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## Beloit International Film Festival Returns

by Charles Herbst

The Beloit International Film Festival has announced its schedule of films for its upcoming 13th season. This year, the 10-day festival will be held from February 23 through March 5, 2017. Over 100 films of various types, genres and ratings have been selected for screening at the festival. While many films are full-length features, the shorter films are shown as part of one of 10 groups called “short slots.”

“BIFF”-- as it is known locally -- is an intimate, very accessible film festival. You’ll get to see a wide variety of independent filmmakers showing their work. Many of the filmmakers are present at the screenings and take questions at the end of the film from the audience. In the past, some have traveled from as far as Australia. There is often the opportunity to further socialize afterward.

Cannes and Sundance do have their glamour, but they are also crowded and can be expensive to attend. Hob-nobbing with the filmmakers, a flat-rate \$9-per-screening ticket price, less-crowded, comfortable venues, and free parking 30 minutes from home make Beloit an annual, must-attend event.

The festival is powered by over 300 volunteers and has broad community support. Most venues are in downtown Beloit and are within easy walking distance. Most of the venues serve food and several have full liquor service.

For the first time, BIFF will have an Artist in Residence. Damien Patrik will give two workshops that will be open to the public, free, and should be of interest to aspiring and experienced actors. The first, Manipulation U will be held on Saturday, February 24 at 2:30PM. The second, The Casting Process for Actors and Directors, will be held Saturday March 3 at 11AM. Both will be held at Hendricks CareerTek, 635 Third Street, Suite 200.

This year at BIFF, vintage classic radio makes an appearance. The Stage One Theatre Company will present an hour long performance of the radio drama *All About Eve*. This event is free, Friday February 23, at La Casa Grande, 618 Fourth Street. It will be simultaneously be broadcast on WCLO Radio with music, sound effects, and a live studio audience.

One of BIFF’s offerings is the annual Wisconsin/Illinois showdown. The first three days’ screenings feature films of Wisconsin and Illinois filmmakers. This showdown is in its fifth year. While the festival screens many films from all over the US as well as international offerings, the showdown allows the festival to showcase local filmmakers, which give a regional accent to their high-quality productions. When audiences walk into each Wisconsin-Illinois Showdown screening, they are given ballots to vote on what they believe are the best films, awarding filmmakers much-deserved recognition.

This year’s BIFF Sing-A-Long film will be Walt Disney’s *Frozen*. The film will be presented on Saturday February 24th, 7:30 PM, Schubert’s Luxury 10 Theatre, 2799 Cranston Road, Beloit. Prior to the screening, there will be costume and singing competitions. Prizes will be awarded, popcorn and soda will be provided, all compliments of the theatre. Tickets required, purchase through the BIFF website or box office.

The Silent Film Showcase will feature a screening of *The Cameraman*. The film will be accompanied by an ensemble of elite regional musicians, who will perform the musical accompaniment. Saturday, March 3, 7PM. Beloit Memorial High School, 1225 Fourth Street, Beloit. Tickets \$20, students \$5.



The Devil herself comes to Beloit for the world premiere of *Sunset Contract*, by Marc Conen. Independ Pictures.

*Discover Wisconsin* is a popular TV show that features places throughout Wisconsin. This is Beloit’s turn. On Tuesday, February 27, 5:30PM, at La Casa Grande, a forthcoming episode featuring Beloit (to be aired on March 17) will be shown free of charge. There will be free taco bar and a cash bar available.

Every year the festival closes with a classic film, shown free of charge, no tickets required. This year, it is *The Sting* with Paul Newman and Robert Redford. Sunday, March 5 at 2:30PM, Schubert’s Luxury 10 Theater, 2799 Cranston Road, Beloit. (In past years, the classic finale has drawn an overflow crowd.)

BIFF After Dark offers variety of nightlife during the festivals. Several clubs offer live entertainment during the festival and an opportunity to keep the party and conversation going. Beyond the clubs and the food/drink offered at the film venues, Beloit offers a full host of restaurants ranging from fast food to fine dining.

Finally, if you enjoy seeing indie films on a regular basis, check out BIFF Year Round. Each

Wednesday, a film is screened at 6:30 PM at the Hendricks Center for the Arts, 409 Pleasant Street, Beloit. Complimentary coffee and snacks are served. Frequently, the filmmaker is available afterward via Skype. Admission is \$5--\$2 for students. Or you can attend all 37 films by joining the Beloit Film Society for \$50.

