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# The Politics of Public Budgeting in Illinois

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SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

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## **The Simon Review**

### **The Politics of Public Budgeting in Illinois**

**By John L. Foster and John S. Jackson**

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# THE SIMON REVIEW

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## **The Politics of Public Budgeting in Illinois**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is about taxing, revenue and public budgeting in Illinois. The concept of public budgeting includes both the revenues raised by government and the ways in which those revenues are spent on the functions and programs sponsored by governments. This paper focuses especially on spending, that is on how and where revenue is distributed in the state in the form of public services and programs. It provides relevant data on the statewide distribution patterns and especially the question of whether those expenditures of the taxpayers' money disproportionately benefit one region over the other. This question has provoked a long running debate in Illinois and it is one of the key questions influencing budgeting and most notably the raising of revenue in the state. The backdrop for this analysis is the stalemate over the state's budget that went on for more than two years in 2015-2017 and that did lasting damage to the state and the continuing questions over what Illinois should do next regarding taxes and spending which will be crucial issues in the 2018 elections.

### **Introduction: Perception and Reality in Public Policy Making**

Our paper also raises questions related to perceptions and realities in politics and their role in the never ending debate over the making of public policy and especially budgeting. Constructing a budget and deciding each year how to spend the projected revenues is one of the most fundamental things all governments are required to do. Budgeting shares equally in with "providing for the common defense" in the words of the U. S. Constitution, that is, ensuring public safety at the state and local level and for the national defense at the national level. Those two receive top billing as the most important functions the public expects from their government. As anyone who is conversant with Illinois government over the past few years knows, Illinois was not able to perform that basic function, i. e. could not adopt a full state spending plan for over two years, a failure unprecedented in the state's modern history. In addition Illinois has run a structural deficit in its budget for the almost two decades since the turn of the century--another budgeting failure. This paper explores some of the root causes for those failures and some of the basic lessons we should learn from those experiences to guide the state's future.

It is often asserted by those who study politics that perception is more important than reality in the rough and tumble of the American political process. This is because public opinion, campaigns and elections have a major impact on the making of policy and this is particularly true in tax and budget issues. It is clearly the case that the public's perception of an issue may well not square with all the empirical facts. People believe what they have been taught, what they have told by trusted sources, particularly public figures, sources they trust in the media, and what they want to believe. Never mind what the factual basis for those beliefs are and how complex the empirical realities of establishing what "the facts" are.

This makes it more difficult to make rational public policy based in the reality of what the facts and the empirical evidence show. If the mass public does not believe in what are objectively provable facts, this ignorance corrupts the political discourse and makes the adoption of rational, evidence based public policy very problematic. For instance if a majority, or large minorities of the public do not accept that there is a virtual scientific consensus about the facts of climate change being real and that human activity has been the most significant cause of that change, then the potential for the adoption of realistic measures to combat it become more problematic (Nadja Popovich and Livia Albeck-Ripka, New York Times Interactive, December 14, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/14/climate/republicans>).

It is the role of a pluralistic community of scientists, engineers, researchers, scholars and informed experts to try to learn what the relevant facts are and to understand what we do not know and where the boundaries of ignorance still need to be pushed back. This is the fundamental role of research. There are well founded rules required by the scientific method that are the rules of the game in the establishment of empirical truth. Those rules govern the ways in which a widely recognized body of public knowledge is created. The professional communities in each discipline share a respect for those rules and requirements and understand what is involved in expanding the scope and limits of accepted public knowledge.

Transferring all of that fairly “academic” and arcane scientific world to the political debate is however a challenge in modern American politics, or in the politics of any state or nation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. “Experts”, scientist, engineers, and basic researchers are easily dismissed as “elites” who are trying to tell us what to think and what to do in a political world which recently has been infected by a mass populist movement, in the U. S. and in many other nations. The manifestations of this mentality are as diverse as the “Brexit” movement in Great Britain and Europe and “Trumpism” in the United States. This paper explores the occurrence of one major disconnect between perception and reality which has long infected the politics of Illinois, and has especially influenced the public discussion and the making of policy in the fields of taxation and public budgeting in the Prairie State.

### **Popular Perceptions of the Budget and Taxing in Illinois**

Americans in general do not like taxes and the people of Illinois are no exception to that general rule (Fox, November 13, 2017, 62-67). It is perhaps a natural inheritance from our revolutionary past which saw a new nation born in part out of the grievances of the colonists against the British crown, and the popular uprising of the colonists against the “Stamp Act” taxes that helped spark the American Revolution. “No Taxation without Representation” was a popular battle cry which helped propel the relatively weak and disorganized colonies to make war on the strongest military power on earth at that time.

It is significant that an appeal to that spirit of independence and rallying against taxes imposed by England was a part of the narrative of the modern Tea Party’s uprising against the federal government and the Obama Administration in 2009 and 2010. The Tea Party’s popular

adoption of the Revolutionary War's coiled black snake on a yellow background flag was the symbolic embodiment of this revolt against the governing party in particular and all political elites in general. That was the beginning of the populist uprising which heavily influenced the 2010, 2012, and 2014 elections, and reached its apex in the election of Donald J. Trump in 2016. This movement still roils our politics today. **It may be that the dislike of taxes is universal; however, in the U. S. that impulse is deeply embedded in our history and political culture, encouraged by a substantial proportion of the political leaders, and constantly reinforced by the tenor of most of our campaigns.**

However, no matter how much we hate taxes in general we do like a great number of concrete public policies and programs that are supported by that revenue. We like and depend on the functions the taxes can buy. Symbolically this dichotomy was represented by the perhaps apocryphal Tea Party demonstrator in 2009 holding a sign that read, "Keep your government hands off my Medicare". Our earlier analyses of longitudinal data covering public opinion in Illinois over time shows clearly that a healthy majority of Illinois voters want to keep and not cut substantially all the most important and most expensive services funded by state government (Jackson, Leonard, and Dietz, June 2016). Public education, public safety, public health, parks and recreation, etc. all received high levels of support coupled with majority opposition to budget cuts when asked where specifically the state budget should be cut to address the state's continuing deficit.

Polls at the national level also support the view of the American public as being schizophrenic in our desire for both low taxes and relatively generous public goods. We are especially solicitous of those programs that benefit us and people like us. It is only foreign aid, welfare, and "waste and fraud" that Americans generally believe are the source of the problems of the federal budget and the cuts should come from what other people in other classes or other parts of the country or state are receiving from the government if reductions are to be made.

This schizophrenic view is a perennial feature of American public opinion which led Lloyd Free and Hadley Cantril to label us as "ideological conservatives and operational liberals" in a classic article they published in 1967 (Free and Cantril, 1967, 206-261). That label is a cogent synoptic description of the empirical data found in our Illinois polls over the 2008-2018 period (Jackson, Leonard, and Dietz, 2016; Jackson and Leonard, 2014; Jackson and Gottemoller, 2007).

## **Polarization**

It has become a commonplace in both the popular press and academic literature to observe that the nation is deeply divided, or "polarized". While there are nuanced differences between some scholars about the depth and the policy impact of this polarization, most researchers conclude that it is real at the political elite level and fairly advanced and deep at the mass voter level as well. Empirical studies indicate that we are deeply divided by geography, class, race, religion, party and ideology and those divisions have grown much more marked over the past two to three decades (Levendusky, 2009; Bishop, 2008; Gelman, 2008; Heatherington, 2001).

These divisions are manifest most importantly in the way we vote individually and in the mass distribution of public opinion collectively. It also shows up in the way the voters react to the personalities and issues of the day. For example, the nation's views on what kind of job the president is doing or where public opinion stands on proposed policies are profoundly influenced by which party the respondent belongs to and what their ideological positions are. Those evaluations swing wildly from time to time with a change in presidents or the party in power in the Congress.

Similarly voting patterns and the results of elections at state, local and national levels are deeply influenced by where the voters live. The acceptance of the red state vs. blue state symbolism and the deep differences those symbols represent are so widespread and complete that they have become a handy popular shorthand for summarizing the many issues and personalities that divide the American people.

Probably the most readily recognized application of the red state vs. blue state dichotomy is in the wide acceptance of the fact that Americans are deeply divided into the predominantly rural and the predominantly urban states (Bishop, 2008; Gelman, 2008). The national map of the state winners of the presidential votes always show a deeply and predictably divided nation which played out again when the winner of the electoral vote prevailed over the winner of the popular vote in the 2016 election which in this respect was a replay of the 2000 election results.

What is not so widely recognized is that inside the states the counties and regions are often also easily recognizable by their long running pattern of voting for either the Republicans or Democrats so routinely that they provide safe seats in both the state legislatures and in Congress for most of their legislative representatives. There are well recognized patterns of red rural counties and blue urban counties voting consistently for their favored party over a very long period of time in almost all the states. **This theme is widely documented and analyzed in a variety of literature on the sources of our current polarization (Florida, 2016; Bishop, 2008; Gelman, 2008; Levendusky, 2009).**

**This red county versus blue county history is especially evident in Illinois where our politics are marked and marred by regionalism.** It is so prevalent that fairly often some angry pundit or politician will advance the perennial idea of dividing Illinois into two states, Chicago and the downstate region ostensibly in order to free the rural areas from the burdens of Chicago. In the March 2018 Primary, one Democrat running for governor, Robert Marshall, went a step farther and advocated the creation of three states, Chicago, the Collar Counties, and Downstate (Luciano, March 12, 2018). It is an idea that has been around for much of Illinois' history and that refuses to die no matter how impractical it is (McClelland, November 15, 2017).

