-City honors in both sports. That led to a basketball scholarship to Alabama State College (now University) in Montgomery, Alabama. I went from a multi-cultural environment in the North, to the South where segregation was the law.



*Photo by Heather Hayes, courtesy of the office of the Illinois Secretary of State.*

Being in the South felt like I was in a different world. One day, I was taking a public bus from the campus to downtown Montgomery. I got on the bus, paid my fare and sat down. The driver told me that I could not sit there and that I needed to move to the back of the bus. I told him that I had paid my fare and that his job was to drive the bus.

He then threatened to have me arrested, and would have, but a police squad car parked on the street was dispatched to another location. Other African Americans who were in the back of the bus explained to me that I was no longer in Chicago, and this is how life is in Alabama. This was a major adjustment to be treated as a second-class citizen. During my time in Montgomery I met and had Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as my minister, met Rosa Parks, and participated in the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott.

*(continued on p. 4)*



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## Jesse White Biography and Interview: A Lifetime of Public Service *(continued from p. 3)*

Q: What were your experiences like as an Army paratrooper and member of the Illinois National Guard? What were the most challenging and rewarding aspects of your military service?

A: I signed a contract with the Chicago Cubs in 1956 and just before I was to report to the team, I was drafted into the United States Army. So instead of going to spring training, I went to basic training! While stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, I decided I wanted to be a paratrooper and was sent to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where I joined the 101st Airborne Division. It was a great experience and taught me the valuable lesson that when you take on a mission, you see it to its completion. It was a very rewarding experience and certainly challenging to jump out of airplanes and to be combat-ready. It was a great honor and a very satisfying feeling to be part of one of the finest fighting forces in the world. On two later occasions, I volunteered to serve in the National Guard and Reserves.

Q: You spent over 30 years as a teacher and administrator in the Chicago school system. Did you always want to be a teacher? What led you to it?

A: Although Alabama State was for teachers, teaching was not my original plan. I taught gymnastics in college and liked working with young people. When I returned to Chicago after the baseball season I worked at the Chicago Public Schools. I worked for five years at Jenner Elementary School, 26 years at Schiller Elementary (the school I attended), and two years as an administrator.

Q: During your time as a state representative, you represented a very racially and economically diverse district. What difficulties did you have in representing such different kinds of people?

A: When George Dunne, who was the President of the Cook County Board, encouraged me to run for the state legislature, he told me that the make-up of the district was 83% white, 12% black, and 5% other ethnicities. After being elected, I was the only member of the House Black Caucus who represented a majority white district. The district was comprised of Lincoln Park, De Paul, Old Town, Streeterville, the Magnificent Mile, and Cabrini-Green. There were many community and business organizations in the district and attending their meetings, which I did on a regular basis, made it much easier to communicate with constituents. I do not recall any specific difficulties I encountered. I served 16 years in the House and had the highest regard for my constituents.

Q: During your years in the House of Representatives, what bills or issues were you involved with that made the biggest impression on you?

A: I was proud to chair the House Human Services Committee which dealt with the agencies that covered one-third of the state budget. I had a very good relationship with Judy Baar Topinka, who was then the ranking Republican member of the Committee. We worked together and with other members of the Committee to see that these departments were fully funded to serve those in need. Some of the issues that impacted my district were the development of Navy Pier, the creation of the Contemporary Art Museum, and condominium expansion. I was involved in legislation that helped the Greater Chicago Food Depository and other food banks in Illinois, and was an early supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment and the mandatory usage of safety belts for automobile drivers and passengers. I am proud of my work with former WGN-TV newscaster Merri Dee on the Victims' Bill of Rights Law.

Q: What do you hope to be remembered for as Secretary of State?

A: As Secretary of State I have worked to clean up the culture of corruption I inherited, used technology to improve customer service, and passed laws to make

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the roads of Illinois as safe as possible. I am especially proud of strengthening the Graduated Driver's License program, banning texting while driving, toughening anti-DUI laws, creating the position of an independent inspector general, and developing one of the best organ tissue/donation programs in the country.

Q: You're well known for founding and leading the Jesse White Tumbling Team. You founded it in 1959 to help underprivileged children. What changes have you seen in the problems faced by at-risk youth over the last 50-plus years?

A: The Tumblers were started in 1959 to provide a positive alternative for inner-city kids. More than 17,000 young people have been through the program. They have traveled throughout the United States and performed in Canada, Hong Kong, Bermuda, Belize, China, Israel, and Croatia. Many of the problems at-risk youth face have not changed, such as gangs, drugs, and crime. The biggest difference is the number of guns in our country and how they take thousands of lives every year.

Q: One of the major changes that occurred during your lifetime was the breaking down of racial barriers. What are the most significant changes that you've seen, and what do you think still needs to be done?

A: I believe African Americans have come a long way in our society including the first African-American President, but much more needs to be done. Having experienced segregation, I know how deeply the pain cuts, and it is a tragic part of our history. We need to make a greater effort to help people who are suffering and something I believe in strongly is that people who have been successful in life have an obligation to give back to the community. People should participate in doing volunteer work, donating resources, or mentoring young people.

Q: You were a college student in Alabama when Martin Luther King, Jr.'s house there was bombed. His assassination in 1968 triggered rioting and violence in your home city of Chicago. What recollections do you have of those times?

A: Dr. King was one of the most extraordinary people I have ever met. He was my minister at Alabama State where he led the Montgomery Bus Boycott. I remember him attending many of our college basketball games. One of my favorite stories was when Dr. King was explaining the philosophy of non-violence and how he would use it in Montgomery to integrate that city's bus system. He said it was the philosophy used by Gandhi to help the Indians gain independence from the British. He said if you are hit in the face turn the

other cheek. Do not hit back. I raised my hand and he called on me. I said, "Dr. King, I am from Chicago, and we do not operate that way." He said, "Jesse, just follow the script."

