



# The MIG Journal

The daily newspaper of Model Illinois Government

Thursday, March 3, 2005

## Blake Whitson resigns as attorney general after censure

*Heather Shaffer*  
*Editor in chief*

After being reelected during last year's Model Illinois Government simulation, former Attorney General Blake Whitson resigned from the executive board in July 2004. His resignation came three months after the executive board passed a censure condemning Whitson's behavior at the last MIG simulation and after the board attempted to remove him.

Whitson said he resigned from the executive board because, "based on the personal relationships and feelings on the board after the attempted removal and censure, I felt that it was in my best interest and in the best interest of MIG for me to resign rather than let personal conflicts divide the board and be detrimental to MIG as a whole."

The executive board went into executive session during the April 18, 2004 meeting to discuss RES 2005-4, the censure of Blake Whitson.

According to Governor Dan Kovats, the censure was brought against Whitson mostly because of the prostitution advertisement that ran in the last issue of the MIG Journal during the 2004 simulation.

The advertisement pictured several delegates dressed as pros-

titutes, asking for the support of the Original Legislation calling for the legalization and regulation of prostitution.

The board felt that the advertisement was inappropriate for the newspaper because the MIG Journal is a lasting document of the organization, according to Jason Stuebe, president of the senate.

The censure passed with



10 "ayes" with Whitson abstaining from the vote.

Regarding the censure against him, Whitson stated, "I agree with the censure, because unfortunately it was my responsibility to oversee the paper."

He added, "But in my defense, the paper was ready to print when I was dealing with e-board issues in executive session, and the final MIG Journal was shown to Keith Sias in my absence and with no objections from him, the journal was sent to print."

Directly following the ap-

proval of the censure, Chief Justice Andrew Kapral made a motion to remove Whitson from office.

"The reason I brought the motion for removal was that in dealing with Blake in the past year, and then with his conduct at the meeting, I felt I could no longer trust Whitson and that I could no longer work with him," Kapral said.

According to the April 18, 2004 minutes, Kovats asked each of the members to vote and give a reason to support their vote. Kovats voted "aye" but gave no reason for his vote. He later said that he did not give a reason for his vote because he and Whitson had personal problems that he did not want to talk about at the meeting and was going to talk about later with Whitson personally.

Treasurer Jessi McCorkle voted "aye" and according to the minutes, stated that Whitson had been given a second chance and his chances had run out.

When later asked about her comments, McCorkle said that she does not remember saying that comment and wanted to be clear that her decision to remove Whitson was not personal.

"I like Blake and have no personal problems with him, but at the time

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MIG Governor Dan Kovats welcomes delegates to the simulation (page 5).

Discover the history behind Model Illinois Government (page 7).



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## Senate to consider governor's moratorium on death penalty

*Heather Shaffer*  
*Editor in chief*

Governor Dan Kovats issued on April 18, 2004, a moratorium on the execution of all prisoners sentenced to death in the state of Illinois. President of the Senate Jason Stuebe announced Feb. 25, 2005, that the Senate would consider the governor's moratorium.

Executive Order 2004-2005.1 bans the death penalty until further review of the system can gather enough information to make a formal decision to keep the system, revamp the system or end it all together.

Kovats said he created the executive order because every year a bill to abolish the death penalty is always brought before the House of Representative or the Senate. In order to add more to the debate, Kovats said he came up with the wording and created the executive order.

Stuebe, a conservative democrat, believes that enough time has been granted to review the system, which many groups consider unconstitutional under the provisions protecting individuals from cruel and unusual punishment.

In a written statement, Stuebe said, "This governor needs to learn that there are three branches of the government that should be working together. It's another example of the high and mighty executive wielding his constitutional authority before analyzing his intellectual

capacity."

According to Stuebe, the executive order will be placed on the docket of the Senate Government, Labor and Commerce Committee, which is co-chaired by Senators Carrie Bauer and Jason Kennedy.

The committee will consider the question "Should the governor's order stand?". If the committee decides that the executive order should not stand, it will then be sent to the Senate for consideration.

Stuebe said that the Senate will probably run as a committee of whole in considering the executive order while the Senate stands in recess.

