

**IN MY OPINION****Caroline Porter****Suggested prerequisite for journalists: a run for political office**

One of my advantages as a journalist is experience in politics - working for a party, being a candidate and serving in elected office. Sure, I'm unabashedly a Democrat, but I'm honest about it and would like to think I have some objectivity when it comes to the performances of elected officials, regardless of party affiliation.

Political journalists have the luxury of never being responsible for public policy, of never needing to garner financial and personal support in a political campaign, of not having to roam the countryside trying to reach voters, of not having their reputation impugned by the opposition, of not sacrificing time, energy, money and self esteem during a long campaign. Few, if any, journalists would survive the rugged schedule, pressure and personal sacrifices of a candidate in a political campaign.

Never has exaggerated journalistic cynicism been so obvious as during the onset of the current Democratic administration in Illinois. I know that reporters and journalists are the watch dog of our Democracy, but let's not get ridiculous. The recent columns of Doug Fincke, and Rich Miller of Capitol FAX, about Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich have been so vituperative it sounds like, as we say in the hinterlands, the writers have corn cobs up their butts.

Blagojevich supposedly didn't communicate with the press often enough while he was trying to organize an entire new administration, review and subsequently fire all the cushy appointments Governor Ryan made at the last minute, and trying to figure out how to get the State out of a record \$5 billion dollar deficit. The press has been in a twit about the gov being away from Springfield so much, especially after he presented his budget to the legislature. I guess we're to assume he was supposed to be holding the hands of the legislators while they did the job they were elected to do.

Never mind the governor has a new baby. And there are human beings outside of Springfield who would like to hear and speak with the governor, and they are top priority, not the press. Then there is the constant flap about the "Chicago influence" in State government. About half

the state's population lives in Cook County but that doesn't make it part of the "axis of evil." Those of us who have been in the minority party downstate for decades are damn glad the Chicago and downstate Democrats are in control for a change, as we've been ignored for years under the long, mostly corrupt, fiscally irresponsible leadership of Republicans in Springfield. At times it appears some of the Springfield press have been kissing the behinds of the Republican leadership for so long they've been brainwashed.

Constant criticism and cynicism is easy, but destructive and irresponsible. We have a right to occasionally hear about the good and positive actions of the legislature and state administration. Contrary to what some believe, being constantly critical doesn't make a person look smart. It usually indicates a lack of knowledge and thought.

I'm not used to praising our State Representative Donald Moffitt, (R-Gilson), but what a truthful statement he made to John Pulliam of the Galesburg Register-Mail. Pulliam wrote, "While Moffitt noted that receiving only a few minutes to review a multi-billion dollar budget is not a good practice, he said this was the same way things were done under Republican governors." How refreshing is that? Moffitt has also earned the reputation for working with members of both parties on issues of concern.

This is in contrast to our newly elected State Senator, Dale Risinger, (R-Peoria) who, while serving his first year in the legislature, sure talks too much and puts on a great show of shock at the budget procedure. He's been in state government for years and knows the ropes — this process is no surprise to him.

So, my fellow journalists, we are responsible for reporting and commenting on state government so something close to the truth is known, the good as well as the bad.

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