His assassination was devastating and one of the saddest days of my life. He offered hope to so many people. The world would be a much better place had he been able to live a longer life.

Q: You played for several seasons with the Chicago Cubs organization. How do you feel about the team's World Series win?

A: I played eight years in the Cubs system and it was a very special experience. I had the opportunity to play and become friends with such great players as Ernie Banks, Billy Williams, and Ron Santo. I'm sorry that Ernie and Ron were not able to see the great Cub team of 2016. I am delighted with their success and want to commend the Ricketts family for developing this outstanding team. I am proud that we no longer have to say "wait till next year."

# Cecil Partee Biography

Cecil A. Partee had the distinction of being the first African American President Pro Tempore of the Senate (1971) and President of the Senate (1975).

Mr. Partee was born April 10, 1921 in Blytheville, Arkansas. The story of his youth is typical of black middle-class life in Blytheville during the 1920s and 1930s. After completing his undergraduate work at Tennessee State University, he was denied entry to law school at the University of Arkansas. Instead, the State of Arkansas paid his tuition at Northwestern University, where he earned his law degree.

Upon admission to the Illinois bar, Mr. Partee started practice in Chicago. With the idea of widening contacts for his practice, he asked committeeman William L. Dawson to assign him a precinct. This precinct captain assignment started his long-term association with the Regular Democratic organization in Chicago. He was soon offered, and in 1948 accepted, a position as an assistant state's attorney.

Two significant events in his life occurred in 1955. First, he married Paris Angelina Bradley. Second, redistricting expanded Chicago's representation in the General Assembly. Mr. Partee was asked to run in 1956 for one of the new positions in the House of Representatives. He did so, was elected, and continued in the House for five terms (1957-1967). He then served in the Senate for five General Assemblies (1967-1977). While in the Senate, during the 77th through 79th General Assemblies, he served as the first African American President Pro Tempore of the Senate (1971), Minority Leader (1973), and Senate President (1975).

According to his obituary in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, he became the state's

first black Governor—for a day. “Under the old Illinois Constitution, whenever the Governor was out of the state, the Lieutenant Governor became the Governor and the next person in line was the the President of the state Senate,” said U.S. Senator Paul Simon. “Once when Governor Richard Ogilvie was out of the state, I purposely went across the river to Saint Louis so that Cecil Partee became Governor, the first African American to serve as Governor of our state, but only for one day.”

Mr. Partee was the 1976 Democratic nominee for Attorney General, but lost to Republican William Scott. He was named commissioner of Chicago's Human Services Department and served until 1979, when he was elected city treasurer. He served in that office until 1989, when he was appointed as the state's attorney after Richard M. Daley's election as mayor. He ran in a 1990 special election to fill the remaining 2 years of the term, but lost to Republican Jack O'Malley.

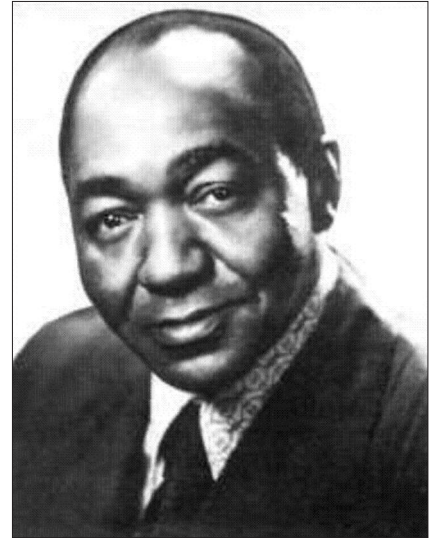
Cecil Partee died of lung cancer on August 16, 1994. He was survived by his wife Paris, daughters Paris and Cecile, and two granddaughters.

## Cecil Partee Oral History

### Boyhood and Education

Q: What was life like in Blytheville, Arkansas when you were quite young?

A: Well, it was just a small town when I was quite young. By 1930, when I was nine, it was a town of 6,000 people. It was, in one sense, progressive. They had the first radio station in Arkansas, even including Little Rock and all the larger towns. It was segregated and we had a school. You went to school and you went to church and many of your teachers were also people who taught in the church.



The church offered a lot of opportunities to participate in plays or to say speeches. We had programs on Mother's Day, on Christmas, on Thanksgiving. Had three or four programs a year at the church where you would have an opportunity to say a poem or something that was appropriate for that particular holiday.

I got involved quite young in what has turned out to be public speaking. They used to have what they called oratorical contests and when I was six years of age I was taught and said, in one of the contests, Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life," which is about an eight-stanza poem which I was able to do at six. They had this oratorical contest and I said that poem and a girl said a poem called, "Is It Because I'm Nobody's Child?" The girl was given first place and I was given second place and two persons contested the judges' decision and, as a consequence, they gave both of us first place. One of those two persons was a black lawyer.

It was the very first time I had ever met a lawyer who was black. I suppose—it might have been the first time I ever really met a lawyer, I'm not sure. It was very interesting to me. He took an interest in me and the next day he took me down to his office and introduced me to various people.

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So, I guess, really, that was the first time I had seen a lawyer and I guess maybe in the back of my mind that has always stuck out.

[But] I always wanted to be a doctor, that was my plan.

Q: Oh? A physician?

A: A physician, yes. I found out one day that I had no chemistry for blood and illness and I hated to be around people when they were sick because I didn't feel I could do enough for them. So I abandoned the notion of being a doctor.

I really went into business because I had wanted to be an actuary, because I did very well in math and all.

After I started debating and started doing very well in the debating, it was suggested to me by one of my history professors that maybe I ought to consider going to law school. My roommate was a fellow who came to school saying he wanted to be a lawyer and so we got to talking about it again and I then decided probably that would be the way I would go. I would go to law school.

Q: How did you decide on Northwestern?

A: Well, I had made an application to both the University of Chicago and Northwestern and had been accepted at each on the basis of my college grades.