"We want to do that so there is more of a freedom of questioning. The Governor will be there and I'm hoping some lobbyists will be there and this will be our chance to ask questions of them on the floor," he said.

Kovats said, "What Stuebe is doing is going to be interesting and I am looking forward to it."

The executive order also establishes the Governor's Commission on Capital Punishment, which will study and review the administration of capital punishment in Illinois and examine ways of providing safeguards and making improvements in the way law enforcement and the criminal justice system carries out their respon-

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**Whitson's resignation**

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with the feeling of the other members of the board, I felt that keeping Blake would only cause inner conflict on the board so removing him was the best choice," she said.

Secretary of State Scott McFarland voted "nay," stating that he felt Whitson had learned from his mistakes.

Speaker of the House Augie Campos voted against Whitson's removal for the same reason. Lieutenant Governor Dan O'Donnell voted in favor of Whitson's removal because Whitson failed to fulfill his duties and there-

fore should be removed.

Comptroller Brianna Hudkins, President of the Senate Jason Stuebe and Faculty Advisor John Vinzant also voted in favor of the removal.

Faculty Advisor Joan Eastland voted "nay" because "Blake had apologized numerous times and had been censured and that was enough. Furthermore, he was an elected official and needed to be impeached and not removed."

The vote ended in seven "ayes," three "nays" and one abstention. The motion failed because of a failure to obtain the two-thirds majority needed for the motion to

pass.

Whitson announced his resignation by letter on July 18, 2004. According to Kovats, Whitson's official reasons for his resignation were not made public. "Blake asked me not to say anything and I would like to respect his wishes," Kovats said.

Kovats accepted applications for attorney general and he said that many qualified applicants applied. He appointed Mike Runestad as attorney general for the simulation because of Runestad's experience in journalism and involvement in national parliamentary organizations.

**Governor's moratorium**

(continued from page 2)

sibilities in the death row process.

According to Kovats, the commission will help go through all the pending death row cases to make sure all possible leads have been exhausted, no information has been left out, and no law enforcement officers beat a confession out of the accused.

Only a simple majority of the Senate is needed to overturn the governor's executive order. Since it is an executive order, it only has to be overturned by the Senate and does not have to be sent to the House, Stuebe said.

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*Mike Runestad*

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The Editorial Board membership consists of the four main content-related positions and one representative elected by the journalists. A majority vote of the board determines the opinions that appear under "Our Views."

**Letters to the Editor**

Letters up to 250 words in length must be submitted by 7 p.m. each night. In the event more letters are submitted than space available, a representative sample will be published. Letters may be edited for space, grammar, and libel.

**Elections: Let's be civil**

In accordance with the principles of decency, honesty and fair play, and in light of the current election season, we at *The Journal* issue the following recommendations to all of those involved in the runs for office:

Journalists who, professionally, are to avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived, should refrain from wearing any campaign materials or personally endorsing any candidate. All *Journal* endorsements will come from the editorial board.

Similarly, executive staffers should refrain from campaigning for any candidate while on the job, as such action is prohibited in the State of Illinois. Advisors and executive board members not running for re-election should heed these regulations, letting the candidates fight their own battles.

No one wants to hear who slept with whom (or what), what the illegal substance of choice is for a particular candidate or how a candidate's mother is in bed. This is not Jerry Springer, so for God's sake, refrain from personal attacks. While there is no legal mechanism through which negative campaigning is prevented, it is at the epicenter of professional and ethical statesmanship. Keep the races about what your constituency wants to hear: the issues.

For those voting, vote on the issues. Don't vote on who has the best giveaways, who has the coolest campaign materials on their beers or who throws the biggest parties. You are models of good citizens, actively involved in the governmental process. Vote as you would one day want your constituents to vote.

**Moratorium: Good idea, but poorly executed**

On Jan. 15, Gov. Dan Kovats issues his first executive order, placing a moratorium on the death penalty in Illinois and forming a commission to review and make recommendations regarding the administration of capital punishment in Illinois.

Then, Senate President Jason Stuebe announced his plans to take to question in the Senate the Governor's moratorium. While Stuebe admits that the Governor has the constitutional authority to issue the moratorium, he argues that the power should not be placed unilaterally in the hands of the executive while neglecting the other two branches of government.

