



Bernard Schoenburg: Are offers to take less seen as 'gimmicks'?

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Three citywide candidates are letting the public know that they will not take all that is coming to them in pay or benefits if they get elected.

I guess I shouldn't be too cynical and question their sincerity, but I can't help but notice that while they are talking about being part of the shared sacrifice in city government, none of them are going to have to skip any meals if they don't get all their pay or benefits.

Mayoral candidate MIKE HOUSTON — one who hasn't pledged not to take what the job pays should he win — put it this way: "I would say that those are gimmicks, and if you haven't got anything else to talk about, you're looking for gimmicks."

Of course, Houston is running against a couple of the people he's talking about, so we have to look at his view through that prism.

One of his mayoral rivals, SHEILA STOCKS-SMITH, has said her first act as mayor would be to take a 10 percent pay cut and demand that her directors take 5 percent pay cuts. She has done lots of volunteer work but left a paying job with Springfield public schools for this campaign. And even when she was working full time at the city of Springfield as education liaison, the city council never let her pay top \$15,000. She says the Springfield home where she has lived for two decades was purchased for \$140,000 — not an extravagant amount.

But as the spouse of a doctor, I hope I have license to also point out that Stocks-Smith is married to Dr. LARRY SMITH, a partner with Central Illinois Kidney and Dialysis Associates, and the group just built a new Springfield building.

Stocks-Smith defends her proposed cut in pay as mayor from what is now about \$120,000. "Clearly it doesn't solve our budget problem," she said, but it's a way to "lead by example."

MIKE COFFEY JR. is another mayoral contender, and after the primary at his first news conference, promised to return to the city pay for his first 90 days in office, should he win.

We know, from the apron he's wearing on the brochures, that Coffey's family owns Saputo's. He told reporters he's actually manager and his parents are owners, so there won't be any problem with the liquor license there, which a mayor can't hold. He says he'll be a full-time mayor.

"The point is ... that cuts need to be made at the top, and that I'm willing to sacrifice," he said.

"This whole theory that I'm a person of means is a little bit exaggerated," Coffey added. "I'm a person that has to work 360-some days a year. I need a paycheck just like every single person out there."

Coffey and his father also own warehouse and parking space at the old Springfield Produce Inc. just east of The State Journal-Register. "We store stuff for the restaurant" at the warehouse there, he said.

His parents own the rental space next to Saputo's where there are state offices. But he owns a condo in Naples, Fla., that was purchased as an investment.

"I don't think I've ever spent the night there," he said, and asked if it is usually occupied by renters, he said, "Sometimes it is; sometimes it isn't."

ANDY GRISWOLD is running for city clerk, which pays more than \$82,000 a year, with a promise that he will not sign up for a city pension or take pay raises, benefits or a car allowance. He's not now involved in full-time work, though he is working with the Network Knowledge public television stations to recruit volunteers, and he's helping introduce another business to clients. But both are part time and have no base salary. He launched Springfield's branch of TruPay, a company that does payroll and other human resources work, but didn't want to move out of Springfield, and until this summer, he's under a "no compete" agreement not to work for a competitor. He was paid \$3,000 a month, he said, or \$17,600 last year, for work he did for the state GOP.

He's also marrying Dr. GINGER DARLING, a neonatologist, in July, which an observer might think makes it easier to forgo city benefits that he tallies, over a possible eight years, in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

His opponent, City Clerk CECILIA TUMULTY, who is now being attacked by Griswold in at least one radio ad for mistakes in records and taking, for example, a car allowance, says Griswold is "relying on gimmicks."

"It's my experience that the people of Springfield want to hear about how you plan on making city government work better for them, and not how fortunate you are that you can afford to not take a salary for the work you do," she said.

"If I was making \$85,000 in the private sector, I would be contributing to my own 401(k) and I would be paying a significant portion of my own benefits," Griswold responded. He said he thinks taxpayers "expect their elected officials to live in that same world."

Gimmicks or not? You be the judge.

UIS' Mooney honored

Congratulations to CHRIS MOONEY, professor of political science at the University of Illinois Springfield and the U of I's Institute of Government and Public Affairs, on being named the first Honorable W. Russell Arrington Professor in State Politics.

Mooney, a national expert in the field of state politics and policy who focuses on legislative decision making, legislative leadership and morality policy, was selected for the honor from candidates at all three U of I campuses. The professorship, which is part of the IGPA, is named for Arrington, who served in the legislature from 1945-73, became the Senate's leader and was considered the father of the modern General Assembly in part for building up the operation with adequate staff.

The late Arrington's son MICHAEL ARRINGTON and former Gov. JIM EDGAR, an Arrington admirer, were involved in the efforts to fund the professorship. JIM PAUL, assistant director of the IGPA, said the goal of \$500,000 needed for an endowed professorship was nearly reached.

Mooney, who has the honor for a five-year renewable term, said the chair comes with a research support fund of \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year. His first project is conducting a series of interviews to determine how lawmakers think about cause and effect in public policy.

At UIS since 1999, Mooney is founding editor of a national journal called State Politics and Policy Quarterly.

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