The natural regional divisions are also exacerbated by the partisan divisions that are long standing. Several academic papers in this series have demonstrated clearly that most of the one-hundred and two counties in Illinois have voted so routinely for either the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate over time that there is no problem in designating them

as either red counties or blue counties (Jackson, 2011). Most other states show a similar pattern. These patterns are historic and hold true despite marked differences in issues and candidates across disparate elections, for decades and even political generations. This electoral stability provides the dependable and expected **continuity** in our election results.

In Illinois however there are still enough “swing counties”, or those where the partisan distribution is so close, or where the numbers of independents or voters who are only weakly committed to their party that they can go either way depending on the candidates or the issues involved with a particular race. These voters and a modicum of “crossover voters”, i. e. partisan loyalists who temporarily deviate from their party to vote for a candidate of the other party can provide the **change** and the dynamism in the vote totals and in the ways elections are conducted and how they turn out.

Those swing voters exist and they are also more predominantly found in the suburban areas. Thus, the deep divisions between the urban and the rural counties are somewhat tempered by the independent voters and the swing voters who can provide the winning margin in a closely divided state or county. This tends to be the major pattern in Illinois where the suburban ring of Cook County outside the city and the five suburban counties of DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will can provide the difference between victory or defeat for many statewide candidates.

Thus Illinois tends to be a predominately blue state because of the advantage in party identification that the Democrats enjoy in statewide races. However, Illinois can and frequently does elect Republicans to statewide offices depending on the personalities and resources of the individual candidates and the driving issues of that particular campaign. The current Governor, Bruce Rauner, is the most prominent example of that Republican potential as are former senators Mark Kirk and Peter Fitzgerald and a long list of recent Republican Governors including George Ryan, Jim Edgar and Jim Thompson.

The political tactic which is exaggerated in Illinois is the fact that individual candidates can and often do use these political and geographical divisions as a major narrative or rationale for their campaigns. As candidates see it they need to excite and motivate their base, that is, the loyal party faithful to turn out voters no matter what the current issues are. They also need to attract some of the independents and just enough crossover voters from the other side to be competitive or make them a winner.

This is what happened in the 2014 governor’s race in Illinois for example. Republican Bruce Rauner faced incumbent Pat Quinn in that race with Quinn seeking his first full term. Quinn had initially inherited the job from the impeached Rod Blagojevich on January 29, 2009. He then won a new term on his own in November of 2010 (White, 2013-14, 21). Right at the beginning of that term Quinn led the Illinois General Assembly in adopting an increase in the state income tax. Quinn argued that this increase was necessary to address a long term structural deficit that had been built into the state’s spending habits which consistently exceeded its revenue flow, a



problem that extended back across governors of both parties and various partisan counts in the General Assembly. During the Great Recession of 2008-2009, Illinois was particularly hard hit by decreases in state revenue and increases in the need for spending on state services. This is what happens in all recessions. There was also a unique increase in pension demands because of the “ramp” in the state’s share of pension obligations which had been built into the pension reform plan adopted in the mid-1990s under Governor Jim Edgar.

Put simply, unpaid bills were piling up and the state’s ability to pay them through the manipulation of various accounts and one time only fixes had declined. So, Quinn advocated an income tax increase and the Democratic majorities in the House and the Senate passed it in January of 2011 without a single Republican vote in favor.

With \$5 billion of new revenue from the tax increase the state started paying its bills more nearly on time than before and started paying down the backlog of unpaid bills most notably including its required annual state pension payments. The state issued two operating bonds backed by the earlier tobacco settlement in order to pay for the pension obligations in 2009 and 2010. In 2010 they had passed a pension reform bill which created a second tier for new hires and this helped reduce the estimated long-term pension obligations. These steps plus the new revenue from the income tax increase helped to stabilize the budget for the period of 2011 thru 2014. The unpaid bill backlog was reduced from \$11 billion to about \$6 billion by January of 2015 when the “temporary” income tax expired.

Quinn also adopted some program expansions during his second term. Some of these later became the basis for charges of “waste and fraud” that were leveled at him. One case involving a community development program on the South Side of Chicago lent some credence to this charge (Jackson, 2015).

This all set the stage for the 2014 campaign for governor and the General Assembly. Pat Quinn attempted to explain that the new revenue was essential to providing the base of services that the public expected and had come to rely on as well as to continue to pay down the accumulated debt. Businessman challenger, Bruce Rauner, argued that most, and perhaps all of the new revenue had simply been squandered on waste and fraud and unnecessary new programs. The other Democrats running for statewide or local office tended to stay quiet in this argument and emphasized their own local issues. Republican candidates for the General Assembly condemned the income tax increase and promised its reduction if elected.

**In 2014 Rauner was elected with 52.03% of the two party vote compared to 47.97% for Quinn or by a 4.06 percentage point margin (Jackson, 2015, Appendix C). His victory was partially a result of his anti-tax campaign, which was one of the major issues of his campaign although he also argued that Quinn was not effective in getting things done.** The Democrats maintained a nominal 71 vote supermajority in the House however they could not always count on being able to muster that majority on crucial votes. On the Senate side the party vote was 39 seats to 20 for the Democrats with a net loss of one seat (White, 2015, 31).

In January of 2015, when the new tax bill was scheduled to sunset, and a positive vote was required to continue it there was little support among the Democrats for voting again for extending the tax increase and unanimous opposition among the Republicans. Thus the temporary increase was allowed to expire on January 1, 2015 with no plan for how to replace the revenue it generated. With that expiration, five billion dollars of revenue per year disappeared from the coffers of Illinois government. Immediately the accumulated backlog of bills which had been partially paid down, started to build back up again. Constant wrangling broke out between the Democrats in the General Assembly and the new Republican Governor and his allies in the legislature. The result was that when the Democrats sent Rauner a budget he vetoed it and the Democrats could not override his veto. A deep impasse developed. Money continued to be spent, generally at the FY2015 level for a variety of essential services under court order or due to the requirements of various federal grants for matching funds.

During this time the two areas most vulnerable under these impromptu rules were social services and higher education. K-12 was taken off the table early by action agreed to by the governor and leaders of the General Assembly from both parties since neither group wanted to bear the onus of not funding public schools when they were scheduled to open in August 2015.

Universities and community colleges, on the other hand had no such protection, and they immediately began to suffer since with no budget there were no state funds forthcoming automatically. Their students and their families also suffered because the state started withholding MAP grants which tens of thousands of Illinois students relied on to fund their university or college tuition. Several universities moved immediately to use local funds to temporarily pay for the MAP grants. This loss of state funds was somewhat alleviated by two “stopgap” budget bills which partially funded the universities for the short term; however, when it was all over for two fiscal years they had received only 41.5% of what they would have received from state subsidy under the FY2015 base (Miller, June 4, 2018, 1). In addition the resort to stopgap budgets created enormous uncertainty and dislocations for the universities and their students and wreaked havoc on their ability to plan.

In early July of 2017 the Democrats muscled through the Illinois General Assembly a new income tax bill with a handful of Republican votes. It provided for a nearly exact return to the prior rates of 4.95% (instead of 5.0%) for the individual income tax rate and 7.0% (or 9.5% if the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax is counted) for the corporate rate (Portman, January, 2018). This increase was expected to generate nearly \$5 billion to recoup the same amount of revenue lost when the temporary increase expired in January of 2015. Governor Rauner as he had promised to do, vetoed the bill. Since the Democrats had lost their “supermajority” in the House in the 2016 election, they had to rely on a handful of Republican crossover votes in the House and Senate to override the veto.

After a long and sometime raucous public debate, the Democrats were able to override the governor’s veto with the assistance of one crossover Republican vote in the Senate and ten in the House. The new rates went into effect immediately and the state started to replenish its

coffers with an augmented revenue stream (Bosman and Davey, July 6, 2017; Hinz, July 6, 2017).

The governor and his allies launched an intensified statewide campaign to blame the Democrats, and especially Speaker Mike Madigan for the tax increase. Many Republican legislators joined the governor in this condemnation of the increase which was essentially a return to the rate which Illinois taxpayers paid from January 2011 to January 2015. The governor also took out a series of ads which emphasized his opposition to the increased tax. Many observers saw this as the starting gun for the governor's campaign for a second term in 2018.

Rauner's strategy was also reinforced by his subsequent opposition to and threatened veto of an historic measure which would fundamentally rewrite the state's formula for how state revenue was distributed to local school districts. This had been a perennial problem in Illinois for at least two decades. Critics of the prevailing formula pointed out that it did not systematically help those districts with a low property tax base, and thus those districts with a high number of needy students were not nearly equal in the amount of money they could spend per pupil. The wealthy districts often outspent the poor districts by a factor of 3 or 4 to one in total state plus local expenditures per pupil.