Q: And you had a scholarship that you could use at both these schools?

A: Well, yes. The scholarship would be paid by the University of Arkansas and it would cover tuition at both schools.

Q: It would seem they would do that for their own school in Arkansas, but they chose Illinois? Or allowed you to choose Illinois?

A: No, what they did was—the scholarship came as a result of their obviating my attendance at the University of Arkansas. You see, at the time, the University of Arkansas was an all-white school. And they experienced no anxiety to have any black students. But they said, “You can go somewhere else and we'll pay your tuition.” So I came to Northwestern and they paid my tuition. At Northwestern they gave me a job in the library that paid my tuition. So they gave me that in cash, you see. They just gave me—I think the tuition was maybe, oh, three or four hundred dollars a semester, something like that. So I just got cash for that.

I worked on the weekends. I waited table in nightclubs on the weekends. So I went to day-school and they had an accelerated course over there. I went to school 48 weeks a year so I finished Northwestern eight days short of two calendar years.

#### **Assistant State's Attorney, Then Legislator**

Q: While you were still at the university in school, had you started working or figuring out what you were going to do with your law degree when you got it?

A: [D]uring my final days at Northwestern, we went over to the court building, and I met a man who was trying a case there that we observed and he said he would like for me to come down and talk to him at his office. He might want to have me work for him. His name was Joseph Clayton. As soon as I got out of school, I started to work for him. You see, we got out of school in September, I guess, and we took the bar examination in early November and I worked for him from early November up through January before being sworn in.

Q: Then what did you do in January?

A: Then I just started practicing with him as a lawyer in his office. Handling some of his cases and began to get a few of my own and started practicing. Well, I was there for about a year. Then they asked me to be an assistant state's attorney.

Q: You say, “they.” Who were “they” that asked you to become assistant?

A: Oh, a judge came to me. I had joined a political organization. I had gone in to see Congressman Dawson and told him that I wanted to become a precinct committeeman, and he says, “Why? Do you want a job?” I said, “No, sir, I don't want a job.” He says, “You're a lawyer. You went to my school, Northwestern.” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Well, you're kind of strange.” And he called a lot of fellows in and he said, “I want you to meet a very strange animal. Here's a fellow who's different. Most lawyers want a job and no precinct, and here's a guy who wants a precinct and no job.”

He said, “Well, why do you want a precinct?” I said, “Well, you see, I'm not from here, I don't know a lot of people here, I'm trying to get to know a lot of people. If I had a precinct, I would know 500 people by their first name and 500 people would know me by my first name. And that would give me some start towards getting known in this city.”

So I took a precinct. Now, I had had the precinct for a year before they called me in and asked me, they said, “Well, now you said you didn't want a job but here's a very nice opportunity for you as an assistant state's attorney.” So I became an assistant state's attorney.

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## Cecil Partee Biography *(continued from p. 7)*

Q: Where was the precinct?

A: The precinct was at 62nd and St. Lawrence and Champlain.

Q: What were the major issues—your platform at that time?

A: Well, at that time we were very, very interested in trying to pass some legislation for fair employment practices, number one. That was one of the big issues. The other was civil rights and public accommodation, because you have got to remember in 1957 that was before the 1965 civil rights bill came down from the federal government and there were many places in Illinois where you were not accorded your civil rights. As a matter of fact, when I went to Springfield in 1947 to be sworn in as an attorney, I could not eat at the same hotel with the other lawyers being sworn in. They had it in the Abraham Lincoln Hotel and we were not admitted.

Q: Oh?

A: We were not invited to the hotel for the dinner with our class. And I lived long enough to be invited to make the principal speech to a similar class in Springfield. Some five or six years ago, I was invited to be the principal speaker at the luncheon for the new lawyers who were being sworn in. And I told them I thought it was interesting that I would be invited because, when I finished [law school], I was not able to come. And there was a lady in my class named Jewel Lafontant who was also not able to come who became Assistant Solicitor General of the United States. And I said, “I have a little spot over here. There’s a place across the street over here called the Senate and I’m the President. So, you know, maybe we are making some progress.”

But I also suggested to the black students in that class that, although they

were there having dinner and they were accorded their civil rights, there are still a lot of pockets and areas of racism and discrimination and that they had an obligation to work hard toward eliminating it, just as we did the things that we were subjected to. That it was not all over and still isn’t all over.

Q: When it came up that this was a possibility, going to the legislature, why did you accept it?

A: I thought it was a step forward, thought it was a very significant thing to be one of 235 people who made the laws for the state. It was a real attractive kind of thing from that vantage point. It also meant to me that I could go out into the world and practice law because the legislature only met for six months every other year. That meant eighteen months that you would be home practicing law as a private practitioner.

When I first went, you could take your two-year salary at once, so I took the two-year salary because I figured that I would make less money practicing law the first year than the second year, for two reasons. One, I would only be out a year, or a half a year, really. The other being that, the second year, I would have a full year uninterrupted with the legislature to practice law. I did that for a number of years. I would practice law and was in the legislature.

Q: Did you do your own drawing of the bills?

A: No, you sat down with them [Legislative Reference Bureau] across the desk, discussed the idea that you had in mind and you would have somebody rough-draft what you wanted to do or, point-by-point, what you wanted the bill to include, what you wanted it to exclude. And then they would put it in written form for introduction.

Q: Did you have much occasion to use the Legislative Reference Bureau for anything other than the drafting of the bills? [R]esearch?

A: No, we didn’t have that in those days. You did your own research. We didn’t even have a telephone to call home or call your office or anything of that sort. You would just put some money in the phone booth. We didn’t even have credit cards in that day. You just put some quarters or dimes, whatever it took, in there, to do it. No, we didn’t have any help at all. We had no interns, we had no staff, you did it yourself.

Q: So really your office was more or less your hotel room?

A: Our head.