### Attending BIFF

With over 100 films to choose from, a little planning is essential. Fortunately, the website, [www.beloitfilmfest.org](http://www.beloitfilmfest.org) lists all the films and features trailers for most of them. A link at each film listing allows you to buy tickets.

Tickets are \$9 per screening if purchased on line. The price is \$10 if you buy them at the box office or at the door. Student tickets are \$5. Credit cards are accepted on line, but it’s cash only at the door. Often, if a popular film sells out (and it does happen) additional showings are scheduled. Of course, an additional showing is not guaranteed.

Film Reviews and Screening Times

# The 13th Annual Beloit International Film Festival

by Charles Herbst

I've seen eight of the more than one-hundred films on offer, and, while some of these films were more enjoyable than others, all eight are good productions worth seeing. Should any of these films be sold out, check with the festival. Additional screenings are generally added so as to give everyone a chance to see the film. Buying tickets online, while not absolutely necessary, will save disappointment in case of a sold-out house.

## 6 Dynamic Laws for Success (in Life, Love & Money)

Rated PG 13, Written and directed by Gregory Bane

Imagine someone knocks at your door late at night and tells you the crazy story that he thinks \$2.5 million in stolen money is hidden in your house and that, if you agree to let him search your house and maybe do some digging in the walls, he'll share the loot with you?

So begins this screwball comedy noir filmed in Idaho. Ulysses T. Lovin (Travis Swartz), an ex-used car salesman, finds himself drugged, tied-up, frees himself and accidentally shoots the home invader who meant to do him in in search for the money. The money isn't in his house, but he now has the book. A copy of *6 Dynamic Laws for Success*, in which the answers to where the money is hidden can be found. In his quest all over Idaho, he encounters the many other people looking for the same treasure.

While reminiscent of *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, this plot had enough of its own twists to keep me interested and laughing. The book, *6 Dynamic Laws for Success* is a parody of Napoleon Hill's self-help book, *Think and Grow Rich*. The points made in the 6 dynamic laws roughly correspond to the action in the film. The film does contain a kidnapping and some violence, but it is not gory and would not be off-putting to more sensitive viewers.

## Obituaries

Adolphson, Joseph, 35, Cherry Valley, Feb. 1  
Ekberg, Gary, 62, Belvidere, February 5  
Maculan, Grace, 85, Belvidere, February 5  
Whitfield, Teddy Sr., 67, Belvidere, February 2

*6 Dynamic Laws for Success* won Best Narrative at the Barbados Film Festival and has been nominated at a number of other festivals. It is sure to be a contender in Beloit.

**Fri, Feb. 23, 5PM, Bushel and Peck's**  
**Sun, Mar 4, 2:30PM, La Casa Grande**

## CTRL Z

Rated R, Written and directed by James Kennedy  
This English film of 23 minutes is a delightful science-fiction comedy of how Ed has developed a time machine that allows him an infinite number of (actually about 5000) attempts to impress the girl of his dreams.

The action takes place in a diner in Cheshire where Ed (Edward Easton) and his friend Carrie (Kath Hughes) are sitting. Ed explains (actually over and over again) to Carrie how the device works. Ed can set a safe point on the machine, a time he returns to if he should die. But to get to the safe point, and get another chance at the girl, Ed must kill himself (which he does over 4000 times during about three actual years).

With a little advice from the waitress, Ed, of course, eventually gets the girl and she gives him her telephone number. But, for all his meddling, Father Time and karma play a nasty little trick on Ed in the end.

The film has a madcap style about it and is more *Monty Python's Flying Circus* than *Groundhog Day*. It entertains, will make you laugh, and an all-around fun film to watch.

*CTRL Z* will be shown with a group of other short films at the festival.

**Tue, Feb 27, 5:30PM, Domenico's**  
**Sun, Mar 4, 12 Noon, La Casa Grande**

## Change in Federal Regulations Affects School District 100

By David Larson

In 2005, Belvidere School District 100 sold bonds to fund renovation of district school buildings and the construction of Belvidere North High School. In the fall of 2014, when those bonds, which had staggered due dates, started to mature, the district choose to refinance them at a lower rate and prepaid several million dollars to smooth the effect on the local property tax rates.

This past fall a second phase of refinancing for the same purpose began in which only half of the refinancing was completed before new federal regulations contained in the Trump Tax Reform Bill limited that option of advance bond refunding, despite strong lobbying by state and local governments.

