

A primer for the Illinois primary

By Adriana Colindres, Special to the Beacon

Posted 12:09 p.m. Tues., 01.19.10 - Ready or not, Illinois voters are less than two weeks away from a high-stakes election that will determine which candidates continue their quest for governor, U.S. Senate and a handful of other offices in the state.

The winners of the Feb. 2 primary elections will advance to the November general elect

The primary is unusually early because state lawmakers decided in 2007 to switch the date from March to February in even-numbered years.

At that time, supporters of the plan said the earlier date would give Illinois a greater sa in the process of nominating candidates for U.S. president. Democrats particularly liked the idea of bolstering the chances of Barack Obama, a former member of the Illinois General Assembly whose presidential campaign was just beginning.

The downside, though, is a lot of people don't realize an election is just around the corr Even if they know about the election, they've likely had very little time to learn about tl candidates.

"I've run into people and they're surprised that an election is going on," said Madison County Clerk Mark Von Nida.

Kent Redfield, a political scientist at the University of Illinois Springfield, said voters ter not to focus much on political campaigns during the holiday season. That makes it hard candidates to get their messages heard, and the challenge is even greater for candidate who aren't already familiar to the public.

"It's a big plus for a candidate who is an incumbent and has name recognition," Redfiel said.

Von Nida noted that the recent cold weather has hampered candidates, especially politi newcomers.

"That grassroots campaign doesn't really exist when it's 8 degrees outside," he said.

Illinois law allows voters to cast their ballots before Election Day, and some already hav done so. But election officials in the Metro East said the response, so far, has not been overwhelming.

As of last week, about 200 of Madison County's 170,000 registered voters had taken advantage of the state's early voting provisions, Von Nida said.

"At this point, it's been very slow. I had anticipated a little more activity by now," Monr County Clerk Dennis Knobloch said on Friday.

Knobloch said about 50 to 60 of the county's 23,000 registered voters have cast ballots "For one thing, I think the change of date for the Illinois primary still has everybody confused," he said. "First, you only have a select group of people willing to declare a pa for the primary, and a lot of them were used to the old March dates. I think that has kir of thrown people off."

Here's a look at the key statewide races. Most of the candidates have websites detailing their biographies and their positions on issues.

GOVERNOR

QUINN, HYNES BICKER AS REPUBLICANS SPAR

The Democratic contenders for governor are the incumbent, [Pat Quinn](#) , and state Comptroller [Dan Hynes](#) . Both are Chicago Democrats.



Quinn (right) has been referred to as "the accidental governor" because he never was elected to that job. Rather, he successfully ran for two terms as lieutenant governor, being elevated to the governor's office last year when his former running mate, Rod Blagojevich, was thrown out of office. Quinn also is a former state treasurer.



Hynes (left) has been state comptroller - the state's chief fiscal officer -- since 1999. He wrapping up his third term.

The Republicans seeking to become governor are businessman [Adam Andrzejewski](#) of Hinsdale, state Sen. [Bill Brady](#) of Bloomington, state Sen. [Kirk Dillard](#) of Hinsdale, former Illinois Republican Party head [Andy McKenna](#) of Chicago, political commentator [Dan Proft](#) of Chicago, former Illinois Attorney General [Jim Ryan](#) of Elmhurst and DuPage County Board Chairman [Robert "Bob" Schillerstrom](#) of Naperville.



From left: Andrezejewski, Brady and Dillard

For both political parties, the key issue in the governor's race is the state's long-standing, ever-worsening financial crisis. The state owes billions of dollars in unpaid bills, and the projected deficit for the coming fiscal year is about \$13 billion.

Quinn and Hynes agree the state needs to boost revenues - another way of saying tax should increase. But their approaches differ.

Quinn has talked for months about raising income taxes while restructuring the state's tax system to protect the people who are least able to afford higher taxes. Hynes has proposed raising taxes only on those who make more than \$200,000 a year.

The Republican candidates say their focus would be on cost-cutting and pension reform, not on increasing taxes. They all say they would do a better job of leading the state through crisis than Quinn.

The Green Party candidate for governor, [Rich Whitney](#), faces no opponent from his own party and will advance to the general election.

U.S. SENATE

BATTLE TO SUCCEED BURRIS

Democrat Roland Burris took over the U.S. Senate seat formerly held by Obama, but he never was able to escape the shadow of Blagojevich, who appointed Burris a few weeks after Blagojevich's 2008 arrest on corruption charges. Burris isn't seeking election to a term.

