



Farmers & Merchants
State Bank of Bushnell

Member
FDIC

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By Thy Rivers Gently Flowing, Illinois, Illinois

By Michael G. Steelman

When I was in grade school, we would start our day with the Pledge of Allegiance. Next, we would sing “America the Beautiful.” Finally, we would sing “Illinois.” Do you remember it?

By thy rivers gently flowing, Illinois, Illinois,
o’er thy prairies verdant growing, Illinois, Illinois . . .

The second verse of “Illinois” says in part,

“. . . Straight thy way and never varies, Illinois, Illinois,
till upon the inland sea,
stands thy great commercial tree,
turning all the world to thee, Illinois, Illinois,
turning all the world to thee, Illinois.

When we sang that Illinois song, my heart would swell and I was proud to live in Illinois on those prairies of our state song.

These many years later, I have lost my pride in Illinois, and that young, swelling heart is now broken.

Illinois has great people, fertile ground, a spectrum of industry, cities and schools. Nevertheless, our state is broken.

For decades, the people we have elected to represent us have voted to spend more money than we have. They have pushed fiscal responsibility into the future by borrowing massive amounts of money that our children and our children’s children will have to someday pay.

The Illinois Constitution states that “The Governor shall prepare and submit to the General Assembly . . . A state budget for the ensuing fiscal year. The budget shall set forth the estimated balance of funds available for appropriation at the beginning of the fiscal year, the estimated receipts, and a plan for expenditures and obligations during the fiscal year . . .” The Constitution also states that “The General Assembly, by law, shall make appropriations for all expenditures of public funds by the state. **Appropriations for a fiscal year shall not exceed funds estimated by the General Assembly to be available during that year.**”

For years now, our elected representatives have simply ignored the requirements of our Illinois Constitution.

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Rivers . . .

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At this writing, according to the Institute of Government Public Affairs at the University of Illinois,* our state has a \$9 billion annual deficit, that will grow to \$14 billion by fiscal year 2026. Further, our state has \$159 billion in IOUs.

I cannot blame any one governor, representative, or state senator for the tragic state of Illinois finances. The time for blame and recrimination is long past.

It is time for our elected officials to put party politics aside and do their job according to our Illinois Constitution and save the future of our state.

We all have our personal vested interests, be it school funding, local funding, pensions, and help for those who need it most.

Fixing Illinois' current sad state of financial affairs will take sacrifice by all of us.

We will likely have to pay higher taxes. Nobody wants to hear that, but that is a fact. According to the University of Illinois report, bringing back the 2011 tax increase would only close about one half of the budget gap projected for the next several years.

Similarly, the problem can't be solved with spending cuts alone, because Illinois cannot cut debt service or pension payments, and it would take at least a 20% cut of all remaining spending to eliminate the deficit. This includes education, corrections, Medicaid, public safety, transportation, and more.

Economic growth, according to their report, is also not a cure-all. An increase in the growth rate of personal

income by an extra 1/2 of 1% every year for 10 years, would only have a modest effect on the deficit. We will have to find ways to keep and attract business.

The Illinois report concludes:

“. . . Being saddled with paying past years' bills means that today, Illinois must reduce their expectations for the services that they can expect from government, and be prepared to pay more for government, now and in the future.”

What is the alternative? Illinois is not paying its bills now. Judges have had to order payments in certain circumstances, and Illinois continues to borrow money that it cannot afford.

Since a state cannot take bankruptcy, will a federal judge eventually order a Receiver to run the State of Illinois?

Is that what we want for the future of Illinois?

People I talk to about the Illinois fiscal crisis are numb. They are fearful. They are tired of politics and the lack of common sense.

Until our elected representatives, and all of us, take off the mantle of politics and self interest, the problem won't be solved. But the problem CAN be solved. All of us must sacrifice, all of us must work hard to help each other.

I hope someday that we will again be proud, with swelling hearts, when we hear the words “By thy rivers gently flowing, Illinois, Illinois.”

***“Fiscal Futures Project IGPA
University of Illinois.”**

Friends in Motion

Some anniversaries recently celebrated include:



Jim and **Barb Spiker** (20 years), of Edwards, Colorado.

Happy anniversary Jim and Barb!

Recent birthday celebrations include: **Margaret White** (80) of Avon, **Swede Borg** (73) of London Mills, **Deb Hobbs** (72) of Good Hope, **Kay McCance** (76) of Smithfield, **Sara Hudson** (88), **Carolyn (Deedee) Pensinger** (80),

Karen Thompson (71), **Harris Lafary**, and **Lyndall**



Pigg, all of Bushnell.

Happy birthday to all!



UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

May 7 & Jun. 4 - VFW breakfast, 7 to 10 am

Jun 3 - Free blood pressure, pulse/oxygen, cholesterol and blood sugar checks at F&M Main Bank Lobby, 9 to 10 am



June 19th

Ground Beef Dishes

BACON CHEESEBURGER ROLL-UPS

Peggy Weiss

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 6 bacon strips, diced
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 pkg. (8 oz.) cubed Velveeta
- 1 (16.3 oz.) large refrigerated buttermilk biscuits
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup yellow mustard



In a large skillet, cook the beef, bacon and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add cheese; cook and stir until melted. Remove from heat.

Flatten each biscuit into a 5-in. circle; spoon 1/3 cup beef mixture into each biscuit. Fold sides and ends over filling and roll up. Place seam side down on a greased baking sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 18-20 minutes or until golden brown. In a small bowl, combine ketchup and mustard; serve with roll-ups. Yield: 8 servings.

TACO SALAD

Lou Reno

- 1 lb. hamburger
- 1 small pkg. taco seasoning mix
- 1 can red beans; drained
- 1 small onion
- 1 head lettuce
- 2 cups shredded cheese
- 3 tomatoes; seeded
- 1 large bag taco chips
- 1 bottle Western dressing

Brown hamburger; drain. Add taco mix. Drain beans. Tear lettuce into bite sized pieces and chop tomatoes and on-



ions. Toss ingredients above together, refrigerate. Before serving add cheese, dressing and chips; toss.

BAKED SPAGHETTI

Kathy Lynn

- 8 oz. uncooked angel hair pasta
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- 1 1/2 lbs. ground beef
- 1 1/2 tsp. seasoned salt
- 1 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 2 cups tomato sauce
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups canned diced tomatoes
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/2 cup diced green bell pepper
- 1/2 cup diced onion
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1 cup Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 small bay leaves

In a stock pot, combine tomatoes, tomatoe sauce, water, onions, peppers, garlic, parsley, seasoning mixtures, sugar and bay leaves. Bring to a boil



over high heat, and then reduce to simmer, covered for 1 hour. Crumble the ground beef in a large skillet. Cook over medium-high heat until fully cooked. Drain, and then add beef to the stockpot. Simmer for additional 20 minutes. Cook the pasta according to package directions. Cover bottom of 13x9 inch pan with sauce. Add a layer of pasta and then a little less than half of each cheese; repeat the layers, ending with sauce. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Top with remaining cheese, and return to oven and cook until cheese is melted and bubbly. About 5 minutes. Cut into squares before serving.