Until December 2017, units of government could refinance freely, often with the purpose of cutting interest costs if the market conditions provided that opportunity. Over the years, several Boone County governmental units have used this maneuver to save taxpayers millions of dollars. The new law has restricted the district from finishing a 10-million dollar bond refinancing at present day, favorable interest rates. In the fall of 2017, the district was able to refinance the first 10 million but other regulations restricted the district to 10 million per calendar year, thus moving the second 10 million to 2018. The bonds of concern come due in 3 years, but with rising interest rates, it is reasonable to refinance now rather than later. If refinancing could not occur, according to Greg Brown the district business manger, bond-related district property taxes could double in the next 3 to 4 years. Brown, speaking at the January meeting of the school board, was hopeful that a revision to the federal regulation would come about soon because of a 35% drop in municipal bond market open interest, caused by the legislation. Brown believes that a new set of transition rules may develop soon, owing to the demands of the bond market.

In an interview this week, Brown said refinancing options are available, but they are not as favorable as they were under past regulations. He explained that refinancing could occur in two ways: as a taxable form of the bond at a higher interest rate; or, if refinancing occurs in a short time window before the bond due dates, a tax-free offering is still permissible. Either way, Brown explained, it can be done, but hopefully transition regulations will be issued to clarify what is now a murky situation

## Empty Space

Rated PG 13, Directed by James Choi

An very obese and intensely-bullied young man, Tom (Merrick Robison), leaves Chicago for his grandmother's rural cabin near Protection, Illinois. Getting around by bicycle, Tom obtains a job in town as a dishwasher.

While the Town of Protection is not exactly welcoming to him and somewhat hostile, he meets a blind girl named Lilly (Elizabeth Stenholt), who becomes his girlfriend.

Lilly and Tom are interesting, challenged characters who get to know and befriend each other. The characters are portrayed as very ordinary and believable. While Lilly and Tom's romance is somewhat predictable, it is also touching and enjoyable to watch.

This film was filmed in several towns west of Rockford, including Lanark. It is part of the BIFF Wisconsin/Illinois showdown. Local viewers might recognize some of the locations.

*Empty Space* has won several awards, including Best Indie Spirit Drama Feature at the Twister Alley Film Festival and both the Audience Award Best Feature and the Jury Award for Best Narrative Feature at Lighthouse International Film Festival.

**Sat, Feb 24, 7:30PM, Domenico's**  
**Fri, Mar 2, 2:30PM, Hendricks Arts Center**

## My Country

Rated PG 13, Written and directed by Giancarlo Iannotta

At the beginning of the film, Vincenzo (Mario D'Agostino) dies at his home in Chicago, and on his deathbed, requests that his son Lucky (played by Giancarlo Iannotta) scatter his ashes in the Molise region of Italy. He also tells Lucky that he had an older son, Francesco (Antonio Palumbo), who is married with a child on the way.

Lucky travels to Rome and enlists his initially reluctant older brother, Francesco, to accompany him to Molise. The film is about fifty percent English and fifty percent subtitled, and is filled with comedy. There are the obvious Chicago versus Italy stereotypes. Francesco's womanizing and his troubled relationship

Continued on page 3

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David Grimm April 1938 - Dec. 2000  
Richelle Kingsbury Aug. 1955 - June 2013

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with Vincenzo, who had abandoned him, make for several dramatic episodes in the film. Lucky and Francesco accomplish their task, despite a few rough patches.

Filmed partially in Chicago, *My Country* is part of the Wisconsin/Illinois showdown. It is clearly a strong contender. The photography, particularly in Italy, is well-done and a treat to see. The humor, interesting plot and good technical qualities of the film make this an enjoyable adventure to watch.

**Sat, Feb. 24, 7:30PM, Bagels and More**  
**Fri, Mar. 2, 5:00PM, Bushel and Peck's**

**Sunset Contract**

Rated R, Written and directed by Marc Conen

I've heard it said that God was an Englishman; *Sunset Contract* introduces the devil as an English woman. In this English film, Brad (Peter Nicholas) has made a contract with Miss Eve (Paris Jefferson) to build a social network, called Nightfall. In return, Miss Eve granted Brad three wishes; A villa, The girl of his dreams, and Gold Bullion. Nightfall was to reach 300 million subscribers by a set date and had only reached 299 million. Miss Eve comes to call at the villa, interrupting a rendezvous between Brad and his fiancée, Mary (Anna Nightingale).

Miss Eve insists that Brad sign over all rights to Nightfall in perpetuity by sunset, or else. While the movie is billed as a drama, it has lots and lots of laughs. Miss Eve is a master of catty conversation. A number of keen observations are made about social networks, free will and human nature.

*Sunset Contract* will have its World Premiere at BIFF. This is Marc Conen's first feature film, having produced a short film, *High Tea*, in 2011. For a first feature, I found it a very well-written, impressive effort. I look forward to seeing more films by Conen.