The Republican candidates are [John Arrington](#) of Harvey, [Patrick Hughes](#) of Hinsdale, U.S. Rep. [Mark Steven Kirk](#) of Highland Park, [Donald Lowery](#) of Golconda, [Andy Martin](#) of Chicago and [Kathleen Thomas](#) of Springfield.

The Democrats are [Alexander "Alexi" Giannoulis](#), [David Hoffman](#), [Cheryle Jackson](#) and [Jacob Meister](#), all of Chicago, and [Robert Marshall](#) of Burr Ridge.

Among the Republicans, Kirk is widely viewed as the leading contender. He is serving his fifth term in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he is a member of the House Appropriations Committee.

The Democrats are tougher to handicap.



From left: McKenna, Proft, Ryan, Schillerstrom

REPUBLICANS



Top from left: Arrington, Hughes, Kirk

Bottom from left: Lowery, Martin, Thomas

Giannoulias, who is now state treasurer, may have the edge on name recognition, but Hoffman and Jackson also have made the news from time to time.

Hoffman, a former inspector general for the city of Chicago, occasionally clashed with Mayor Richard Daley. Jackson is on leave as CEO of the Chicago Urban League, and she was Blagojevich's press secretary during his first term as governor.

In a debate last week, the Democrats covered a number of issues but appeared to agree that repairing the national economy and creating jobs should be the top priority.

The Green Party candidate is [LeAlan Jones](#) of Chicago.

THE REST

OTHER HOPEFULS SEEK OFFICE

Lieutenant governor seems to be the job that just about everyone wants.

For decades, the job sparked little enthusiasm - even within state government. One former lieutenant governor, Republican Dave O'Neal of St. Clair County, cited boredom when he resigned in 1981.

But there's always the possibility that a lieutenant governor can ascend to the governor office, as Quinn did last year.

The Democrats running for lieutenant governor this year are [Mike Boland](#) of East Moline, [Thomas Castillo](#) of Elmhurst, [Scott Lee Cohen](#) of Chicago, [Rickey Hendon](#) of Chicago, [Te Link](#) of Waukegan and [Arthur Turner](#) of Chicago.

The Republicans are [Brad Cole](#) of Carbondale, [Dennis Cook](#) of Orland Park, [Matt Murphy](#) of Palatine, [Jason Plummer](#) of Edwardsville, [Don Tracy](#) of Springfield and [Randy White Sr.](#) of Hamilton.

Don Crawford of St. Elmo is running under the Green Party banner.

Creating jobs and revitalizing the economy are the dominant themes for most of the candidates, many of whom presently hold public office. Boland, Hendon, Link, Murphy and Turner serve in the legislature, while Cole is mayor of Carbondale and Cook is a school board president.

DEMOCRATS



Top from left:
Giannoulias, Hoffman,
Jackson.

At right from top:
Meister, Marshall



The men running for lieutenant governor will compete separately from gubernatorial hopefuls in the primary. But party nominees for governor and lieutenant governor will pair up as running mates for the November election.

COMPTROLLER: The contest for Illinois comptroller has attracted three Democrats, three Republicans and a Green Party candidate.

The Democrats are [S. Raja Krishnamoorthi](#) of Hoffman Estates, [Clinton "Clint" Krislov](#) of Wilmette and [David Miller](#) of Lynwood.

The Republicans are former state Treasurer [Judy Baar Topinka](#) of Riverside, [Jim Dodge](#) of Orland Park and [William Kelly](#) of Chicago.

The Green Party candidate is R. Erika Schafer of Chicago.

TREASURER: In the race for state treasurer, only the Democrats will have a primary. [Robin Kelly](#) of Matteson, currently chief of staff in the treasurer's office, will go up against [Justin Oberman](#) of Chicago.

The lone Republican candidate is [Dan Rutherford](#), a state senator from Chenoa; and the Green Party's standard-bearer is [Scott Summers](#) of Harvard.

ATTORNEY GENERAL, SECRETARY OF STATE: There is no primary election in the race for attorney general and secretary of state because of the small pool of candidates.

In November, Republican [Steve Kim](#) of Northbrook and Green Party candidate David Blum of Belvidere will try to oust the incumbent attorney general, Democrat [Lisa Madigan](#) of Chicago.

Similarly, Republican [Robert Enriquez](#) of Aurora and Green Party hopeful [Adrian Frost](#) of Plano will aim to defeat incumbent Secretary of State [Jesse White](#), a Chicago Democrat.

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