Governor Rauner charged that the new state aid formula disproportionately favored the Chicago Public Schools system. He pointed to a long standing block grant program that did apparently favor Chicago to some extent because it gave them block grants for special education and transportation based on a guaranteed rate whereas other districts had to apply through a more stringent categorical grant program. This gave Chicago more money for these particular functions although Chicago officials claimed that they received a smaller proportion of total state aid than their share of the state's school population would require. In addition, the Chicago Public School system had paid their share of the pension obligations (approximately \$221 million annually) while those districts outside Chicago had their share of the pension payments picked up by the state.

The governor and some Republican legislative leaders claimed that the block grant guarantee was just another "give away" to Chicago. This new example was seen by Chicago's critics as reinforcing the well-developed narrative that Chicago was always favored in the scramble for scarce state resources.

After another contentious debate the bill was tweaked to give the private schools an additional allocation of new money. It made available a total of \$75 million for a pilot program which would provide tax credits for individual donations to scholarships for students to attend private schools. This was something Republican had long supported and even the Cardinal of Chicago climbed on board this bandwagon thus making it easier for Democrats to support. With this added feature to the bill it passed handily, and the governor signed it.

By the end of the fall 2017 veto session the script for the 2018 state elections was mostly set. Rauner would run on getting the state back on track again and making the policy changes he sought as necessary to making Illinois more competitive with surrounding states (Leonard, 2017). For him this would consistently entail his pointing at Speaker Madigan as the scourge of state government and the obstacle to all reform and progress. The governor's "Turn-Around Agenda" continued to consist of a series of proposals to curb the power of organized labor including "Right to Work" laws at the local levels, curtailing the use of union dues to pay for lobbying, and cutting the state's contributions to Workman's Compensation (Ibid). Achieving this objective demanded the curtailing of the power of Speaker Madigan and his supporters in the General Assembly mostly via the passage of a term-limits amendment that the governor constantly touted.

In addition the power of local governmental bodies had to be contained via distinct limits on the property taxes (Ibid). When pressed by reporters and in some of his television ads, Rauner also talked about "rolling back in stages" the new income tax increase. In the run up to the upcoming primaries in 2018 the governor continued to talk generally about the need to reduce Illinois taxes and especially targeted the increase in the income tax as well as property taxes. On February 14, 2018 the governor gave his annual budget address. In it, he proposed rolling back the state income tax increase over a four year period starting with a one billion dollar reduction which would have been twenty percent of the five billion total raised by the tax increase. He then went up with a series of television ads touting his tax decrease plan and attacking the Democrats, especially Speaker Madigan, for the tax increase. Critics noted that his proposed budget, however, built the entire five billion dollars from the tax increase into his base budget for FY2019. His budget also depended heavily on moving public employee pension payments and health insurance costs from the state to local governments, changes unlikely to be adopted by the legislature. This early exchange presaged the major themes for the fall campaign.

The Democrats, especially J. B. Pritzker, essentially ran as the "anti-Rauner" candidate. Pritzker emphasized that he, too, wanted economic development and more jobs, but his diagnosis of what that would require was essentially in direct opposition to virtually every point in Rauner's platform. What some termed, "the Battle of the Billionaires" in Illinois featured two very wealthy candidates promising to be the champion of the middle and working classes (Economist, October 21, 2017, 32). By the time the votes were counted on March 18<sup>th</sup>, Rauner and Pritzker had emerged as the nominees for their parties, although Rauner had a much closer challenge from the far right than had been expected. He beat his challenger, State Representative Jeanne Ives, by a narrow 20,000 vote margin while J. B. Pritzker effectively doubled the vote for his two closest rivals, Senator Daniel Biss and Chris Kennedy.

After the primary the overall outline of the fall general election and the major narratives were clearly discernable. One of fall campaign's central features would be the fight over the budget, the deficit, tax revenues and where to find the tens of millions of dollars of current spending that the current budget did not support.

## The Survey Data

As was discussed in the introduction to this paper, the Illinois political culture has long been marked by a deep division between the major regions of the state. Chicagoland, versus Downstate, Central and Southern Illinois versus Northeastern Illinois are common themes in the political debate. This division manifests itself especially with Western Illinois and Southern Illinois residents, and their representatives, perennially voicing feelings of being left out and both regions occasionally spark loud movements to “secede” from the rest of the state. (Never mind that this feat is nearly impossible to accomplish politically and constitutionally). Often this Downstate mistrust and ire are aimed at Chicago since it is by far the largest, the most prosperous, and the most powerful part of the state.

These feelings of regional pride or regional jealousy are not completely unusual. Many states with a big city and a dominant urban area have some of the same divisions. New York City versus “Upstate” New York, southern California versus northern California, and Atlanta versus the rest of Georgia are all recognizable memes in their state politics. **What is different or at least exaggerated in Illinois, however, is the extent to which many Illinois leaders emphasize, exploit and exacerbate these regional differences for their own advantage.** One of the most tried and true political strategies in Illinois is to run against Chicago. Or alternatively, running against major leaders of Chicago. As the original example, Mayor Richard J. Daley and the Daley Machine in his day was always a staple for Downstate candidates to target their ire against.

More recently, the stand-in for running against Chicago is to run against Speaker of the House Michael J. Madigan the long-time leader of the House Democrats and the Chair of the Illinois State Democratic Party. Some of the most effective campaigners against Madigan, or before him, Daley, have themselves also been from Chicago. Democratic Governor Dan Walker from the mid-1970s and Republican Governor Bruce Rauner currently are the epitome of a Chicago candidate getting elected statewide by running against the city. That theme is already prominent in the campaign of Governor Rauner seeking re-election in 2018 and to a lesser extent in the advertising campaign of his major rival, J. B. Pritzker.

This internecine strategy is sometimes seen in other states. Political Scientist, Katherine Cramer, wrote a well-reviewed book published in 2016 documenting the rise to power of Governor Scott Walker in Wisconsin (Cramer, 2016). In it she explored the concept of “Rural Resentment” which she maintained is endemic to Wisconsin politics. She noted that much of “Upstate Wisconsin” is like Downstate Illinois, that is, Upstate residents see the urban southern part of Wisconsin, centered in Madison and Milwaukee, as the source of many of their state’s troubles and places to be avoided and mistrusted. Ironically, Walker used these themes very advantageously to win his first election and to survive the re-call election against him which followed even though when he ran for governor he was the County Executive in Milwaukee.

Kramer also documented the pervasive extent of these urban-rural divisions in the minds of the voters as evidenced by poll data gathered by the University of Wisconsin. Her polls showed just

how regionally divided Wisconsin was in the conviction in the Upstate areas that the urban sections of the state in the south were getting more than “their fair share” of state resources and the feeling that the government in Madison did not represent the values and opinions of those who lived in the more rural areas.

Cramer later noted the similarities of these divisions in the marked rural versus urban and sectional geographic divisions that were so vivid in the national presidential election in the 2016 election. Donald Trump mined a rich vein of anti-Washington, anti-Establishment, anti-Elite, and anti-urban resentment in places like Appalachia, the Rust Belt of the Midwest, much of the Mountain West, and the perennial resentments in much of the South, especially the rural parts of the Confederacy. Several studies of the 2016 election and Trump’s victory have demonstrated the extent to which Trump was able to mine “the politics of resent” and the alienation and mistrust that many Americans, especially those in the more rural areas and those places where the global economic trends have hurt rather than helped the local economy to carry him to the White House.

We are taking a page out of the Cramer book in our use of essentially the same polling questions to demonstrate the extent of those rural vs. urban divisions in Illinois.

### **The Data**

Our survey data are taken from statewide polls of registered Illinois voters as a part of the Simon Poll series done by the Paul Simon Institute. These polls are designed to take periodic measures of public opinion on a variety of political, public policy and values questions for the entire state.

In 2017 we included questions regarding the perception of each region’s getting its “fair share” of state resources in one of our polls conducted in the fall. This was a statewide poll of registered voters with a total of 1000 respondents and a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points.

We included these questions because of the long-standing controversy that this issue causes in Illinois politics and its omnipresent appearance in so many political campaigns and their commercials. These arguments were key to the budget impasse of 2015 through 2017 and a part of the conflict over the General Assembly’s vote to override the governor’s veto of the budget that finally passed in July of 2017. This narrative also surfaced a couple of weeks later in the school funding formula battles between the governor and the legislature when the governor threatened a veto of the whole package over his charge that the formula entailed a “bailout of the Chicago Public School system”. While he initially signaled support for the bill, he later vetoed it over an issue of the bill’s inadvertently leaving out some 138 small and religiously sponsored private schools who did not have official recognition from the Illinois State Board of Education and would not benefit during the first year from the new tax credit for private school scholarship donations. As a result the new law was delayed until April of 2018, deep into the planning period for FY2019 while these differences were resolved.

This issue of regionalism is also shaping up to be an important part of the political debate for the general election in the fall of 2018. As covered above, the campaign ads during the primary season were filled with charges that one candidate or another is “sold out” to Chicago or to Speaker Madigan.