**Fri, Feb. 23, 5PM, Domenico's**  
**Fri, Mar 2, 2:30PM, Domenico's**

**Tater Tot and Patton**

Rated R, Written and directed by Andrew Kightlinger

Andie a/k/a Tater Tot (Jessica Rothe) is a wayward college-age girl who has been sent to her aunt and uncle's ranch in rural South Dakota in lieu of going to rehabilitation. The characters had previously met when Tater Tot was a toddler. The aunt has passed on and Tater Tot's Uncle Erwin a/k/a Patton (Bates Wilder) singlehandedly runs his ranch as a functional alcoholic.

Predictably, Tater Tot and Patton don't care much for each other. Tater Tot sends text messages about what a awful place it is and complains about the cellular service. Patton, frustrated with her smashes the cellphone. Tater Tot feeds her supper to the dog (who sniffs at it) and the dish is returned to her until such time as she would eat it. Once Tater Tot realizes she is stuck there for the summer, she decides, more or less, to make the best of it.

In spite of the drinking and drugging, and sex with the neighbor boy, the two characters grow and develop a fondness for each other. Patton tries sobriety and Tater Tot develops an interest in someone other than herself. In the end, Tater Tot and Patton end up embracing when she leaves at the end of the summer.

This is a somewhat difficult film to watch, but it has an interesting message. Would Tater Tot and Patton have been better off if they pursued professional rehabilitation instead of spending the summer together? Two flawed characters helped each other to become stronger people.

*Tater Tot and Patton* contains nudity, sex, foul

language and is quite earthy at times. The film won first place at the Vail Film Festival for Best Screenplay.

**Fri, Mar 2, 5PM, Hendricks Arts Center**  
**Sun, Mar 4, 5PM, La Casa Grande**

**This Cold Life**

Rated PG, Written and directed by Darren Mann

Svalbard, also known as Spitsbergen, is located at 79 degrees north latitude and is half-way between Norway and the North Pole. It is a desolate, if hauntingly beautiful place where a few thousand people make their home, chiefly in the village of Longyearbyen.

*This Cold Life* is a documentary of the people who live there and their close relationships to each other. In a place where perpetual darkness lasts for four months of the year, and perpetual daylight for another four, many of the natives enjoy their life and have no interest in leaving for more conventional climes. We meet a number of interesting folks who tell their stories.

The film discusses the coal industry and its collapse which led to the abandonment of the Russian village in the archipelago and how the Norwegian state coal operations are threatened. Layoffs in the coal industry have reduced the population of Longyearbyen and put pressure on the community.

For those of us who grow tired of our relatively mild winters, *This Cold Life* is an interesting look at the lifestyle in the world's northernmost settlement.

**Sun, Feb. 25, 12 Noon, Domenico's**  
**Sat, Mar 3, 5PM, Bagels and More**

**Virginia Minnesota**

Rated PG 13, Written and directed by Daniel Stine

Four alumnae of a foster home for wayward girls return years later to a reunion of sorts where the housemother has died and left each of them in her will. The will won't be read until four girls have assembled. One of the girls Addison (Aurora Perrineau) is reluctant to come from nearby Grand Marais until Lyle (Rachel Hendrix) travels there and persuades her to return. Lyle is anxious to move on so that she can attend an important job interview and the delays ultimately cause her to miss it.

The film is dominated by the memories and guilt of the girls regarding the drowning of a younger, fifth girl at the home when she was in their care. The young women are presented as troubled individuals who are still carrying much baggage in their lives beyond the drowning. Comic relief is provided by "Mister," a travel robot that Lyle clings to as a companion, rather than letting the robot find another ride from another traveler.

Daniel Stine has written and directed several other short films including *God and Vodka*, *Grape*, and *The Championship Rounds*. This is his first feature-length film.

**Sat, Mar 3, 7:30PM, Bushel and Peck's**  
**Sun, Mar 4, 5PM, Hendricks Arts Center**

**BIFF Venues**

All of the venues are in Beloit, and most are downtown.

- Schubert's Luxury 10 Theatres is near Interstate 90 on the northeast side. Beloit Memorial High School is north of Downtown on the west bank of the Rock River. Seating is open on a first-come-first-served basis.
- Website [www.beloitfilmfest.org](http://www.beloitfilmfest.org)
- Box Office 444 East Grand, Suite 100 608 466 9693
- Bagels and More, 324 State Street
- Beloit Memorial High School, 1225 Fourth Street
- Bushel and Peck's, 320 State Street
- Hendricks Center for the Arts, 409 Pleasant Street
- La Casa Grande, 618 Fourth Street
- Schubert's Luxury 10 Theatre, 2799 Cranston Rd.