Stuebe plans to put the moratorium on the docket for the Senate Government, Labor and Com-

merce Committee, questioning whether the order should stand.

Acknowledging Stuebe's concern regarding too much power residing in the hands of one individual, it was a positive move to take the issue up in committee; however, the moratorium should stand.

A slight majority of people nationwide agree that a moratorium should be put in place to mend a broken system, where, in Illinois, approximately one in 21 convictions have been overturned.

Critics of Gov. Kovats would argue that he has lost touch with the sentiments of the Illinois citizenry and is issuing the order without any regards for the desires of the constituents he serves.

This argument is wholly without merit. In a system where numer-

ous convictions have been overturned in recent years, through the commission he established, it is the most basic wishes of the citizens that Kovats is trying to uphold: assuring that those who are falsely convicted are not put to death.

However, for those who do believe that Kovats is, as Stuebe says, "a high and mighty executive," it is Stuebe's initiative that will ultimately offer Kovats the most legitimacy in his executive action. By bringing the matter to the Senate, the sentiments of the citizens will be affirmed through their representatives by showing that the people of Illinois are, in fact, in favor of reforming a broken system.

Letter to the editor:

## Governor's Welcome to MIG

As Governor, I have been impressed by the hard work and dedication that everyone has shown these past 12 months in preparing for today. All of you, Executive Board members, staffers, legislators, BOB members, justices and lawyers, lobbyists, journalists and faculty advisors, are the backbone of this organization. I am pleased to welcome everyone to the 2005 simulation.

This year, I think you will be pleased with the changes we have made, changes designed to make this year more memorable and enjoyable for everyone. The addition of the overtime legislative session, the return of the Friday night floor session, an expanded *MIG Journal*, a renewed commitment to FYDOP and a new sense of family and teamwork will be the hallmarks of this year's simulation. Working together, we will make MIG 2005 one for the ages.

As we gear up for Opening Ceremonies and the next three days, take a moment to talk to one another and meet new people. All of us come from different schools, different backgrounds and have different ideas. MIG is more than a chance to play senator or BOB analyst; it is an educational opportunity. Use these three days as an opportunity to expand your horizons, learn from each other and have some fun.

Once again, welcome to MIG 2005!

Yours in Service,

Daniel W. Kovats  
Governor

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## Governor removes Bureau of the Budget director Percibal Mora

*Melissa Spurgeon*  
*Ad. Manager*

Bureau of the Budget Director Percibal Mora was removed from office due to failure to complete duties and failure to communicate properly with the rest of the executive board this past winter.

At the November meeting, a line item was added to the agenda "Bureau of the Budget." In this discussion, according to the minutes, Secretary of State Scott McFarland stated that nothing thus far had been turned in according to the time line resolution passed in the April meeting.

According to this resolution, the BOB director was to have the BOB budget and AOR sheets approved and to the printer, his part of the prep kit completed, and the appointment of committee chairs completed by the November meeting. Mora failed to comply with this timeline.

McCorkle said that she tried to help Mora many times but he refused her help on every occasion. Lt. Governor Dan O'Donnell said he would not want to remove Mora at such a late date because he feared that the new BOB director would not be able to catch up. McCorkle disagreed, stating that it would not be the first time that a BOB director had been replaced this late into the year.

At this time, Kovats assured the board that he would be contacting Mora and he would make the decision whether to fire Mora if needed.

The decision to remove BOB Director Mora was finally made between the November and January meetings. Kovats's decision was announced on the website before the January meeting. It was also announced on the website that he would be replacing Mora with Dennis Malak, from Eastern Illinois University. Malak was confirmed and sworn into office at the February Meeting of the

Whole.

Mora, from Daley College, was appointed by Governor Dan Kovats on April 18, 2004, with the advice of Jessi McCorkle, former BOB director and current treasurer.

According to the April 2004 minutes, Kovats stated that he thought Mora's ideas about MIG meshed with his own, and that Mora should be able to greatly improve his part of the simulation.