These regionalism issues are so pervasive in Illinois we included items specifically designed to measure their contours in our statewide polls of 1000 registered voters conducted in the fall of 2017 and in the spring of 2018. The results here are from our 2017 poll and were based on Cramer’s Wisconsin polls (Cramer, 2016). The first question asked:

**Table 1**

**“How much attention do you feel the state government pays to what the people in your community think when it decides what to do?”**

	<b>Statewide</b>	<b>Chicago</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>	<b>Downstate</b>
A Good Deal	5%	7%	6%	3%
Some	19%	16%	22%	18%
Not Much	70%	72%	67%	73%
Don’t Know	5%	6%	5%	6%

Obviously the statewide results show that very few Illinois voters are impressed with the extent to which their elected representatives pay attention to them or the people in their community in making decisions. The modal category is “Not Much” which attracted seventy percent of the respondents. The results by region reinforce this image of widespread disenchantment. Broken down by region, the similarities are striking and the differences are narrow. The Downstate residents by a small margin are the most alienated. The Suburbs are the least alienated and the most generous in their assessment of how much their legislators share their values, but the margin of difference is not great. Confidence in the link between the governors and the governed is one of the essential elements of representative government and on this measure, Illinois state government elicits little confidence from the voters.

Table 2 examines the question of how much the state government represents your community’s values. This question also captures a fundamental tenant of mass democracy in that the voters need confidence that their political leaders share some level of the same basic values that they hold to. Obviously, the “Not Much or “Only a Little” categories attracted over a majority (53%) of the statewide responses. It was also the most popular response in each of

the three geographical regions. This time the respondents from the central city of Chicago outstripped even Downstate voters in their level of alienation although the difference is only 3 percentage points. Once again, the Suburban voters were the least alienated, with just over a bare majority choosing this response. The remainder of the respondents were in the “Somewhat or Very Well” categories with 41 percent statewide giving the more positive responses. Each of the three regions of Illinois hovered just at the 40% positive marker.

**Table 2**

**“How much does the state government represent your community’s values?”**

	<b>Statewide</b>	<b>Chicago</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>	<b>Downstate</b>
Not Much or Only a Little	53%	57%	51%	54%
Somewhat or Very Well	41%	38%	42%	40%
Extremely Well	1%	2%	1%	0%
Don’t Know	5%	4%	5%	6%

This widespread lack of faith in state government is a problem for representative democracy. As Hannah Pitkin has documented in detail, one of the fundamental premises of mass democracy is that the elected representatives in government must share some of the important personal characteristics and the basic values of those they purport to represent (Pitkin, 1987).

In addition to sharing their basic values it is also advantageous for the governors to reflect some of the most important socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the governed. As Pitkin explains it, if the political leaders “look like” the governed in terms of race, gender, and ethnic background it helps to inspire voters’ trust that the representatives also share their values and life experiences. The drive to have more women, more African-Americans, more Hispanics, etc. in government reflects this faith in what Pitkin calls “symbolic representation” or descriptive representation, and it helps to create a working consensus and sense of trust between leaders and followers that allows leaders to make hard decisions and for mass democracy to function. Recent elections featuring what are called “populist uprisings” of “the people” against “the elites”, both in the United States and abroad call into question some of these fundamental assumptions about how well our form of representative democracy is working to fulfill these expectations.

The most important of all of the elements of representative democracy is the requirement that the governors “Act For” those they govern to adopt Pitkin’s terminology (Pitkin, 1987). Perhaps in the absence of a high level of faith that the decision-makers actually share the values of the



people they represent it is even more important that there be some working level of trust that the political elites will act faithfully for those they represent. Put simply, if they vote as I would vote on policy issues at an acceptable level, their underlying personal values may not be as important as the votes they cast. Perhaps this helps explain the often commented on anomaly that in the 2016 presidential election approximately eighty-three percent of evangelical Christians voted for Donald Trump. None of Trump’s lifestyle choices, personal language or church attendance record would reflect the basic traditional value commitments of evangelical Christians. So how could they possibly vote for him?

Some of the evangelical leaders, when confronted with this apparent contradiction admitted freely that they wanted Trump’s support for anti-abortion bills, his opposition to same-sex marriages, his promise to allow churches and pastors to participate openly in politics, even from the pulpit, without losing their tax-exempt status, and his pledge to appoint conservative Justices to the U. S. Supreme Court more than they wanted evidence that he shared their basic values or had ever practiced anything resembling their form of traditional Christianity. When faced with this dilemma, the church people unhesitatingly chose the “acting for” dimension of representation over any other dimensions of representation although they would not have used these terms. Pitkin’s untangling of these different layers of the concept helps us to understand how this may not have been a hard choice for those dedicated to their policy goals first and foremost above the other dimensions of representation.

Table 3 turns to the more pragmatic questions of who gets what in the allocation of scarce resources that state government inevitably must do as one of its most crucial functions. This is the essence of the budgetary process at any level of government. The fact that the resources are always scarce is what makes governing in general and budgeting in particular so important and so conflict ridden. It shows why you can never take “politics” out of the business of governing. The 2015-2017 stalemate in the budgetary process in Illinois and the brief shutting down of the federal government in the fall of 2017 and January of 2018 illustrate just how fundamental the budgetary process is to the government’s operation. When that function fails, government basically fails at its most fundamental level and many ordinary people are hurt.

**Table 3**

**“How well does the state of Illinois do in distributing government resources equally across rural, urban and suburban areas of the state?”**

	<b>Statewide</b>	<b>Chicago</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>	<b>Downstate</b>
Not At All or Only a Little	62%	60%	61%	66%
Somewhat or Very Well	24%	22%	24%	24%
Extremely Well	1%	2%	1%	0%
Don’t Know	14%	17%	14%	10%

This table explores the question of whether the state is distributing governmental resources in an equitable manner. It is easy to see that this question also taps into the possibility for deep wells of resentment to exist in the different areas of the state with respect to whether their areas are receiving their “fair share” of the governmental pie. In fact regionalism and regional conflicts are among the most enduring themes in the political culture of Illinois. Almost any campaign for state representative, state senate, or governor in Illinois will include a heavy dose of one candidate accusing his or her opponent of having “sold out” to another region of the state.

The results are not encouraging for state government as 60% or more statewide and in all three regions give their political leaders bad marks on this report card. Downstate is still the most alienated toward their state government with Chicago and the Suburbs essentially the same on the “Not at All Well or Only a Little” categories. Just under one-quarter of the respondents statewide and almost the same levels in each of the regions gave the state the “Somewhat Well or Very Well” marks, and only one to two percent in all categories gave the most positive “Extremely Well” response.

In the questions reported in Tables 4, 5, and 6 we break out these responses by the three most widely recognized geographic regions of Illinois. This helps us see how the voters in each of the regions evaluate the treatment they are receiving from the state as compared to their counterparts elsewhere in the state. This is an attempt to delve a bit deeper into these regional perceptions of who is getting their “fair share”.

**Table 4**

**“Are rural areas of Illinois given much more than their fair share, somewhat more, somewhat less, much less or about their fair share of government resources?”**

	<b>Statewide</b>	<b>Chicago</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>	<b>Downstate</b>
Much More or Somewhat More	13%	24%	12%	7%
Somewhat or Much Less	48%	35%	42%	66%
About Fair Share	18%	13%	22%	14%
Don’t Know	22%	29%	24%	13%

**Table 5**

**“What about suburban areas? Are suburban areas of Illinois given much more than their fair share, somewhat more, somewhat less, much less, or about their fair share of government resources?”**

	<b>Statewide</b>	<b>Chicago</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>	<b>Downstate</b>
Much More or Somewhat More	42%	53%	33%	47%
Somewhat or Much Less	16%	10%	19%	15%
About Fair Share	28%	18%	34%	24%
Don’t Know	15%	21%	14%	14%

**Table 6**

**“Lastly, what about urban areas? Are urban areas of Illinois given much more than their fair share, somewhat more, somewhat less, much less, or about their fair share of government resources?”**

	<b>Statewide</b>	<b>Chicago</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>	<b>Downstate</b>
Much More or Somewhat More	30%	14%	31%	40%
Somewhat or Much Less	37%	55%	38%	25%
About Fair Share	19%	16%	18%	23%
Don’t Know	13%	17%	12%	13%

As we anticipated the Downstate voters are the most alienated or disenchanted with their lot from state government as compared to their peers in the other two regions of the state. They are the group most convinced (66%) that they are not receiving their fair share, and indeed are receiving somewhat less or much less than their fair share as is evident in Table 4. This theme of what Katherine Cramer calls “rural resentment” is now recognized as one of the driving forces today in American politics (Cramer, 2016). It is one of the key components in explaining Scott Walker’s take-over of state government in Wisconsin, and explaining how he survived the recall vote subsequently mounted against him by a national coalition of Democrats and Progressives which is the story Cramer told in her book. She and many others following her lead then went on to extrapolate the dynamics of rural resentment as one of the most

important factors in the deep rural versus urban distribution of the presidential vote for Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton nation-wide in 2016.

What we did not entirely anticipate was the extent to which Chicago voters shared this disenchantment with respect to whether urban voters receive their fair share. As Table 6 shows, well over a majority (55%) of Chicago voters say that the urban areas are receiving somewhat less or much less than their fair share. This level of what we would term “urban resentment” is exceeded only by the 66% level of resentment exhibited by Downstate rural voters in Table 4 with respect to the rural areas’ slice of the budgetary pie. (Badger, 2018, 23).

