

The hazards of too much power and testosterone

Hopefully by the time this column appears, the legislative leaders in Springfield will have come to some agreement about the state budget and it is passed by the legislature. The games being played in our state capitol by the leaders of both parties, but especially the Democrats, are a result of men being in positions of power for too long and men being men. It's time the state Democratic Party elected a new chairman and the Democratic majority in the House elects a new Speaker. The problem is, Speaker Mike Madigan has convinced his party members that if he is not elected for the rest of his life, their favors, jobs, appointments and any legislative goals will disappear. And of course, if he is elected and one has voted against him, that's exactly what happens.

Madigan's counterpart, Senate President Emil Jones, is another guy who ought to be replaced. I don't care how effective these men have been, it was never the intention of the founding fathers that our legislators or congressmen be in office for life, in fact, the assumption was exactly the opposite — hence, terms of office. At least the Democratic leadership has made some effort to include Republican legislators in the budget discussions and now that the official time for adopting the budget has passed, it cannot pass without Republican approval. The Republican majority always got out of session nice and early because about five guys made all the decisions and no one else in the legislature had an opportunity to see the budget or provide input. The Republican minority has no room for complaint.

Governor Blagojavich never should have promised not to raise taxes, although if he had, he never would have won. Any candidate who says taxes have to be raised will not win an election. Governor Richard Ogilvie, a Republican and probably one of the state's best Governors, lost his re-election bid because he backed the state income tax. He was being realistic, of course, but the voters just hate that. Voters say they want politicians to be honest with them, but they prefer to elect people who are not.

The ego clashes between the top Democratic leaders, Jones, Madigan and Blagojavich, convince me that we ought to be electing more women to the legislature. We have a pretty crummy record of electing women to public office in this state. I believe there is one women legislator from "downstate," (outside Chicago) and the others are all from the Chicago area. That doesn't say much for voters in rural Illinois. In fact, it doesn't say much for democracy in this state, since over 50 percent of our population is women.

Women candidates, legislators and



members of congress are finally figuring out they have much more to offer with their female perspective and approach than if they try to act like men. As Dr. Phil would ask, "How's that working for you?" Not well. Men have made an awful mess of this world and their performance isn't impressive in the state legislature.

One final note: the media keeps telling us poll numbers show the popularity of Congress to be lower than the president. That might have something to do with citizens having very low expectations of President Bush and much higher expectations for Congress. Citizens need to be reminded that our federal government was intentionally organized providing the sharing of power of legislative and executive branches with great numbers of representatives, so decisions and action do not come quickly or easily.

Are we dissatisfied with our representatives on the state and national level? Now is the time to file for office. Next February will be the national party primaries when party members select candidates for local, state and federal offices for the general election next fall. Next March, citizens can file for office as independents, and legislation has been passed reducing petition requirements for independent candidates for the state legislature. Democracy will not work without citizens being informed and participating.

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