Q: Well! (laughter)

A: Yes, didn’t have any offices. The leaders had offices in those days, the Speaker would have an office. Maybe the Assistant Majority Leader and the Assistant Minority Leader, and then the Minority Leader and the Majority Leader would each have probably an office, I think they had offices. I don’t really remember that they had offices, to tell you the truth; but I do know the Speaker had one and the President of the Senate.

### **Fair Employment Practices**

Q: On the Fair Employment Practices Commission, the effort to get this established went over several years starting in 1953. Evidently Senator Wimbish was very active in 1953 in attempting to get a bill through on this.

A: That was the raw bill that gave us the Fair Employment Practices Act. They had some very definite exclusions. I think originally the bill excluded all employers with less than 100 employees and over the years you’ll find a large number of bills



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whittling it down to 75, then 50, 25, and 15. Eventually, a bill which had been offered many, many times passed both the House and the Senate.

I handled a bill in the Senate which gave the Fair Employment Practices Commission initiatory powers which gave it the right on its own to make a complaint for discrimination. Prior to that time, the only avenue for making a discrimination complaint on employment had to come from the individual who was aggrieved by a situation. The idea for the commission to have the power was because the commission had the capability of looking at an entire industry and determining, a great deal more than an individual, whether there was or was not discrimination within that industry. And then they, the members of the commission, could initiate a complaint and not have to rely solely on an individual who had been aggrieved.

That was a very hard-fought battle over the years and there was a great deal of resistance to it. But finally we got it passed maybe as late as 1973, or 1974, maybe even 1975.

Q: We have interviewed [Martin Lohmann] and he was one that was opposed to this because, as he pointed out—and also I found that Senator Arrington had stated—that there were real problems in finding sufficient black people that were educated sufficiently to take some of these jobs. Did you find that to be true?

A: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. There were plenty of black people for the jobs that they were seeking. No, I don't find that to be true at all.

Q: Well, that seemed to be one of the main oppositions to the bill.

A: Well, you see, if that were so, just on the basis of logic, if there were no black people to take the job why would there be any opposition?

Q: Yes, I see. (laughter) Yes, sir, I see.

A: Yes. You're opposed to something because it's a problem to you. If there are no black people to take the jobs involved, there shouldn't be any opposition because there wouldn't be a problem. So I don't buy that at all.

### Open Housing

Q: A bill which you introduced with the housing affairs had to do with the Weston nuclear plant, or this came up in regard to getting the bill passed. Do you recall that?

A: Yes, I recall that very well. The federal government was looking for a place to put a large nuclear plant, a plant that would bring a substantial amount of money to Illinois if it were located here. They had designated the site and the government, the federal government that is, had given the impression that unless we passed an open housing law that plant would not be located in Illinois and I was using that as an argument for the passage of an open housing law, so that we could acquire that plant. But that didn't sell. The opposition was so strong they would rather deprive themselves of the dollars than to pass the law.

Q: Yes. I notice there was a bill that was passed to provide the—I think it was \$30 for the purchase of land for the plant.

A: Yes, I might have been strident about the entire committee because I never felt that they ever gave me a fair hearing on it. I thought that when they came in there their minds were made up and they weren't prepared to listen to what the true facts were.

In those days, it's to be remembered, I couldn't even get any newspapers, any editorial comments in favor of fair housing. I went once to Peoria and talked to the editor there who was a

man that I considered a very fine man and asked for an editorial in favor of the concept and he told me that he didn't think that people who worked for him and his newspaper would do it on the basis that they didn't believe in the concept. He said they didn't believe in the concept and hence they wouldn't write favorable articles. I said, "Well, I'm not asking that they believe in the concept, but what I'm asking is, 'Do your people have journalistic integrity?'" He says, "You are doggone right they do. They certainly do have journalistic integrity." I said, "Then, if they have journalistic integrity, let them make a survey, since you say they don't need it in Peoria. Let them make a survey of the city of Peoria and I'll abide those results."

So the newspaper people in the Peoria *Journal-Star* made a survey and they didn't write one editorial in favor of open housing, they wrote twelve editorials in favor of open housing and put them in a little booklet called *A House Divided*. I was just more than gratified that they did it. Although they may not have believed in it, they had the journalistic integrity to write what the survey revealed and the survey revealed a real need for open housing in Peoria which they had initially felt that they didn't need.

### Police Brutality

Q: Along the latter part of the 1960s there was also consideration of police brutality being excessive against the black population. Do you recall that situation? I believe you had made statements that it was not excessive brutality.

A: Yes, I think that the phrase "police brutality" became sort of a code word and that, in many instances where police sought to enforce the law, people just resisted the enforcement of the law and there were instances where there were skirmishes. There were

(continued on p. 10)

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## Cecil Partee

### Biography *(continued from p. 9)*

fightings, people got their heads hit with nightsticks or shot under circumstances where, if both persons involved had been a little more civil to each other, it would never have happened.

Then there became a climate of fear. I'm sure that a lot of white policemen were afraid in certain situations in black communities. A lot of things that passed for police brutality were, in fact, perhaps police brutality. A lot of things which were adjudged to be, or said to be, police brutality were not in my judgment police brutality but were police enforcing the law where they had encountered resistance. But really what it is or what it isn't is not really so important, actually, as what it is perceived to be.

#### Insurance

Q: One of the biggest areas that you were involved with was with insurance. [W]hy would you have been so interested in insurance matters in the legislature?

A: [F]rom the very first time I went to Springfield, one of the largest complaints that I'd had from the people in my district was about their relationship with insurance companies. Many of them felt that they were being ripped off. [I]n my district there were a large number of people who were not paid for accident claims. There were people who had insurance companies and many of them were fly-by-night companies. [I]n 1957 a company could actually come into Illinois, set up and do business and not be examined during the first two years of its existence. [C]ompanies would come in, take a large number of premiums, pay no claims, and then fold their tents and leave within that two-year period before they could be examined. And one of the first bills I passed in 1957 was one that prohibited that kind of thing and made for

early examination of those companies.