So the politics of resentment has traction among urban voters in Chicago just as it does among rural voters Downstate. Those political leaders who divide Illinois into regions and appeal to regional identity and stir the sense of resentment against other regions have done their work effectively. Tens of millions of dollars spent in uncounted numbers of political ad campaigns over the years have appealed to and reinforced this divisive narrative in Illinois. The counter argument of “we are all in this together” and “what helps Illinois as a whole helps all of us” and “politics does not have to be a zero-sum game” is not getting much traction in Illinois judging by our poll results. The leaders of most other states celebrate their state’s history, culture, and accomplishments and tout state pride. They have at least one major state university athletic team or a professional sports franchise that is the pride of most fans statewide no matter what their regional allegiances are. That is not the tradition in Illinois.

Voters in the Suburbs are somewhat the exception to this pervasive dissatisfaction and resentment rule. They are about equally divided in their assessment of how well the suburbs do in the constant battle for scarce resources. As is evident from Table 5, fully one-third (33%) of suburban voters believe that they receive much more or somewhat more and an almost identical 34% say that they receive about their fair share. This leaves only 19% who say that suburban voters receive somewhat less or much less than their fair share. Trying to mine the well-springs of some sort of “suburban resentment” does not appear to be a particularly promising strategy for candidates in those areas of Northeast Illinois.

All of the discussion in the first section of the paper above proceeded in a vacuum based on the political perceptions of the people. What is usually absent from such discussions is empirical data showing the realities of where the money is spent by the state compared to where it is raised in the form of state revenues. That is a very different story as we will see in the next section of the paper. The deeply embedded strain of rural resentment reflected in our polls is not necessarily well founded on demonstrable facts as we will see in the next section of the paper. But, we started this section with the assertion that most of the time perception is important, even crucial, in politics. When perception does not match the facts, it is very often the perceptions, the belief systems of the people that count the most.

## **Economic Data**

In one sense, ordinary voters and even officials closely involved with government should not be faulted for not having a precise idea of which regions state revenues come from and where they are disbursed. The state's records do not make it particularly easy to track. In brief, there is no single source of state revenue and disbursement data broken down either by county or region.

The Illinois Department of Revenue does publish income tax data on their website by county through 2015. Sales tax revenues can be traced through the return of the local portion to counties and municipalities. But this is a significant data management task given that the state has 1,298 municipalities receiving funds spread across 102 counties. Lottery sales are recorded by zip code. Federal Medicaid reimbursement, which accounts for over 10% of state revenue must be traced by the home county of recipients.

On the disbursement side, records are kept by different agencies using their organizational units. For example, general formula and mandated categorical aid to K-12 education is recorded by the 921 districts or separate units across the state rather than by the 102 counties. Similarly, the state aid to community colleges data available on the Illinois Community College Board website is categorized by 39 separate districts. State higher education aid expenditures are available in the Illinois Board of Higher Education records and distributed to the 12 universities. This is attributed to the counties in which they are located, although their effects obviously spill over county lines.

By far the most considerable recent effort to sort out state revenues and disbursements by county was a report by the Illinois General Assembly's Legislative Research Unit (LRU) released in October 2015 (Legislative Research Unit, 2017; See also Legislative Research Unit, 1989). Using 2013 tax and budget records, the LRU undertook a massive data management task and was able to trace 80% of the tax revenue and 71% of expenditures from the general fund to all 102 of Illinois counties. The largest untraced item on the revenue side was the corporate income tax. The LRU staff noted that these taxes are filed in the home county of the corporation while business can be done across a number of counties or in other states.

On the disbursement side, the largest single item not traced was contributions to the various public pension systems which have grown to over 20% of the general fund. Pension contributions from the state are recorded in the counties housing the system headquarters. Later these funds plus employee contributions and investment returns are disbursed as payments to pension recipients across the state, nation and other countries.

The major portion of the traceable 80% of tax revenues to the general fund consisted of the individual income tax, the state share of sales tax and the federal match for Medicaid. Much smaller revenue sources included lottery profits, insurance taxes and the estate tax. The 71% of traceable disbursements in order of size included Medicaid, K-12 education aid including the

mandated categorical programs, state operations, state payroll, Local Government Distributive Fund, and state aid to public universities and community colleges.

The LRU report included several additional cautions in using this data. First one year of data is obviously a snapshot in time and conditions do change with budget cycles. Second, economic benefits clearly spill across county lines. And third, only the general fund data was included. Revenue sources such as the motor fuel tax, vehicle license fees, toll way fees and expenditures such as capital projects and the transportation category were excluded.

These are all reasonable cautions. We will use regions rather than counties which will reduce but not totally eliminate the spillover problem. While it is true that FY 2013 data is a snapshot, it is still useful for looking at taxing and funding for 2018. Budgeting is incremental and the major contours of the 2018 budget are not dramatically different from the 2015 or even the 2013 budget. The state income tax was 5% in 2013. It has since returned to 4.95% after a sharp reduction during the budget stalemate. The sales tax remained the same. Illinois fully participated in the Federal Medicaid expansion by 2013 which remains in effect. Higher education and community college state funding was dramatically reduced during the budget stalemate years, but has returned to 90 percent of FY 15 levels. A new K-12 school aid formula which increases state funding to the poorest property wealth districts passed in 2017, but it is just going into effect at the time of this writing.

The data in Table 7 from the 2010 US census provides background for the state data analysis to come. We first divided the state into three regions to match the groupings used in the earlier poll data discussed in this paper. Cook includes the City of Chicago and its inner ring of suburbs. The five suburban counties are DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will. The other 96 counties are lumped in “downstate”.

There are, however, significant variations across these 96 counties which stretch across 400 miles from the Wisconsin border to the Ohio River. Hence, we divided the 96 into four major sub regions which, with some collapsing, follow the 10 economic development regions defined by the Illinois Department of Employment Services (See Appendix A). The 18 North-counties run from the Wisconsin border as far south as Kankakee excluding Cook and the five suburban counties. The 9 Southwest counties essentially are the Illinois portion of the St Louis metropolitan area. The 19 Southern counties are along the I-64 corridor and south to the Ohio River except for the St Louis metro area. We lumped the remaining 50 counties, which make up 5 IDES regions, into one large Central region.

Table 7 provides a quick look at the economic variation across the state. The five suburban counties are by far the wealthiest on median household and median family income. The Cook County region is slightly higher than the 96 county downstate region on these measures. However, there is significant variation across the downstate counties. The 18 North counties as a group are virtually the same as Cook County on the income measures while the 19 Southern counties fall some distance behind.

**Table 7**  
**County Household and Family Income by Region**

<b>Region</b>	<b># of Counties in Region</b>	<b>Median Household Income*</b>	<b>Median Family Income**</b>	<b>Average County Population</b>	<b>Average County Number of Households</b>
<b>Cook</b>	1	\$53,942	\$65,039	5,194,675	1,966,356
<b>Suburban</b>	5	\$75,137	\$86,860	624,395	216,756
<b>Downstate</b>	96	\$45,752	\$57,204	47,233	18,695
<b>North</b>	18	\$53,698	\$64,618	103,179	38,549
<b>Central</b>	50	\$45,091	\$56,976	67,103	27,375
<b>Southwest</b>	9	\$47,193	\$58,978	48,558	19,325
<b>South</b>	19	\$37,514	\$48,316	20,283	8,350

\*Average median household income for counties in that region.

\*\* Average median family income for counties in that region.

Source: 2010 United States Census reported in [wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Illinois\\_locations\\_by\\_per\\_capita\\_income](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Illinois_locations_by_per_capita_income)

At this point, it is important to note that the rural, and to a lesser degree urban resentment outlined in Tables 4-6 is inversely related to the regions' broad economic conditions. The highest levels of resentment of state taxing and spending policies occur in the downstate counties which lag Cook County a little and the five Suburban Counties a lot on the economic measures. The lowest levels of resentment of state policies are in the suburban counties which clearly are doing the best. Urban Cook County is in the middle.

We do not have income data for the specific respondents to the survey. Hence, we cannot conclude that low economic well-being is directly related to the level of resentment of state policies among individuals. And we cannot break down the downstate survey data across the four downstate sub regions. But if we could, we would speculate that the highest levels of rural resentment occur in the 19 most southern counties. This speculation is partially based on the fact that both authors have lived in southern Illinois for over forty years each.

The Southern Illinois Survey conducted periodically by the Simon Poll™ provides some additional relevant evidence. This question of rural resentment being strongest in the most

economically deprived parts of the state is probably related to the feeling of whether the state is on the right track or wrong track which we ask routinely in our surveys. The 2015 Southern Illinois poll of eighteen counties which largely overlap the “south” region in this analysis showed that 79% of the respondents believed that the state of Illinois was on the “wrong track” and only 13% said it was on the right track. Our March of 2015 statewide poll found that 61% of all Downstate residents said Illinois was on the wrong track and 23% said right track. So, these data at least indirectly suggest that southern Illinois residents are more skeptical and critical toward state government than even the rest of downstate.