**If you go....**  
**Chicago Auto Show**

by Charles Herbst

The Nation's Largest Auto Show will be held starting this Saturday, February 10 through Monday, February 19 at Chicago's McCormick Place. There will be nearly 1000 cars on display in over 1 million square feet of exhibit space. If you are looking for a car, you couldn't ask for a better display. If you are a car buff, this is heaven.

The Journal will be covering this year's show in our February 16 issue. Meanwhile we have several suggestions for you if you go:

Save on admission. General admission is \$13. There are many discounted or free auto show tickets floating around. Wintrust Banks is an official sponsor of the show. Wintrust is offering \$3 off tickets for admission on February 10 or 11 and \$6 off tickets for admission on February 12-16 and February 19. There are several Wintrust branches in McHenry County, including in Huntley. There are also branches in Elgin.

On Tuesday, February 13, Women are admitted for \$7. Avoid traffic, tolls and high parking fees at McCormick Place. Parking at McCormick Place is \$23.

Taking the train is really not a good option. There is no direct bus from either Ogilvie or Union Station to McCormick Place.

During the week, we suggest you use the Park and Ride at I-90 and Randall Road. Parking is free. Round trip to the Chicago Auto Show will cost you \$5 with your Ventra card. The express bus (which has reclining leather seats and free wifi) will take you to an easy transfer to the Blue Line at Rosemont. At Clark and Lake, take the escalators up to the Green Line. Ride the Green Line to the 22nd Street/McCormick Place Station. McCormick place is a short walk. (It's what we are going to do.)

On the weekend, we suggest you drive to the CTA Park and Ride at Cumberland Avenue and the Kennedy Expressway. Parking is \$6 for 12 hours. Take the Blue Line to Clark and Lake, where you'll transfer to the Green Line as described above. Round trip fare to McCormick Place from Cumberland is also \$5. Ventra cards can be purchased or fare added at Rosemont, Cumberland or any CTA Rapid Transit station.

Give it a try. There are plenty of CTA personnel at all of the rapid transit stations, who will happily give you directions if you need them. Or you can always call 312 836-7000, or visit [transitchicago.com](http://transitchicago.com) for help.

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# Illinois Contemplates Viability of Borrowing \$107 billion

By Dan McCaleb and Greg Bishop  
Illinois News Network

An Illinois House committee Tuesday afternoon began exploring the idea of borrowing more than \$100 billion to both invest and to help pay down the state's \$130 billion unfunded pension liability

Under questioning, the proposal's author admitted there is risk to taxpayers.

During a fact-gathering hearing of the House Personnel and Pensions Committee, state Rep. Rob Martwick, D-Chicago, said he's not sure if the idea is viable or not, but it's worth investigating.

"I'm not smart enough to know that," Martwick said. "These matters are far beyond my expertise."

Martwick has proposed issuing \$107 billion in bonds to help pay down the state's \$130 billion unfunded pension liability, which he said could save the state billions of dollars in the long run through investments.

But some Republicans already have criticized the idea, saying it would be the largest bond issuance in world history.

"Think about that," state Rep. Grant Wehrli, R-Naperville, told Illinois News Network Monday. "Illinois, that can't pay its bills now, is going to put up more debt on our credit card in hopes of solving our pension crisis. I'm open to ideas, but simply bonding out \$107 billion is massively irresponsible."

Martwick said at Tuesday's hearing that the state is going to have to pay pensioners one way or another. How that's going to happen is the question. "How do we manage that cost? At what cost do we repay that debt?" he asked.

Professor Runhuan Feng with the Department of Mathematics at the University of Illinois said under the proposal, the state would issue 27-year, fixed rate serial bonds to pay down the pension debt. Feng, who wrote the proposal, said his goal was to save the state billions of dollars but also have the state's five pension systems funded at 90 percent.

"The proposal is to distribute all the bond proceeds to the five retirement systems in order for them to meet 90 percent funding ratio immediately in 2018," he said.

But 35.8 percent of those allocations would be deposited in a special investment fund for each system until 2045, Feng said. The state would pay down the bonding debt in annual payments of \$8.5 billion until 2045.

Because of the investments, Feng said, the state would save \$103 billion off its current obligation by 2045. The state's current obligation is \$345 billion through 2045. Under his plan, it is \$238 billion.