We were paying more premiums for the same kind of coverage than they were paying in other districts, particularly in white districts. Chicago had a zone system of premium charge and people in my district paid more for automobile insurance than they did in many other parts of the state, and more than in some other parts of Chicago.

So those bills were all calculated to give strength and vitality to the insurance industry in the context of consumers getting the best kind of a deal.

#### Death Penalty

Q: In regard to the death sentence, it appeared that you were in favor of suspension, or perhaps, abolishment of the death sentence. What was your position?

A: Well, philosophically I have always been opposed to the death sentence because during the period that I had opposition, I felt that only minorities and poor people were the ones who got the death penalty. People who had money and could hire top-flight lawyers rarely ever got the death penalty. It was normally poor people and minority people who got the death penalty and I was opposed to it because I didn't think, first of all, that that was a very fair kind of rationale. And also, I believed that, you know, if perchance you gave somebody the death penalty and you made a mistake, you'd made a mistake and there would be no way to rectify it.

I had been an assistant state's attorney for eight years before I went to the legislature. I won an awful lot of cases for the state. I won 18 juries in a row in felony cases but in none of those cases did we ever recommend a death penalty. A lot of cases where people got 99 years and 199 years, and all of that. But I'll tell you, we always knew that if we had made a mistake

we could always bring that person out of the penitentiary, if we found out that he wasn't the person that did it. So I was really opposed to the death penalty.

In later years, I think I've been inclined to change my position on it. The Supreme Court of the United States commenced a course of action a few years ago where they swung the pendulum very, very far in the interest of fairness to the defendant. And although I think that fairness to the defendant is a good and salutary thing, I think the pendulum swung so far that the Supreme Court, in giving extended rights to the defendant, commences to diminish the rights of the persons who were injured, the rights of the complaining witnesses. I think their rights commenced to evaporate, as rights for the defendants increased, so much so that it became pretty much common knowledge in the United States that whatever you did you were not going to get electrocuted for it. You would never get the death penalty. And I've come to believe that a lot of people have been killed in rather simple robberies, or simple burglaries, or simple rapes, because the defendant believed that he wasn't going to get the chair anyway and that, even if he killed the person, he was not going to get the chair. So he would kill the person, then there is nobody to testify against him and, even if he is apprehended, he is not going to get the chair anyway. So I kind of believe that we really started people to killing people in other criminal activity, because they knew they were not going to get the death penalty. And for that reason, I think I have moved back toward believing that if I were in the legislature today, I'm pretty sure that I would vote for the reinstatement of the death penalty, for that reason, if for no other.

#### Eighteen-Year-Old Vote

Q: In regard to elections, you were the lead in proposing that Illinois

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ratify the U.S. constitutional amendment reducing the age from 21 to 18 for voting. In 1972 you introduced a bill which was approved to implement that for the state of Illinois.

A: Yes. The 18-year-old voting was a very hotly contested issue and it was something that really had everybody upset. I guess a lot of gentlemen felt that if the 18-year-olds got the vote, that, in many instances in many areas, particularly the areas of the colleges, that they would come in in large numbers and take over the established leadership of those county governments.

I can remember the day that it was called and passed in the Senate, we had 58 people present and 40 of them spoke on the subject, and 8 of them spoke twice. That's when we had the explanation of votes, so you could speak for or against the bill, and then on the roll call you could explain your vote, which was another speech. I told them that I firmly believed in freedom of speech, but I thought it only fair to point out to them that after the first 3 spoke, the next 37 did not add one bit of information to the debate, but actually the next 37 simply rehashed what the first 3 had said on the question. And I told them that I was reminded of the Beatitudes and that I had a new Beatitude for them: "Blessed are they who have nothing to say, and more blessed they shall be if they cannot be persuaded to say it." And there were a couple of nuns sitting in the gallery and, the next day, they brought me down something that they had—the new Beatitude statement in a script on a piece of paper—and framed for me, and I have it hanging on the wall.

[S]ometimes rather dire predictions as to how [a bill] is going to affect people don't come true at all. As a matter of fact, after the 18-year-olds were permitted to vote, in the very first election after the permission for them to vote, there was a pretty big outpouring of youngsters, 18 to 20 years old, who came in to vote. Since that time, it has

fallen down considerably. The predictions just didn't come true. As a matter of fact, senior citizens, on a percentage basis, are much stronger voters than our younger. So sometimes you have to look back at what was predicted would happen if certain legislation was passed, and it didn't happen at all. And sometimes things you didn't think were going to happen, did.

### Candidates' Pamphlets

Q: In 1971 and again in 1973 and 1974, you co-sponsored a bill which would have the Secretary of State publish candidates' pamphlets.

A: I think the idea for candidates' pamphlets grew out of an observation that we made of such a pamphlet in the state of Oregon. One of the reasons for it was that it would tend to make all candidates have at least an initial kind of accessibility to the voters, despite the fact that there may be some disproportionate differences in the candidates' individual ability to do so. One candidate may have a great deal more money to spend for literature than the other. There was a tendency, or an attempt, to at least give every candidate some opportunity to get his name and his platform before the public. [W]e felt that that would at least equalize in some fashion the ability and capability of a less affluent candidate to get his name before the public.

Q: I understand there were considerable problems of making sure that it was known who was supporting a particular candidate.

A: Well, I think the whole idea of disclosure is calculated to inform the public who the principal supporters of a particular candidate are and to let the public judge from that information whether or not there are any debts owed to any particular segment of the business community, or to any particular segment of any kind of group.

Q: In 1975 and 1977, you co-sponsored, with Donnewald, a bill which would limit the candidates' campaign expenditures. Both of these were tabled.