Table 8 presents the best data available on how state taxing and spending actually affect the various regions of Illinois. For this table, we took the 2013 state general fund data collected by the LRU for each county and aggregated it to the six regions. As noted above, the revenue data includes 71% of disbursements drawn from and 80% of the revenue earmarked to the general fund. The ratio column represents funds received in comparison to revenue generated. Given this 71%/80% limitation, a ratio of .89 would estimate the same number of dollars received as contributed (.71/.80=.89).

The final “estimated adjusted” column assumes that the unknown general fund data (mostly corporate income tax on revenue side and pension payments on disbursements) is divided across the regions in the same proportions as the known data. Disbursements are thus divided by .71 and revenue by .80. **A ratio of 1.0 then indicates equal estimated revenue and expenditures in a region.**

**Table 8**  
**Selected State Revenue and Disbursement by Region**

<b>Region</b>	<b># of Counties in Region</b>	<b>Selected State Revenue x 000</b>	<b>Selected State Disbursement x 000</b>	<b>Ratio*</b>	<b>Estimated Adjusted Ratio**</b>
<b>Cook</b>	1	\$11,925,149	\$9,515,776	0.80	0.90
<b>Suburban</b>	5	\$8,024,505	\$3,738,956	0.47	0.53
<b>Downstate</b>	96	\$8,120,546	\$12,096,366	1.49	1.69
<b>North</b>	18	\$2,574,235	\$2,827,802	1.10	1.24
<b>Central</b>	50	\$3,828,613	\$6,361,238	1.66	1.87
<b>Southwest</b>	9	\$1,237,775	\$1,559,109	1.26	1.42
<b>South</b>	19	\$622,920	\$1,553,709	2.49	2.81

\*Ratio is selected disbursements at 71% level divided by selected revenue at 80% level

\*\* Adjusted ratio is disbursements divided by .71 divided by expenditures divided by .80



Source: Original county revenue and disbursement data, LRU 2013. Regions and ratios by authors.

**Table 8 clearly shows that taxes and spending are not equally distributed across the state. The suburban counties generate about twice as much in taxes as they receive in direct state spending. Cook County is closer to breaking even in this comparison although it provides slightly more tax revenue than it receives in state spending. Downstate Illinois, on the other hand benefits from the state tax and spend mix. The 96 downstate counties, as a group receive about 50% more in state spending than they contribute in tax revenue.** Breaking these counties into four regions shows a more pronounced pattern. The 18 North counties have tax/spend ratios that are not widely different from a “break even” status. **The southern 19, on the other hand, receive a bit more than two and one-half times in state spending than they contribute in taxation. The central region with state offices and payroll in Sangamon County and the state’s largest university in Champaign County is roughly in the middle with a bit less than double state spending compared to its tax load. (See Appendices A and B also).**

These findings, of course are not consistent with the rural resentment findings of the earlier survey data and a great deal of political rhetoric and folklore that is widely accepted and heard repeatedly in almost every political campaign in the regions. **It is quite clear that Downstate taxes are not being disproportionately siphoned off and spent in the City of Chicago.**

On the other hand, these findings are consistent with a more objective look at the state. The Illinois tax system certainly is not progressive. In 2013, the largest revenue source was the almost 5% flat rate income tax on most income. The second largest source was the 6 % state sales tax (with 1.25 percentage points returned to county and municipal governments) levied on most purchases other than food, but not services. Counties with higher median household incomes, obviously are going to generate more revenue dollars through these taxes although we would not expect much variation in percentage of total income going to these taxes.

On the spending side, the largest single item in the 2013 General Fund was Medicaid which is paid for roughly evenly by the state and federal governments. Medicaid is need based. Hence poorer counties have proportionately higher enrollment numbers. The second largest budget item was K-12 general state aid to education aid plus the mandated education categorical programs. As noted above, historically Illinois has not done nearly as much as other states to even out total education spending across the state, but the formula in effect in 2013, particularly with the mandated categorical grants, did favor poorer and rural districts with greater busing and special education needs over the wealthy ones on a per capita basis. Finally, the other major portions of the budget--state payroll, state operations, four year universities and community colleges—also favor downstate Illinois. Nine of the state’s twelve public universities, virtually all state prisons and parks, and the state agency headquarters in Springfield are downstate.

Table 9 provides a rough estimate of how important state taxing and spending is to the different regions. The first column is a measure of regional economic activity. We took the per capita income figures for each county from the 2010 Census and multiplied by the county population that year. The second column is a measure of state taxation. We started with the LRU selected state revenue numbers shown in Table 8 and subtracted the Federal Medicaid match funds so only direct state (income, sales, lottery, estate, insurance) taxation was included. The disbursement numbers in the fourth column are the same as in Table 8.

The county figures were then aggregated by the various regions as before. The two ratio columns are thus state taxes and state spending as a percentage of regional income.

**Table 9**  
**Selected State Revenue and Disbursements as Share of Regional Economy**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Regional Income x 000*</b>	<b>Regional State Revenue x 000**</b>	<b>Regional State Disbursements x 000</b>	<b>Revenue Ratio***</b>	<b>Disbursement Ratio***</b>
<b>Cook</b>	\$152,385,791	\$9,981,317	\$9,515,776	6.55%	6.2%
<b>Suburban</b>	\$106,739,800	\$7,295,101	\$3,738,955	6.83%	3.5%
<b>Downstate</b>	\$110,309,726	\$6,939,826	\$12,096,366	6.29%	11.1%
<b>North</b>	\$33,440,586	\$2,186,741	\$2,827,801	6.54%	8.5%
<b>Central</b>	\$51,213,453	\$3,227,206	\$6,361,237	6.30%	12.4%
<b>Southwest</b>	\$17,852,007	\$1,040,916	\$1,559,109	5.83%	8.7%
<b>South</b>	\$7,803,724	\$484,962	\$1,553,708	6.21%	19.9%

\*Income equals per capita income x population by county from 2010 Census. County totals aggregated to regions

\*\*Revenue equals selected state tax revenue minus Federal Medicaid reimbursement by county from LRU 2013. County totals aggregated to regions.

\*\*\* State Revenue and Disbursements as a percentage of Regional Income

There is slight variation between regions in the revenue ratio column. Chicago and the wealthier suburban counties generate far more tax revenue dollars in Table 8. But as a percentage of total income, the tax load effect is only slightly progressive with the wealthiest region paying about one half percentage point more than the poorest. This, of course, is to be expected once the need based Federal Medicaid revenues are subtracted given the essentially

flat rate taxes used in Illinois. The slightly progressive differences which do appear are likely the result of exempting the first \$2150 per person and all retirement income (Social Security, pensions, 401k etc.) from the 5% state income tax. This effectively lowers the rate on regions with significant near poverty level populations or large concentrations of retirees. Food and prescriptions are subject to a 1% sales tax rate while other purchases have a 6% sales tax.<sup>1</sup> This too somewhat lowers the tax load on lower income groups which tend to spend more of total income on these essentials.

There is significantly more variation in the disbursement ratio column which shows state expenditures as a percentage of total regional income. In the wealthiest suburban five counties, the selected state spending is a very modest 3.5% of total regional income. In urban Cook County the state accounts for almost twice that level of economic activity at 6.2% of total income. This is slightly less than the 6.5% of income going to state tax revenue.

But the largest impact of state spending in relation to other economic activity is downstate. State spending is equivalent to 11.1% of total income across this 96 county region. But this average hides much larger variations across the sub regions. The 18 county North region is not too far from Cook County with state expenditures at 8.5% of income. The Central region is significantly higher at 12.4% of regional income. And in the Southern 19 counties—clearly the poorest part of the state—state expenditures are equivalent to 19.9% of total income.

Residing in Jackson County, one of the southern 19, we can easily see the importance of state expenditures in the local economy. The largest regional employer is Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. A small state penal facility has recently re-opened in Murphysboro and significant numbers of employees of state prison and mental health facilities located in neighboring counties reside in Jackson County. Southern Illinois Healthcare is the largest non-governmental employer, but significant portions of its revenue come from state employee health insurance and Medicaid. The next largest employers include the City of Carbondale which receives Local Government Distribution Funds and several school districts which receive the mix of K-12 and mandated categorical funding. Without these state expenditures and the multiplier effect created as they pass through private businesses, which supply state institutions and cater to state employees, there might be very little county economic activity at all in deep southern Illinois.

These findings may help explain the broader question posed earlier of why there is significant rural resentment and some urban resentment in Illinois politics, but less suburban resentment. In the context of the broader economy, the regions which are doing least well, show the highest resentment levels while the better offs show the lowest. But blaming state government for the perceived inequities is somewhat mistaken. True, the poorer regions are carrying almost the

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<sup>1</sup> County and municipal governments are allowed to add additional sales tax to the base 6% state rate. Five percentage points of the base sales tax goes to the state with 1.25 percentage points returned to local government. The slightly lower 5.8% tax load for the 9 county Southwest region may be the result of significant sales taxable purchases on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River.

same relative tax burden as the better offs. So, if one believes in progressive taxation based upon ability to pay, there is much to dislike, or resent in the Illinois tax system. On the other hand, the lower income regions of Illinois as a whole are receiving significantly more in state expenditures than they contribute in taxes. Indeed in the most southern region, there would be very little economic activity at all without the state.