But state Rep. Jeanne Ives, R-Wheaton, read a series of headlines criticizing Illinois for its past borrowing practices to pay off debt. "Why are those headlines wrong?" said Ives, who's running against Gov. Bruce Rauner in the Republican primary for governor. "These are very qualified, like, we're talking bond buyers, zero hedge, ... chief investment officer, Trib. These are qualified entities that understand the bond market."

Feng said he thought the past criticism was directed at borrowing money to pay down debt, not to invest as his plan would do.

Ives then asked Feng if he'd checked with any of the credit ratings agencies to see what borrowing more than \$100 billion would do to the state's rating, which is just one notch above junk status. Martwick interrupted and said further hearings would explore that topic.

Feng, who is in the state university pension system, said there would be risk to taxpayers if the rate of return on the investments doesn't meet his expectations. Ives responded by saying taxpayers would be the ones left with the responsibility of covering the costs if the plan doesn't pan out.

Rep. Scott Drury, D-Highwood, pointed out that state actuaries have overestimated investment return rates in the past.

"One of the issues we've had with our pension systems is that the actuaries have assumed these returns on the pensions that have turned out to not

be correct," Drury said. "That puts us way more into debt."

While the state says its pension systems are underfunded by \$130 billion, private actuaries say it could be more than \$200 billion because of the inflated return rates the state uses.

Drury and other lawmakers also worried the General Assembly could waste an entire year talking about what could amount to just a theory without focusing on real solutions to tackle the 3 percent compounded annual interest retirees get.

Rep. Grant Wehrli, R-Naperville, asked that if taxpayers were asked to take a risk, should pensioners not give something too? Martwick said he'd be willing to discuss options in the future.

Rep. Steven Reick, R-Woodstock, said even if Weng's plan works to pay down current debt, it doesn't fix the fundamental problems with the overly generous pensions systems,

"We're still accruing a 3 percent annual COLA (cost of living adjustment). We're still doing the kinds of things that are putting us behind the eight ball now," Reick said. "We're stopping at a point in time but we're starting back up again doing the same things that got us here in the first place."

Dan McCaleb is news director of Illinois News Network and the digital hub ILNews.org. He welcomes your comments. Contact Dan at dmccaleb@ilnews.org. News Director. Dan is a veteran editor and has worked in journalism for more than 25 years. Most recently, McCaleb served as editorial director of Shaw Media and the top editor of the award-winning Northwest Herald in suburban McHenry County.

Greg Bishop reports on Illinois government and other statewide issues for INN. Bishop has years of award winning broadcast experience, and previously hosted "The Council Roundup," as well as "Bishop On Air," a morning-drive current events talk show

## Wisconsin's Foxconn Handouts Demonstrate Peril of "Incentives" in Illinois

By: Ted Dabrowski and John Klingner - Wirepoints

Illinois News Network, ILNews.org - The perils of letting politicians dole out taxpayer dollars to corporations as investment "incentives" was on full display in Wisconsin recently. New reporting finds that the price tag to taxpayers for winning the Foxconn facility will be \$4 billion, not the \$3 billion originally reported.

That may leave Wisconsin taxpayers holding the bag for decades - if they ever recoup those costs at all.

Wisconsin politicians last year granted the electronics manufacturing company a reported \$3 billion in state tax credits to locate a factory in their state. It's one of the largest taxpayer-backed incentive packages ever promised to a corporation to locate a facility in the U.S.

While Foxconn's factory was being celebrated as a major win in Wisconsin, some analysts were already questioning whether the \$3 billion subsidy would ever be recouped by taxpayers.

According to the state's own estimates, it will take until at least 2043 for Wisconsin to recover the costs of the taxpayer subsidies.

And Wisconsin residents are now finding out the price tag is much higher than Wisconsin politicians originally advertised. When all local and state "incentives" given to Foxconn are added up, the sweeteners total more than \$4 billion. Local government

costs include infrastructure investments in roads and highways, sewer and power lines.

That enormous sum has already had a negative impact on the state's local governments. As Wirepoints previously reported, Racine County suffered a credit downgrade from Moody's Investors Service due to the \$400 million in incentives its politicians promised Foxconn.

The Foxconn deal is risky for state taxpayers. Whether it will pay off remains to be seen.

Regardless, the deal is still a perfect example for everything wrong with the whole practice of letting politicians hand out taxpayer dollars as a subsidies

- Politicians get to the pick the economy's winners and losers. Their preferences decide where state money goes. But it isn't their money. It's the taxpayers' money

- Politicians shouldn't have access to that money in the first place. Corporate incentive programs force every resident, entrepreneur and small business to pay higher taxes so that big companies can get big subsidies. It's simply not fair.

