

# THE CENTERPIECE

A regular publication of the Center for State Policy & Leadership

University of Illinois Springfield

June 17, 2013

- Public attention to the recent IRS scandal over excess scrutiny of “conservative sounding” groups seeking the social welfare tax exemption under federal law is waning, suggests UIS political science professor **Michael G. Miller** in a posting on the popular political science blog, *The Monkey Cage*. Citing findings from a survey that Miller and colleague Conor Dowling conducted in 2012, Miller argues that most people don’t know enough about the campaign finance rules for the IRS controversy to be salient to them. The U.S. Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision in 2010 made it easier for politically oriented organizations to claim a social welfare purpose, gain tax exempt status, and not have to reveal their donors. To make these groups more accountable, the public needs to bring pressure to bear, but that probably won’t happen. “On the whole,” says Miller, “it seems unlikely that partisan-motivated IRS scrutiny of organizations seeking...tax exemption will give much momentum to reformers seeking to address electioneering among [social welfare] organizations.”
- **Dr. Ashley Kirzinger**, director of the **Survey Research Office**, was named a 2013 Burns “Bud” Roper Fellow by the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). The Roper Fellow award is given to individuals at the beginning of their careers in survey research and public opinion studies. Kirzinger received the award at AAPOR’s annual conference in Boston in late May, at which she also presented a paper, co-authored with colleagues at Louisiana State University, which examines how the recent inclusion of more cell-phone only respondents in two health surveys in Louisiana changed the estimates for uninsured rates in the state. Previous surveys, the study showed, used sampling procedures that underestimated the percentage of the population without insurance.
- The **Survey Research Office** recently completed the 2013 Sangamon County Citizens Survey. A collaborative project of the Center for State Policy and Leadership, the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln, and the United Way of Central Illinois, the biennial survey includes telephone interviews of over 500 county residents on a variety of locally relevant topics. Results of the survey will be presented on June 28th at the Citizens Club of Springfield Policy Breakfast, beginning at 8:00 am at the Hoogland Center for the Arts.
- **Illinois Issues’** cover story by Jeff Alexander for its July-August issue on the environment begins: “Standing on the Lake Michigan overlook at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, it’s evident why the northern Michigan park was voted ‘the Most

Beautiful Place in America’ in 2011. Towering sand dunes plunge into pristine beaches, which then melt into a seemingly endless expanse of water. But a few miles south, beaches along Platte Bay have been coated in recent summers by a green blanket of bacteria-laden algae. Foreign mussels that entered the Great Lakes in the 1980s in the ballast water tanks of transoceanic freighters now fuel algae blooms that plague numerous Great Lakes beaches. The dime-sized mollusks also contribute to outbreaks of Type E botulism that have killed nearly 100,000 water birds in the lakes over the past two decades. Those problems highlight a troubling but undeniable truth: After years of improvement, the Great Lakes are once again in serious trouble.”

- As the spring legislative session wound down, WUIS Statehouse Bureau Chief **Amanda Vinicky** reported on an overlooked issue in the debate over reforming state pensions. While lawmakers have focused on cutting benefits for teachers, university employees, state employees, and even themselves, they have refused so far to touch judges’ benefits. Many observers see the omission as unfair, even if it will be up to the judiciary to decide ultimately whether any pension deal is constitutional. “A teacher’s just as important as a judge,” Republican Representative Dan Brady of Bloomington told Vinicky. “I cannot believe that we’re not going to make some changes to over 2,039 judges across the state, over 1,059 who are retirees, and not ask them to ante up anything.”
- Speakers have been set for the **11th Annual Lincoln Legacy Lectures**, scheduled for November 19, 2013, the 150th anniversary of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: Dr. Martin P. Johnson, assistant professor of history at Miami University of Ohio and author of the forthcoming book *Writing the Gettysburg Address* (University Press of Kansas, 2013); and Dr. Joseph R. Fornieri, professor of political science at Rochester Institute of Technology and author of books on Lincoln, including the soon to be published *Lincoln, Philosopher Statesman* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2014). Dr. Michael Burlingame, Naomi B. Lynn Chair in Lincoln Studies at UIS, will give opening remarks and moderate. The Lincoln Legacy Lecture Series is presented annually by the Center for State Policy and Leadership in cooperation with the Lynn Chair.
- Friends and colleagues of **Jerry Burkhart** are invited to a reception to honor him upon his retirement as director of the Office of Electronic Media, June 25, from 3:00 to 6:00 pm in the Public Affairs Center Restaurant.

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