



# Political Papers

DECEMBER 2008

## CALENDAR

Jan 3, 2009 - Beginning of  
111th Congress

Jan 8, 2009—Joint session  
to count Electoral Col-  
lege votes

Jan 20, 2009 - Inaugura-  
tion

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## Digital Democracy Has Arrived

"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" meets cyberspace. This is how many political analysts are describing the winning campaign of President-Elect Obama. Originally considered a long-shot for the presidency, President Obama knows how to inspire others or at least communicate with them in a new way.

His campaign went modern grassroots and capitalized on the Web to economically build a brand by connecting and engaging with large groups of people. The best way to sway opinion is to develop an encompassing dialogue that leverages peer-to-peer influence.



David Lazarus, former Agriculture policy aide to Senator Durbin, led the grassroots efforts

for President Obama serving as National Rural Vote Deputy Director. Lazarus was critical in mobilizing the rural vote and highlighting President Obama's commitment to agriculture and rural America.

Illinois Corn Growers Association has ventured into this electronic territory too, by launching an email or web-based newsletter years ago, collecting member emails whenever possible to speed the process of marshaling

our forces for political action. We have also upgraded our web site – [www.ilcorn.org](http://www.ilcorn.org) – all with the intent of getting you the information you need to get involved as efficiently as possible and making your engagement in the political process easier.

ICGA members in a recent survey said they considered public education a top priority issue and obviously key influencers like elected officials will be at the top of the list. In the months ahead we will be attempting to re-brand corn growers image with a focus on the unheralded increasing productivity of the industry and corn farmers as a source of answers for the nation from food to feed to fuel. PAC will play a key role in this effort to assure the message is heard.

## Congressman Foster Visits Patriot

As Dennis Hastert retired in early 2008, a special election was held in the 14th District between Jim Oberweis and Bill Foster with Foster being the victor.

Again, Foster won the scheduled election in November.

And as a freshman Congressman new to the ethanol industry, the

Illinois Corn Growers Association sought some time with Foster and scheduled a tour of Patriot Renewable Energy in Annawan, IL.

Prior to representing the 14th District, Foster was employed with Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory as a researcher and

thus, the ethanol plant and the processes occurring there held special interest for him. He was led through the loading facilities, the fermentation area, and even got an up close look at the profitable by-product of ethanol production, dried distillers grains.

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# Political Action Committee 101



Sending your PAC donation on a personal check ensures that we can get the maximum benefit from your donation.

Political Action Committees (PACs) are highly regulated and have a variety of rules that they must abide by. For ICGA's PAC, the federal guidelines are the ones we most concern ourselves with. State guidelines vary by state and Illinois has a more open structure regarding how state PAC monies are solicited, collected, and distributed.

Federal PACs are restricted on the sort of monies that they accept. Only personal checks,

personal money orders, or personal credit cards may be used to make a Federal PAC donation.

Additionally, donations to the Federal PAC are not tax deductible.

During our yearly PAC solicitations, ICGA tries to clearly state that personal checks must be used if you plan to donate to the PAC. However, occasionally some company/farm checks are sent in as an oversight by the donor.

Because our Illinois guidelines are more relaxed, we are able to accept company checks or credit cards and we place those PAC donations into our State PAC account.

If you do decide to donate to the ICGA PAC, please always consider using a personal check. With the Federal guidelines being more strict, Federal PAC dollars are hard to come by and we always appreciate those personal check or credit card contributions.

## Changes on the Federal Horizon

The November elections are going to mean a significant change to the Illinois Congressional Delegation. Perhaps the largest change will be the hole left by President-elect Barack Obama as he heads to the White House and taking with him several Illinois politicians.

Several names have been thrown around for his replacement, such as Rep. Jesse Jack-

son, Jr, Rep. Janice Schakowsky, and even retiring Illinois Senate President Emil Jones. But while we don't have any idea who Gov. Blagojevich will actually nominate for this position, we do know that Senator Durbin hopes for a fellow Senator that will continue to help carry the best interests of Illinois into the Senate Chamber. As Majority

Leader, Senator Durbin must not only advocate for Illinois but for the interest of the party as a whole.

Obama's road to the White House has also caused a ripple effect throughout Illinois as he gathers up his trusted friends to serve in various capacities in Washington. Right now, the primary vacancy is in the 5th District with Rahm Emanuel's appointment as Chief of Staff for President-Elect Obama. Emanuel's seat will be filled by special election within 115 days of his resignation which has not yet been received.