A: I supported the campaign expenditure level, top levels, on the basis that it would make it possible in some instances, if there are not caps on it, for people with a lot of money to have a lot of newspapers, or a lot of ads in the papers, radio, television, to the disadvantage and distress of a less well-heeled candidate. It was an attempt to prevent anybody from just, say, buying public office, because of the large number of dollars they had available for a campaign. And I thought there ought to be some limitation on how much a person could spend. And those limits were graded downward in terms, you know, of the importance of the office. Governor's office may spend more money than say someone running for Comptroller, something of that sort.

Q: What's been your position in regard to the government paying for campaign expenditures?

A: I think eventually we will come to that. I suppose the first inroad in that area is the check-off system which obtains at the federal level, where you can check off for a dollar coming out of your federal income tax to go to one party or the other. Perhaps if candidates did not have to rely on the general population to raise their campaign funds, they could possibly go into office with less obligation to those people who raise their campaign funds. If someone runs for public office in a particular area, and there are a few large insurance companies in that area, and they raise the bulk of their money, they more or less have some sort of feeling of affinity toward the problems of the insurance industry, and it is just a normal kind of natural thing. If a person is supported overwhelmingly by teachers' unions or groups, they feel a natural affinity to be protectionistic toward

*(continued on p. 12)*

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## Cecil Partee Biography *(continued from p. 11)*

that group. So if nobody could accept campaign funds from anybody, then nobody would be beholden to anybody.

### Governor Maddox

Q: Did you have occasion to use the State Library very much?

A: I know on one occasion I had a debate with a man from, who was then the Governor of Georgia, and I went to the State Library and we were able to find every single one of the newspaper articles where he had been mentioned. He was a man who was known for his hatchet handles on the chicken farm down there. He became Governor of Georgia. What's his name? Well, anyway, he was a segregationist and a man who was keeping black people out of his restaurants and stuff like that.

Well, I had a debate with him and demolished him in the debate because he didn't know anything about me and probably didn't take the time to find out. But I went to the State Library and they had every article that had ever been written on him, and we read it. So, in the course of the debate, I could demolish some of his points by proving to him that in different times in different places during his lifetime he had manifested a different attitude. The man I was trying to remember, name was Lester Maddox. He was the one the library helped me to be prepared to debate.

### Governors Kerner and Walker

Q: (pause) What was the difference in working with Walker from working under Kerner?

A: (laughs) I think, actually, the Walker—well, the methodology by which a person is elected may have some effect on that person's regime in office. Now, when Kerner was elected, he was elected with the full and complete and total support of every segment of the Democratic Party. No confrontations of any kind between one group and another. All Democrats supported him. Walker's election was a very different one. He appealed to various kinds of people, including Democrats and Independents, and others, and at the very beginning you could tell, from his inauguration, that there were going to be differences. In other words, people who had been with him the longest were going to be closest to him in terms of jobs and other kinds of things. We had people who—working here with the regular organization—were not given the same kind of a welcome. [S]o when we got to the legislature, he was in confrontative situations with the leadership of the party here and, as a consequence, it was nip and tuck all the way.

I tried very much to talk to him one day and told him that he should sit down with Daley, he was the leader up here, find out how they could get their act together and not have any kind of fights, and this kind of thing, and I think Daley was very willing to do that. I think though that if Governor Walker—who had, in a measure, won because he had showed some opposition to Daley—if he had done that, then he would have lost a lot of support that he had from a lot of Independents and others, so he never really kind of wanted to do that. Certainly not openly.

So, they just always kept me in a tizzy trying to satisfy and protect both ends

of the party, while at the same time making sure that the people got what they were entitled to in terms of service. So it was a very difficult kind of period. We had our ups and downs.

Q: How much should the legislature be involved in the control of the judiciary?

A: (chuckles) It's been an interminable fight over the years. You can go all the way back to the time of *Marbury v. Madison* when John Marshall was the Chief Justice and he wrote the opinion that said that the court could declare an act of Congress unconstitutional and established that precedent. Until that time, of course, that was not involved, and I suppose that since time immemorial there has been some discussion about how much the courts could control the legislature, how much the legislature would be able to control the court. They are equal, separate and equal, and operate and exist concomitantly, and that is the way it ought to be. But you always have, from time to time, some case arising where there has to be a determination made. I think, frankly, so long as one does not try to suppress the other, and renders any decisions which are thought to be reasonable, that decision can survive without a lot of confrontation or opposition from the other branch.

### Aid to Families With Dependent Children

Q: There was a feeling through the years that aid to dependent children was getting out of hand a little bit, that there was more money going into it than should have. Do you feel that was true?



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A: Well, that's not a subject that lends itself to a quick answer or a quick solution. The aid to dependent children phase of the government, of the whole program I think, really, has been stretched beyond what I think it originally set out to do. I think originally the program was supposed to be a sort of a stop-gap, temporary kind of measure. We now find that it has gone from generation to generation to generation, and I think perhaps the encouragement has exceeded the lack of encouragement that should have been in terms of helping people get off of welfare.

There were some programs over the years calculated to get people off of welfare, but I am just not sure that the program has been run in the best fashion. It seems to me that, the long number of years that we have had welfare, that it [ha]s not improved in terms of helping people, but it has hurt people more than it has helped in that a lot of people have become absolutely dependent on it and it has gone from generation to generation. I am not happy with the way the whole program has worked out.

Q: Do you recall any specifics during your Senate period in regard to public aid, attempts to bring it more under control?

A: [O]ver the last 20-year period, there has never been a year when someone has not had some bills or had some approaches to either eliminate it or say that people who had more than X number of children should be off welfare, that the new children shouldn't go on. [I]t has been a constant fight, a constant vigil, people who have sought increases in welfare, raises from year to year. It has been a constant battle, the whole issue.

### Legislative Staff

Q: Sir, you came to the legislature at a time when there was a start of major change in size and the amount of work the legislature was doing. What do you think was the most significant change in the 20-some years you were in the legislature?