### **Conclusion**

This assertion that perception is more important than the facts is a fundamental axiom of politics that does not bode especially well for mass democracy. Facts should count for something, indeed for a lot, and are essential to any form of rational decision-making. Rational action at both the individual voter level and the aggregate public opinion level is crucially important in a democracy. The operation of a successful mass democracy depends in the long run on the people being well informed and acting according to reality rather than perception and myth.

The founders of the republic and the writers of the U. S. Constitution understood that requirement well and enshrined in the First Amendment as the most important freedoms, what the Supreme Court calls “the preferred freedoms” including Freedom of the Press, Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Religion, the Freedom of Assembly and the Right to Petition the government.

That is why we share with the founders the conviction that it is important for political leaders to get the facts and make decisions based on the best information available in order to make policy based on the facts and the evidence. The same requirements are no less important for the people as they make their decisions in the voting booths every two years in each of their states and nationally for president and for the composition of the Congress and who controls the executive branch every two and four years. These requirements for a fact based discourse are crucial to the mass media as they are the key channels of political information for the public. The conflict over what are facts, and what is “fake news” has become a flash-point for anger and conflict in our polarized nation recently.

We hope this paper contributes in some part to establishing what the facts are about the raising and distribution of scarce resources in Illinois, what the people’s perceptions are, and what are the gaps between those two important ingredients of mass and representative democracy in America today.

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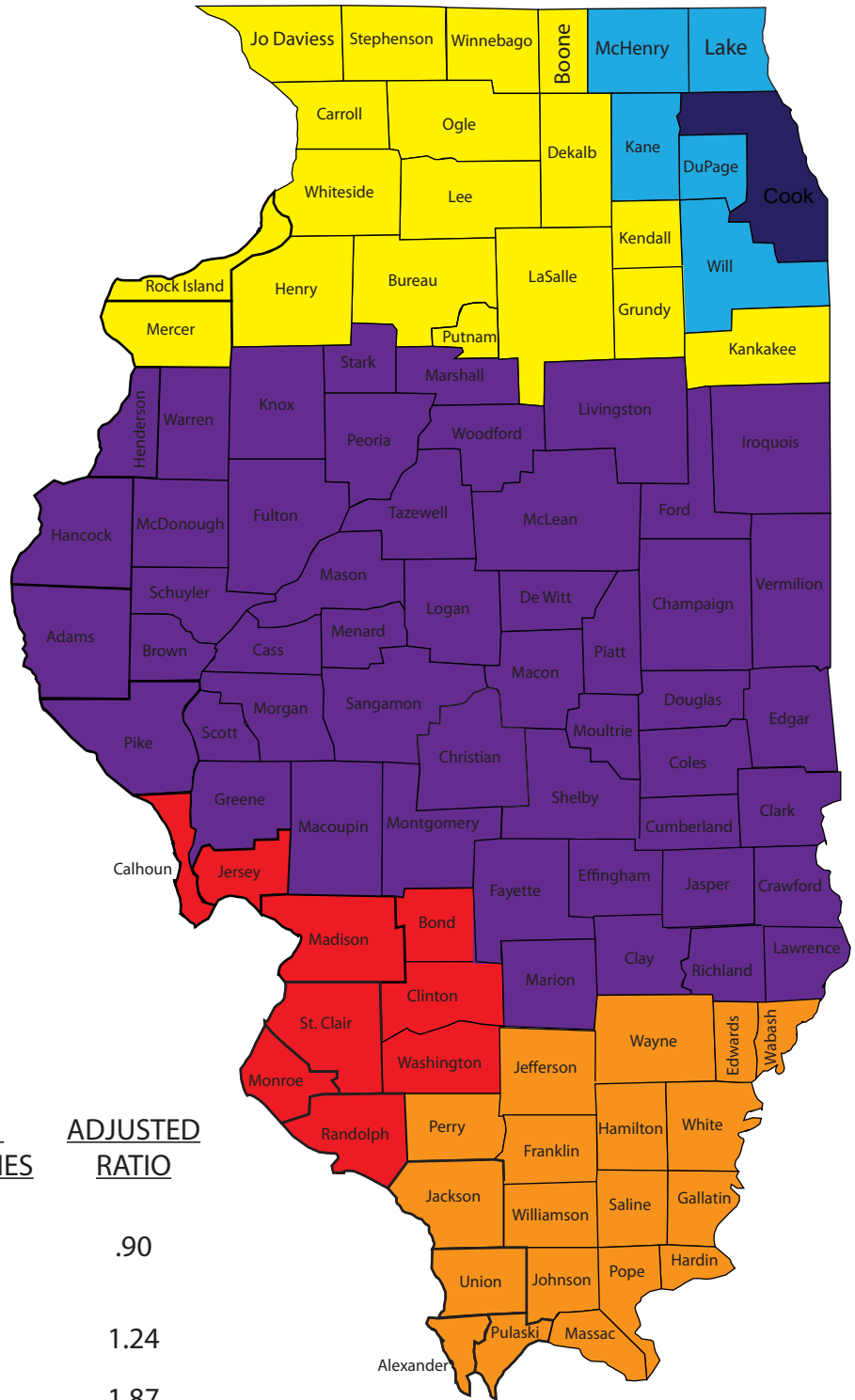
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# Appendix A

Illinois Regions: Ratio of State Funds Received Compared to Revenues Generated



<u>REGION</u>	<u># OF COUNTIES</u>	<u>ADJUSTED RATIO</u>
COOK	1	.90
NORTH	18	1.24
CENTRAL	50	1.87
SOUTHWEST	9	1.42
SOUTH	19	2.81
SUBURBAN	5	.53





## Appendix B

County	Region	Ratio	Selected Revenue	Selected Disbursements	Federal Medicaid Match	Revenue w/out Medicaid Match
Cook	1	0.8	\$11,925,148,518	\$9,515,776,084	\$ 1,943,831,292	\$9,981,317,226
DuPage	2	0.31	\$2,738,909,746	\$850,866,241	\$ 190,648,909	\$2,548,260,837
Kane	2	0.76	\$1,082,636,293	\$820,072,628	\$ 175,571,589	\$907,064,704
Lake	2	0.39	\$2,151,565,097	\$848,508,822	\$ 157,286,144	\$1,994,278,953
McHenry	2	0.42	\$648,667,262	\$272,598,913	\$ 56,169,861	\$592,497,401
Will	2	0.68	\$1,402,726,419	\$946,909,089	\$ 149,727,739	\$1,252,998,680
	Region		\$8,024,504,817	\$3,738,955,693	\$729,404,242	\$7,295,100,575
Boone	3	0.85	\$87,523,975	\$74,354,278	\$ 10,884,171	\$76,639,804
Bureau	3	1.05	\$56,638,847	\$59,266,069	\$ 9,954,842	\$46,684,005
Carroll	3	1.3	\$25,517,276	\$33,083,485	\$ 4,084,450	\$21,432,826
DeKalb	3	1.11	\$211,361,532	\$234,354,501	\$ 23,094,084	\$188,267,448
Grundy	3	0.48	\$147,613,556	\$70,915,544	\$ 7,671,526	\$139,942,030
Henry	3	1.15	\$88,894,653	\$102,559,257	\$ 12,645,007	\$76,249,646
Jo Daviess	3	0.56	\$39,123,951	\$21,934,290	\$ 3,694,912	\$35,429,039
Kankakee	3	1.9	\$275,546,166	\$524,413,027	\$ 37,874,037	\$237,672,129
Kendall	3	0.61	\$228,839,761	\$140,367,561	\$ 20,979,641	\$207,860,120
LaSalle	3	1.14	\$220,095,485	\$250,657,294	\$ 36,172,468	\$183,923,017
Lee	3	2.47	\$55,737,357	\$137,452,236	\$ 5,285,675	\$50,451,682
Mercer	3	0.73	\$24,895,260	\$18,226,136	\$ 2,768,262	\$22,126,998
Ogle	3	1.1	\$88,356,241	\$97,082,537	\$ 17,184,454	\$71,171,787
Putnam	3	0.31	\$25,213,846	\$7,787,894	\$ 1,045,770	\$24,168,076
Rock Island	3	0.89	\$262,483,491	\$232,480,102	\$ 48,354,638	\$214,128,853
Stephenson	3	1.04	\$80,462,198	\$83,841,563	\$ 15,965,333	\$64,496,865
Whiteside	3	1.56	\$100,322,676	\$156,036,118	\$ 18,233,502	\$82,089,174
Winnebago	3	1.05	\$555,608,393	\$582,989,971	\$ 111,599,966	\$444,008,427
			\$2,574,234,664	\$2,827,801,863	\$387,492,738	\$2,186,741,926
Adams	4	1.27	\$135,505,193	\$171,625,381	\$ 21,350,600	\$114,154,593
Brown	4	4.52	\$7,491,676	\$33,865,827	\$ 713,699	\$6,777,977
Cass	4	2.67	\$21,438,835	\$57,162,232	\$ 4,349,958	\$17,088,877
Champaign	4	1.6	\$357,877,716	\$572,985,134	\$ 46,359,705	\$311,518,011
Christian	4	2.17	\$60,513,165	\$131,604,035	\$ 11,464,551	\$49,048,614
Clark	4	1.22	\$25,447,467	\$30,970,424	\$ 4,145,739	\$21,301,728
Clay	4	1.84	\$22,069,364	\$40,668,673	\$ 5,132,088	\$16,937,276
Coles	4	1.61	\$89,895,942	\$144,876,166	\$ 15,513,139	\$74,382,803
Crawford	4	2.07	\$33,423,518	\$69,314,861	\$ 6,002,763	\$27,420,755
Cumberland	4	1.33	\$13,675,785	\$18,161,523	\$ 2,518,529	\$11,157,256
DeWitt	4	0.74	\$29,144,207	\$21,633,435	\$ 3,572,974	\$25,571,233
Douglas	4	0.75	\$37,324,620	\$27,938,236	\$ 5,747,786	\$31,576,834
Edgar	4	1.41	\$29,861,058	\$42,165,197	\$ 7,829,799	\$22,031,259
Effingham	4	0.81	\$84,601,343	\$68,743,914	\$ 10,456,372	\$74,144,971