Other key elections were held in the 11th and 18th Congressional Districts as Rep. Jerry Weller and Rep. Ray LaHood retire. Winning in the 11th District is former Illinois State Senator Debbie Halvorson, a democrat from Crete, IL who was also

Newly elected Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson (center) poses with Jim and Pam Robbins at their home in Peotone. ICGA looks forward to working with Halvorson in the coming 111th Congress.



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# Foster Visits Patriot Renewable Energy (cont.)



**Congressman Bill Foster, replacing Denny Hastert in the 14th Congressional District, visited Patriot Renewable Energy to learn more about the ethanol industry and the impact on his district.**

But visiting the ethanol plant as a Congressman and not a researcher meant that he also asked a lot of questions about the jobs created at the plant, the affect of higher natural gas costs on their bottom line,

and exactly how many bushels of corn the plant plans to utilize, assisting Foster's producer constituents in the process.

President and CEO of the plant, Gene Griffith, addressed the Con-

gressman and others that had come for the tour, indicating that Patriot is the largest "grass roots" project ever developed in the north western part of the state.

Because of the timing of the event, Foster was also concerned about Patriot's access to capitol for the project and whether or not similar projects will have the same access to lending opportunities given our nations current lending crisis. Griffith agreed that these sorts of projects will face many more hardships in the years to come.

*"The ascension of Cullerton to the top Senate post is seen as an opportunity by Democrats ... to more easily move legislation."*

## Four Tops May Offer New Harmony

The election of new Democratic and Republican leadership in the Illinois Senate, half of whom make up "the Four Tops," provide a new potential for unlocking the stalemate in the Illinois State Capitol among the Senate, House, and Governor. The retirement and early resignation of former Senate President Emil Jones, Jr., has allowed Sen. John Cullerton, Chicago, to become head of the Democratic caucus, tantamount to his expected election as President of the Senate. And unlike traditions in the past when unsuccessful leadership candidates were relegated to lowly positions, Cullerton has indicated that his chief opponent Sen. James Clayborne, East St. Louis, will become the Senate Majority Leader. Clayborne fills the post vacated by Sen. Debbie Halvorson, who has recently been elected to Congress and will not return to the Illinois Senate.

At the same time the Democrats were reorganizing, the Republicans

were on a parallel path, which observers estimated had not occurred for several decades. The GOP minority in the Senate will be lead by Sen. Christine Radogno. Sen. Radogno's candidacy was supported by Sen. Frank Watson, who lead the Senate Republicans for 6 years, but was felled by a stroke just prior to the election. He relinquished his leadership position, but has retained his Senate seat.

Since the Democrats have a veto-proof majority in the Senate, the GOP remains the "loyal opposition," but Sen. Radogno will take on her new role when the House and Senate leaders—the Four Tops—discuss operational and policy issues or meet with the governor.

The greatest potential for change in the political stalemate lies with Sen. Cullerton. He is politically closer to House Speaker Madigan and farther from the governor than his predecessor Sen. Emil Jones, Jr. The ascension of Cullerton to the top

Senate post is seen as an opportunity by Democrats to utilize dynamite to unclog a logjam in the Illinois legislative river, and more easily move legislation through the House and Senate, which had frequently been held up by Sen. President Jones.

Cullerton says his agenda has capital improvement legislation and education funding at the top.

Democrats and Republicans in the Illinois House re-elected their caucus leaders, Democrat Mike Madigan, Chicago, and Republican Tom Cross, Oswego.



**Senator Frank Watson and IL Corn leader Greg Guenther talked about ethanol issues at the E85 Mustang Challenge in October.**

## Illinois Corn Growers Association

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## Changes (cont.)

the first woman elected as Majority Leader in the Illinois State Senate.

Also beginning his service in the US House of Representatives is Aaron Schock of Peoria, Illinois. Schock has spent the last several years in the Illinois State House of Representatives.

ICGA will begin this winter educating the newest additions to the Illinois Congressional Delegation as well as encouraging veteran Congressmen to bring the freshmen up to speed on key agricultural issues such as ethanol, rising input costs and the need for lock improvement appropriations.



**Garry Niemeyer, NCGA; Mark Degler, ICGA, Congressman John Shimkus, 19th District; & Andy Goleman, ICGA**

## DONATE

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