- Companies with lobbyists and connections get the breaks. The ones without them end up paying.

- Corporate handouts may be doled out legally, but it's a fair bet to say politicians spend taxpayer money far too freely in search of a trophy "deal" for their political campaigns. Foxconn is proof of that.

- Corporate incentives open the door to an enormous amount of cronyism. More than a billion dollars will be spent on local infrastructure as an "incentive" for Foxconn. Land is being donated to the company. Roads are being constructed. Sewer and power lines are being built. These improvements are ripe for the sort of crony deals that leave taxpayers paying for decades.

The bottom line is politicians are gambling with taxpayer money to give corporate handouts.

This all serves as a warning for Illinoisans and their state's own subsidy programs.

Illinoisans already know their politicians are corrupt. The Berrios-Madigan-Burke property tax assessment scheme in Cook County that enriches politicians and select companies at the expense of poor residents is evidence enough of that.

Do we really want Illinois politicians like House Speaker Mike Madigan, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Gov. Bruce Rauner picking winners and losers directly with taxpayer dollars?

Remember, these are the same politicians that haven't balanced the budget in 15 years. These are the same politicians that have brought Illinois to the brink of a junk rating. The same ones that have pushed up Illinois taxes to some of the highest levels in the nation.

And these are the same politicians that promised schemes like the EDGE tax credit program would deliver stellar economic returns, but instead have cost taxpayers billions with little result.

Since 2000, the state has spent \$1.5 billion on EDGE credits, yet the program has brought in just 37,000 jobs. Rather a poor record considering Illinois still hasn't created a net new job since the year 2000. In contrast, Illinois' neighboring states have each added more than 100,000 net new jobs since then.

Bribing a few select companies with others' tax dollars so they come to Illinois is no way to build a successful economy.

Illinois must instead enact pro-business reforms - including lower taxes - that make the state competitive again. As the nation's fifth-largest economy, companies should want to be here without needing bribes. And if Illinois thrives, they'll have to be here if they want to succeed.

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# Editorial

By Scott Reeder

SPRINGFIELD – Imagine interviewing for a job and getting offered a starting salary of \$340,000 and then demanding that your new employer create positions for your adult daughter and her husband.

Arrogant? You bet.

And you would have to question the wisdom of any employer who would give in to such a demand.

Well, folks, guess who is footing the bill for this fellow's salary and those of his daughter and son-law? Illinois taxpayers and the students paying tuition at Southern Illinois University.

And at the same meeting, last year, that Chancellor Carlo Montemagno was hired, SIU's board voted to cut \$26 million from the school's budget and examine eliminating seven degree programs.

Two weeks after the board voted to make those cuts and hire her Dad, Melissa Germain signed her new contract for \$52,000 to promote theater at SIU.

I can't really say how well she does her job, but in the last several days plenty of drama has come to campus – after SIU's student newspaper The Daily Egyptian uncovered her sweet new gig and that of her husband who makes \$45 an hour helping an interim vice chancellor.

The most qualified people are supposed to be hired for open university and state jobs. But job qualifications in Illinois often are relative – they depend on who your relatives are.

The Daily Egyptian, reported that the university hired the Germaines for positions that had been created for them and that were never advertised to the public.

The university's internal ethics office has now referred the matter to the state inspector general.

I couldn't help but wonder what our governor thought of this situation. You know, our governor, Bruce Rauner, the fellow ran for office on a platform of fiscal responsibility and a pledge to "Shake up Springfield."

So, I contacted his office and asked these two questions:

Does the governor believe this is an appropriate action by SIU? If not, what action does he plan?

And here is the response from gubernatorial spokeswoman Rachel Bold: "SIU has opened an ethics investigation. We believe that is appropriate and look forward to the outcome."

Huh?

That's all the man who was elected to shake up Springfield has to say?

Come on, Bruce, you appoint members to the SIU board. You are state's chief executive, if you won't condemn something this bad, are you functioning as a watchdog or a lap dog?

And these sorts of problems aren't unique to SIU.

In December, Northern Illinois University's board gave a \$600,000 severance to former President Doug Baker, who quit amid a state investigation accusing him and other administrators of mismanagement with the hiring of consultants.

Raise your hand if you ever received \$600,000 for quitting a job. Yeah, me neither.

Have you ever been offered a job and told a potential employer, "Nah, I'll only work for you if you hire a couple of my relatives too?" I didn't think so.

But this is how our state universities are operating. This is the way they are choosing to spend our money.