## 27 years of history with MIG

*Mallory Medved*

*Copy editor*

As delegates converge on Springfield for this year's Model Illinois Government simulation, they follow in the footsteps of over 20 years' worth of student legislators, lobbyists and journalists.

According to former Governor Kevin Whaley, Model Illinois Government was started in 1978 by the Consortium on the Teaching of State and Local Government (Evil supergroup of civics teachers hell-bent on world domination, or benign government entity interested in the preservation of Constitution tests? You decide.), which was a division of the Board of Higher Learning.

The first simulation happened in April 1979, and was attended by roughly 50 delegates from 13 schools. Original participating schools included University of Illinois – Champaign-Urbana, Sangamon State, Black Hawk College, Waubensee, Western Illinois University and Millikin University, among others.

Due to the number of delegates attending, the first simulation was simply a unicameral, or one-chambered, House session in which delegates in several committees debated one or two issues over two days.

According to former Governor Justin Sweigart, the Senate and the Office of the Governor were added in 1980. Originally, the Governor was a representative of the Consortium who would advise students on different aspects of

government. Eventually, the position was given to an elected student delegate. Lobbyists were added in the '80s as well.

Eventually, MIG split from the Consortium and oversight was handed over to Lincoln Land Community College in 1985. It was passed to UIS (formerly Sangamon State) in the early '90s.

Many additions have changed the face of MIG in the last 15 years or so. The Moot Court and the position of Chief Justice were added in 1992, followed by the Bureau of the Budget and position of BOB Director in 1998 in order to involve more students. The simulation was held in the Best Western across the street from the Capitol until 1996, when MIG lost its state funding and it was moved to its present location.

In the 27 years since its founding, many past and present Illinois lawmakers have participated in MIG. According to Whaley, former delegates include staff members from the offices of Secretary of State and State Comptroller, a state representative and several children of Illinois politicians.

In the last few years, MIG participation has declined slightly, owing to cuts in the state budget. Participation is still strong, however; nearly 300 students from 22 schools attended last year's simulation.

MIG has changed drastically since its inception nearly 30 years ago, from a larger simulation, to more delegations, to an expanded schedule to be more comparable to the actual Illinois government.

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## What you've missed: the executive board revealed

*Melissa Spurgeon*

*Ad. Manager*

This year's first Executive Board meeting began with talk from the Chief Justice about instituting a new Justice award and the Governor coining the phrase that MIG is, according to the minutes, becoming a "four day frat party." To close out the April meeting, Attorney General Blake Whitson was censured and his removal attempted.

There was no meeting for the month of May, so business was postponed until June. At this meeting, with four E-Board members absent, the board learned MIG would be getting no funding from the state this year.

Then in the month of July, the governor informed the board that he would be attending the U.S. Student Constitutional Convention in North Carolina and would be representing MIG. According to the minutes, he stated he would be bringing back new ideas for the organization.

The board was informed that the MIG Secretariat from UIS, Keith Sias, would not be returning to MIG and was resigning from the Secretariat and his other positions.

At this meeting, the board heard for the first time about a proposed overtime session President of the Senate Stuebe wanted to have on Friday night. Some delegates were concerned that it would be hard to get delegates to attend an overtime session, but President Stuebe stressed that attendance would be strictly enforced and

participants would work with the schedule, whatever it may be.

This meeting was also the meeting where the end of the rope was reached and Attorney General Whitson resigned.

At the August session, there was talk of not having a Friday night party because of overtime session and the new attorney general, Mike Runestad, was confirmed by a unanimous vote.

In between the September and October meetings, MIG lost two longtime members within a week of each other. Mike Bear, a former President of the Senate from Lincoln Land Community College, was killed in a car accident and

third year John Lefferts, also from LLCC, passed away suddenly.

The October meeting was the Organizational Assembly and a constitutional amendment was brought forth by Alfonso Santoyo to make it so MIG would no longer pay for E-Board rooms. After much arguing and debate, the amendment was shot down by a vote of two yeas, five nays and one abstention, failing to obtain a two-thirds majority.

November's meeting didn't produce anything of note. December's meeting saw the starting of talks of the E-Board's dissatisfaction with the work of the BOB director, Percibal Mora.

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