

Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner visits, assesses flood waters in Alton, Grafton on Friday morning

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Illinois Gov. **Bruce Rauner** joined several local officials on the Alton riverfront Friday morning, assessing flood waters and damages in the area.

Gov. Rauner was welcomed by Alton Mayor Brant Walker, Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold, Police Chief Jake Simmons, Public Works Director Bob Barnhart, Illinois Rep. Dan Beiser, U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis, Madison County Chairman Alan Dunstan and



several other local dignitaries.

The governor praised the City of Alton for building the large barrier to retain the water from the flood in such a short period of time. The wall has saved several businesses in downtown from extensive water damage. He plans to survey various locations in Southern Illinois today and visited Grafton before coming to Alton. James Joseph, director of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, also visited Alton.

"It is amazing the way the community of Alton has worked together to save Alton," Rauner said. "Alton Mayor Brant Walker and his staff did an amazing job. They built this incredible wall in just a day and a half with hundreds of volunteers. I wanted to come to town today to see the work and thank the volunteers and thank the first responders."

Walker said there wouldn't be a full estimate of damages until the water retreats to normal flood stage in a week or 10 days.

He added that the biggest businesses affected by the flooding was Argosy Casino, Ardent Mills and Morrison's Irish Pub downtown.

"To my knowledge now it just damage to the businesses," he said when asked what problems they are incurring.

Walker took the time to again salute Barnhart and his staff for a job well done with the barrier protecting the city.

"This wall is different with its construction," he said. "We went with a block style barrier with sandbags and support. Our public works director and his staff did a phenomenal job."

U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis said the recent flood shows another reason why the formula for disaster relief needs to change.

"Currently the formula is based on populations of our states and it unfairly penalizes states like Illinois and Missouri," Davis said. "When we have things like this that impacts downstate and the formula is based on an entire population of the state, you can't reach a threshold for the state to catch on and receive funding. The thresholds are too high. This has the potential to impact this relief."

Davis commended the first responders throughout his district and all the way up to the Illinois Department of Transportation employees and others in Illinois for their sincere work during this flood crisis.

Asked a side question about the state budget dilemma, Rauner said he hopes the month of January is a time when there is a major breakthrough with the deadlock in the state budget.

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