A: I think the greatest change was the addition of staff personnel. When I first came to the legislature, there was very little staff, very little supportive staff. Committees had a clerk and that was about all. Most of the legislators did not even have a private, personal secretary. As a matter of fact, we had girls in a steno pool and there was no consistency. You would have one lady this day and another one next week, and you had no offices, no place in which to work, no place to receive a phone call. We used to have to use public telephones to call back to Chicago to your office or to constituents. And so, getting an office and getting personnel, both in the office and on the staff of the various committees, is the most significant change that I can tell you.

Q: [O]ne of the major changes that did occur was the change to annual sessions as opposed to biennial sessions. Was this a good move?

A: Well, as I look back on it, I am not sure that it has as much meaning as it was touted to have had. The fact is that the longer the legislature is in session, the more money it spends and the more the various state officers are likely to ask for additional funds for various kinds of things. I would think if I had it to do over that I would be more inclined to stay with the biennial session rather than the annual session.

The other thing that the biennial session provided were people who really had the time to serve as legislators and to earn a living in some other chosen profession or trade or occupation. With the [annual] session, we developed a lot of persons who described themselves as "professional legislators," and my feeling is that the legislative process should not be peopled with persons who are professional legislators, because they, then, lose the one thing that a legislator ought to have and that is a day-to-day currency with reality and with the everyday world. If a man is a doctor or if he is a lawyer or if he is a farmer, or insurance man, or teacher even, he is not in the legislature all the time, he is out in the day-to-day world and he brings the experience of the everyday world to the legislative process. Whereas a person who is there in the legislature on a day-to-day basis very often loses that human touch, that day-to-day progression or retrogression that is existing or happening in the world, and in the state. So I think the biennial sessions were best for that reason, because people then were never going to make enough money in the legislature to sustain themselves. Hence, they needed, of course, some other occupations and that brought them out into the other world.

We always had special sessions during the time we had the biennial sessions because there were some problems that arose from time to time which had to be dealt with with some immediacy, and that was enough time to do it. But with the on-going session, we are almost like Congress there now. The people are there almost the year round, and it is not, I think, in the best interests of the taxpayers.

*(continued on p. 14)*

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# Cecil Partee

## Biography *(continued from p. 13)*

### Racial Barriers in Springfield

Q: One of the major changes that occurred through the years was the breaking down of the racial barriers in the legislature and in Springfield itself, perhaps. Your becoming President of the Senate kind of epitomized that change. What do you think was the major significant contribution that you yourself made during the six or so years you were leading the Senate?

A: Well, you are very right that there was a real, real change in racial matters during the time I was there, because when I first got there, just before I got there, it was impossible for a black legislator to live in one of the hotels, for example. When I became a lawyer in Illinois, I couldn't go in the hotel and eat with my class on the night of the swearing in. And those things changed principally because of the federal civil rights law and the people in Illinois, then, decided to follow the national trend and now have. Those things are behind us.

My becoming President of the Senate, I think, in effect, symbolized a new kind of growth, a new kind of development, and I was careful to make certain that, being the first, I brought the kind of energy and work products to the Senate that would be salutary and progressive, and it would be outstanding. I wanted to be an outstanding person. I think—I say immodestly that I think my record is one that has had a lot of nice things said about it in terms of the way we conducted it. Even to the smallest things.

### Advice to Youth

Q: [W]hat are your thoughts concerning a legislative career today? For a young person that might be looking in that direction?

A: Well, today, yesterday, tomorrow, for me I think it is the same in terms of what I basically feel a person ought to be equipped with when he goes into the legislature, or into politics period, there are some ups and downs in this business like in all other businesses. [I]f a person really wants to be guaranteed some tranquility, some mental tranquility, some economic stability, that he or she ought to have some other kind of basic way to earn a living if he desires to run for public office. He ought to, if he is defeated, be able to go out into the marketplace as an accountant, or as a truck driver, or something that he is equipped to handle so that he is not at the mercy of anybody. I think everybody ought to have a trade or profession or something where he can earn a living extrinsic to politics.

I was at a place the other day and a young man says, "I want to be a senator." I said, "What are you going to be before you are a senator? What are you going to be if you are not a senator?" That is the kind of question I have asked these young people today because, although it is glamorous and it looks good, I think you ought to be able to care for yourself aside from it. [I] don't think as time goes on, that legislators are going to meet year-round and people ought to have something else to do.

Q: Sir, since you have left the legislature, have you missed being there?

A: I had 20 beautiful, wonderful, rewarding, and inspiring years in the legislature. My life has been a series of involvements. I was an assistant state's attorney for a period of time and I thoroughly enjoyed that. I was a private lawyer in certain areas for a period of time, and I thoroughly enjoyed that. I enjoyed my years in the legislature. I'm not one who looks backwards very much in any kind of frustrating way.

### Credit for Mother

I suppose I should give my mother credit, more than any other person, for equipping me to articulate my points and to express myself well, if I am able to. She is the one that should get the credit. When I was a youngster, I didn't realize how far-seeing and wise my mother was but she used to do something that used to annoy me and that was to send me on a walk downtown, eight or ten blocks, with a blind man—take him downtown, bring him home—and she said to me, "Tell him what you see." And he had never had sight, it wasn't a person who had lost his sight. He was a person who had never been able to see and, as a kid, you know, 10 or 12 years old, learning under those arduous circumstances to express to him, a blind person, what I saw. But I think it was important in formulating within me the desire and ability to draw pictures with words and I think that stood me in pretty good stead in the legislature because—I never talked too much but when I did most people would listen, and that is kind of rewarding. Makes you feel kind of good. So, being able to discuss things and debate them was interesting to me and I enjoyed it. Enjoyed it very, very much.