The NIU and SIU campuses are separated by 365 miles, but their administrators are joined by the same sense of entitlement.

Students may be saddled with debt as tuitions escalate. University staffs cringe as the budget axe falls.

But what are university leaders demanding? More -- for themselves.

Where is the governor? Why isn't he speaking out?

His rival for the GOP nomination, Jeanne Ives calls it a lack of leadership on his part.

So far, he hasn't proven her wrong.

# Community News & Events

**Kidz Zone Emoji Party-** Saturday, February 10, 2018, 4:00-8:00PM. We know you LOVE Emoji's, so let's give them a little more love for Valentine's Day! A super fun filled night with dinner, games, crafts, movie, & fun of all sorts! This is a NEW event for Kidz Zone and you don't want to miss it! We ask that all children attending be potty trained. Cost is \$17 and ask about the \$5 multifamily discount. Call 815-784-3488 for any questions, or to reserve a spot for the new event.

**Blue Ribbon Chili Supper Fundraiser-** Its that time again! The United Methodist Men are having a Blue Ribbon Chili Supper fundraiser to raise funds for youth service projects. Saturday February 10th, 4:30-7:00 pm. Adults \$7.00, Children under 10 \$3.00. Tickets available at the door. Dinner includes chili, bread, drink & dessert. Carry out available. Located at the First United Methodist Church (610 Bonus Ave., Belvidere IL. Call 815-544-3479 for more details.

**RVC Hosting Annual Jazz Festival-** Saturday, February 10, 2018 in the Performing Arts Room (located in the ERC building on RVC's main campus, located at 3301 North Mulford Rd.)

**Discovery Center to Host Annual Chocolate Sundaes Sunday-** Chocolate and ice cream are all mixed up together for this afternoon of fun when Discovery Center hosts its annual Valentine's treat, Chocolate Sundaes Sunday, scheduled from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, February 11, 2018. Admission for general public is \$3.00 per person; Members are \$2.00. Admission to the museum and Curious George exhibit is separate, but not necessary to only attend Chocolate Sundaes Sunday. Call 815-963-6769 for more information.

**Spring Township Regular Board Meeting-** Monday, February 12, 2018 at 6:00pm. The meeting will be held at the Spring Town Hall, 93150 Shattuck Road). We will be discussing an appointment to the cemetery board.

**Car Show-** February 13th through 18th, inside the CherryVale Mall. Presented by the Rockford New Car Dealer's Association (RNCDA). There will be over 100 cars inside the mall and people are encouraged to come and check out the new 2018 models, plus they can nominate their favorite charity for a chance to win \$10,000. At the end of the show, a special committee reads the nominations and a local charity wins \$10,000

**Capron Lions Community Blood Drive-** Tuesday, February 20, 2018 from 2pm to 6pm. Located at the Capron Lions Community Building (305 E. North Street, Capron, IL 61012). For more information or to schedule a time-saving appointment to donate, please call Barb at 815-289-5279 or visit our website, RRVBC.org, to self-schedule. Walk-ins are welcome!

**North Boone Fire Protection District #3 Explorer Post 2100 Spaghetti Dinner-** Saturday, February 24, 2018 from 4-8 P.M. Located at The North Boone Fire Station #1 (305 W. Grove Street, Route 173, Poplar Grove, IL 61065). Enjoy Homemade Marinara and Meat Sauce, Garlic Bread, Salad, Desserts available for purchase. Prices are donation only.

**Boone County Food Pantry Fundraiser Bowling Night-** Saturday, February 24, 2018 from

7:00pm-11:00pm located at Dodge Lanes Bowling Alley (1950 N. State Street, Belvidere, IL) \$10.00/ Game (Shoe rental included) Food available on site for purchase.

**39th Annual Easter in the Country Arts & Crafts Show-** Saturday, March 10, 2018 from 9am-4pm. Located at Sandwich High School, Sandwich Middle School and Lynn Haskins Grade School. Shuttle Bus Service Between Schools. \$3.00 admission which benefits The Sandwich School Music Program. Please Leave your strollers at home!

**Northern Illinois University SAT Test Prep Schedule-** The Northern Illinois University spring SAT Test Preparation program provides individualized attention in a small classroom setting and offers students a chance to prepare themselves for the SAT test. NIU's SAT program covers writing and language arts, reading, and math. Enrollment is limited and registration is now open at [www.niu.edu/clasep/testprep](http://www.niu.edu/clasep/testprep) for more information, contact NIU External Programming at 815-753-5200 or NIUEP@niu.edu

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