Fayette	4	2.87	\$31,926,055	\$91,689,295	\$	6,200,636	\$25,725,419
Ford	4	1.05	\$23,333,226	\$24,488,510	\$	3,439,279	\$19,893,947
Fulton	4	2.29	\$52,192,339	\$119,632,428	\$	11,124,572	\$41,067,767
Greene	4	2.43	\$19,142,985	\$46,577,117	\$	4,625,439	\$14,517,546
Hancock	4	1.27	\$26,954,589	\$34,262,111	\$	5,350,061	\$21,604,528
Henderson	4	1.05	\$8,587,070	\$8,993,072	\$	1,275,514	\$7,311,556
Iroquois	4	1.36	\$48,329,639	\$65,829,244	\$	7,037,667	\$41,291,972
Jasper	4	0.97	\$15,426,272	\$15,018,235	\$	1,843,913	\$13,582,359
Knox	4	1.56	\$89,143,609	\$139,153,769	\$	17,454,593	\$71,689,016
Lawrence	4	2.09	\$21,306,360	\$44,614,663	\$	4,670,116	\$16,636,244
Livingston	4	2.87	\$65,575,878	\$187,874,904	\$	9,325,252	\$56,250,626
Logan	4	2.69	\$47,572,106	\$127,812,870	\$	10,017,289	\$37,554,817
Macon	4	1.2	\$207,253,820	\$248,656,035	\$	38,097,603	\$169,156,217
Macoupin	4	2.01	\$70,606,510	\$142,089,295	\$	13,803,284	\$56,803,226
Marion	4	3.09	\$66,213,856	\$204,477,007	\$	19,094,329	\$47,119,527
Marshall	4	0.78	\$18,943,113	\$14,835,641	\$	3,349,967	\$15,593,146
Mason	4	1.92	\$27,091,385	\$52,098,218	\$	4,819,002	\$22,272,383
McDonoug	4	2.39	\$46,329,427	\$110,692,972	\$	7,511,691	\$38,817,736
McLean	4	0.8	\$362,263,797	\$290,672,464	\$	35,083,361	\$327,180,436
Menard	4	4.49	\$18,392,753	\$82,574,951	\$	2,042,915	\$16,349,838
Montgome	4	2.36	\$53,781,619	\$127,096,921	\$	9,554,564	\$44,227,055
Morgan	4	3.23	\$61,055,910	\$197,384,882	\$	11,187,563	\$49,868,347
Moultrie	4	1.06	\$24,908,352	\$26,458,652	\$	4,089,680	\$20,818,672
Peoria	4	0.83	\$402,292,690	\$332,256,798	\$	64,576,176	\$337,716,514
Piatt	4	0.75	\$27,113,139	\$20,252,138	\$	1,978,487	\$25,134,652
Pike	4	2.52	\$24,262,187	\$61,202,202	\$	5,293,890	\$18,968,297
Richland	4	2.03	\$27,622,289	\$56,082,129	\$	5,792,017	\$21,830,272
Sangamon	4	3.31	\$435,555,537	\$1,440,156,674	\$	57,873,578	\$377,681,959
Schuyler	4	3.76	\$10,452,661	\$39,347,866	\$	2,392,282	\$8,060,379
Scott	4	3.49	\$6,492,452	\$22,645,018	\$	1,029,869	\$5,462,583
Shelby	4	1.44	\$32,199,677	\$46,384,784	\$	6,325,753	\$25,873,924
Stark	4	1.22	\$8,854,712	\$10,840,152	\$	1,119,557	\$7,735,155
Tazewell	4	0.73	\$273,149,514	\$198,867,274	\$	34,961,786	\$238,187,728
Vermilion	4	1.56	\$127,584,511	\$199,645,864	\$	33,032,816	\$94,551,695
Warren	4	1.52	\$27,274,684	\$41,487,950	\$	7,051,155	\$20,223,529
Woodford	4	0.81	\$71,157,945	\$57,370,504	\$	3,823,433	\$67,334,512
			\$3,828,612,557	\$6,361,237,647		\$601,406,791	\$3,227,205,766
Bond	5	1.85	\$23,713,245	\$43,918,319	\$	5,668,336	\$18,044,909
Calhoun	5	1.87	\$6,276,008	\$11,729,252	\$	983,225	\$5,292,783
Clinton	5	2.42	\$64,894,472	\$157,161,499	\$	6,477,680	\$58,416,792
Jersey	5	1.03	\$35,945,364	\$37,095,463	\$	6,551,397	\$29,393,967
Madison	5	1.1	\$489,544,441	\$538,829,494	\$	75,501,620	\$414,042,821
Monroe	5	0.49	\$66,117,098	\$32,509,825	\$	2,184,659	\$63,932,439
Randolph	5	3.08	\$58,749,712	\$180,921,286	\$	9,678,105	\$49,071,607
St Clair	5	1.13	\$465,735,103	\$525,228,978	\$	87,788,487	\$377,946,616
Washington	5	1.18	\$26,799,930	\$31,715,131	\$	2,026,233	\$24,773,697

\$1,237,775,373    \$1,559,109,247    \$196,859,742    \$1,040,915,631

Alexander	6	3.71	\$8,817,337	\$32,697,127	\$	4,270,340	\$4,546,997
Edwards	6	1.31	\$10,156,829	\$13,285,918	\$	1,375,790	\$8,781,039
Franklin	6	2.23	\$61,781,217	\$137,699,881	\$	17,000,391	\$44,780,826
Gallatin	6	1.55	\$8,216,392	\$12,737,542	\$	1,591,237	\$6,625,155
Hamilton	6	2.45	\$11,706,263	\$28,662,700	\$	2,257,442	\$9,448,821
Hardin	6	3.52	\$4,653,156	\$16,375,130	\$	1,368,620	\$3,284,536
Jackson	6	3.46	\$94,287,380	\$326,615,559	\$	19,122,338	\$75,165,042
Jefferson	6	1.49	\$76,091,378	\$113,292,460	\$	16,780,270	\$59,311,108
Johnson	6	6.29	\$13,346,550	\$83,917,900	\$	2,372,921	\$10,973,629
Massac	6	1.92	\$21,478,252	\$41,300,742	\$	6,113,054	\$15,365,198
Perry	6	3.09	\$29,366,889	\$90,683,872	\$	5,619,084	\$23,747,805
Pope	6	4.21	\$4,573,058	\$19,240,905	\$	1,725,491	\$2,847,567
Pulaski	6	5.24	\$7,519,819	\$39,374,912	\$	2,646,213	\$4,873,606
Saline	6	2.59	\$43,861,291	\$113,406,526	\$	11,426,737	\$32,434,554
Union	6	6.21	\$26,974,021	\$167,588,322	\$	7,827,009	\$19,147,012
Wabash	6	1.37	\$21,360,249	\$29,192,966	\$	4,066,637	\$17,293,612
Wayne	6	1.71	\$25,421,090	\$43,398,233	\$	4,107,994	\$21,313,096
White	6	1.14	\$27,804,698	\$31,648,852	\$	4,934,090	\$22,870,608
Williamson	6	1.69	\$125,503,947	\$212,589,252	\$	23,351,921	\$102,152,026
			\$622,919,816	\$1,553,708,799		\$137,957,579	\$484,962,237

Summary	Selected Revenue	Selected Disbursements	Federal Medicaid Match	Revenue w/out Medicaid Match
Cook	\$11,925,148,518	\$9,515,776,084	\$1,943,831,292	\$9,981,317,226
Suburb	\$8,024,504,817	\$3,738,955,693	\$729,404,242	\$7,295,100,575
Down State	\$8,263,542,410	\$12,301,857,556	\$1,323,716,850	\$6,939,825,560
NW	\$2,574,234,664	\$2,827,801,863	\$387,492,738	\$2,186,741,926
Central	\$3,828,612,557	\$6,361,237,647	\$601,406,791	\$3,227,205,766
SW	\$1,237,775,373	\$1,559,109,247	\$196,859,742	\$1,040,915,631
South	\$622,919,816	\$1,553,708,799	\$137,957,579	\$484,962,237