# Abstracts of Reports Required to be Filed With General Assembly

The Legislative Research Unit staff is required to prepare abstracts of reports required to be filed with the General Assembly. Legislators may receive copies of entire reports by sending the enclosed form to the State Government Report Distribution Center at the Illinois State Library. Abstracts are published quarterly. Legislators who wish to receive them more often may contact the executive director.

## **Aging, Healthcare and Family Services, Human Services, and Public Health Depts.**

*Annual report on serving minority seniors, FY 2014*

Department on Aging served 515,770 persons 60+ under Older Americans Act. Department of Human Services provided senior benefit programs to 87,320 persons 60+, and rehab services to 14,183 persons 55+. Department of Healthcare and Family Services paid \$10.3 billion under Medicaid; 22% went to the elderly. Department of Public Health funded suicide prevention, Healthy Brain, other Alzheimer's programs, and Tobacco Quitline. (20 ILCS 105/4.06; undated, rec'd May 2016, 46 pp.)

## **Central Management Services Dept.**

*Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses report, FY 2015*  
CMS certified 141 vendors under the program: 82 as veteran-owned and 59 as service-disabled veteran-owned. It made 77 contracts worth \$27.7 million under program. (30 ILCS 500/45-57(b); March 2016, rec'd May 2016, 4 pp.)

*State-owned & surplus real property, 2016*

Choate Mental Health Center and former Illinois Mine Rescue Station were offered for local use. No interest was shown, so they are ready for sale. Rockford bought a former parking lot for redevelopment. Elgin bought Rakow School and land at

Elgin Mental Health Center for multiple uses. Streator bought Military Affairs Armory for a business incubator. Will County Forest Preserve District and Lockport Park District bought Prairie Bluff Habitat Area for prairie restoration and a public park. Sangamon County bought Sangamon Valley Bikeway Trail for continued use as a trail. (30 ILCS 605/7.1(c); Jan. 2016, rec'd Feb. 2016, 2 pp.)

## **Commerce and Economic Opportunity Dept.**

*Live Theatre Tax Credit report, July-Sept. 2015*

Lists no new jobs or vendor spending in the quarter. No tax credits were awarded, so human infrastructure cannot be assessed under diversity reporting requirement. (35 ILCS 17/10-50(b); undated, rec'd Nov. 2015, 1 p.)

## **Juvenile Justice Dept.**

*Quarterly report, April 2016*

On February 29, 2016 there were 429 youth in all juvenile facilities, below capacity for 1,251. Additionally, 646 youth were served on Aftercare. No population projections were included. Enrollment in general education programs was 308 (unduplicated totals for vocational or special education programs were not provided). Ratio of youth to security staff was 3.3 from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.; 3.7 from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m.; and 7.2 from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. (730 ILCS 5/3-2.5-61; issued & rec'd April 2016, 7 pp.)

## **Labor Relations Board**

*Illinois Police Training Act report, July-Dec. 2015*

Board had no verified complaints, investigations, or officers decertified under the Act. (50 ILCS 705/6.1(r); issued & rec'd Jan. 2016, 1 p.)

## **Legislative Audit Commission**

*Annual report, 2015*

Commission reviewed 115 financial audits and compliance examinations; parts of 2 statewide single-audit reports, and 4 performance audits. It reviewed reports on 115 affidavits for emergency purchases totaling \$61.6 million; reviewed 2 awards not made to lowest bidders; recommended 8 new laws (enacted); and reviewed state agency travel control reports. (25 ILCS 150/3; undated, rec'd Nov. 2016, 26 pp. + appendices)

## **Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council**

*Annual report, 2015*

Council spent \$10.1 million and had revenues of \$6.8 million. Programs were down due to Executive Order 15-8 suspending state grant programs. Only three programs, including a task force, were funded. In 2014, Cook County had 12,794 vehicle thefts (73% of Illinois total). From 1991 to 2014 the state's number of vehicle thefts dropped 77%; the rate per 100,000 residents fell 79%. (20 ILCS 4005/7(g); undated, rec'd May 2016, 17 pp.)

## **Natural Resources Dept.**

*Roanoke Flood Hazard Mitigation Project*

Project includes acquiring 23 plots for open green space; building a new community center; road improvements; and downstream channel improvements. Cost of \$8.2 million will be paid by Department of Natural Resources (\$250,000) and the Village of Roanoke. Benefits are projected at \$9.1 million. Includes maps of locations. (615 ILCS 15/5; undated, rec'd May 2016, 10 pp.)

(continued on p. 16)



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## Abstracts *(continued from p. 15)*

### Public Health Dept.

#### *Psychiatry Practice Incentive Program report, 2012*

Outlines eligibility for residency program grants, medical student scholarships, and loan repayment help. No programs were started due to lack of appropriations in FYs 2012 and 2013. (405 ILCS 100/35; March 2013, rec'd July 2014, 3 pp. + 2 appendices)

### State Board of Education

#### *Bilingual Advisory Task Force, final report*

Task Force identified 7 major issues impacting English Learner (EL) services in public schools and made recommendations for improving EL services, including: increase interpreting support for EL students and families; increase access to education technology; align EL program criteria with general curriculum

criteria; increase school district collaboration; modify exams to assess academic achievement plus EL proficiency; and update teacher licensing to increase EL training and offer "micro-credentials" for EL teachers, general education teachers, and administrators. (H.J.R. 36 (2015); issued May 2016, rec'd June 2016, 29 pp.)

#### *Virtual Education Review Committee report*

Makes eight recommendations for virtual learning in Illinois: that State Board of Education should (1) oversee virtual course quality, (2) issue a funding strategy to improve access for low-income students, (3) establish school district approval process, (4) approve multiple course content providers, (5) guarantee that instructors are properly licensed, (6) encourage districts to communicate with students and parents on virtual course options, (7) approve

only supplemental courses (no full-time virtual education programs), and (8) not include online course graduation requirement. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.163(d); April 2016, rec'd May 2016, 20 pp. + 2 appendices)

## First Reading

A publication of the Legislative Research Unit

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