

Governor Rauner delivers message of Republican values at St. Louis Regional Airport

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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EAST ALTON - Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner visited the Riverbend for the second time in as many weeks Wednesday morning with a stop at St. Louis Regional Airport on the border of East Alton and Bethalto.

The trip was one of six across the southern half of Illinois and a dozen throughout the entire state. The trip was privately-funded by political supporters, Rauner said, and it was purposefully taken during the week the Illinois General Assembly is on vacation. During his short speech and subsequent press conference, the governor spoke about not only "Republican values" such as small government, personal liberties and the popular mantra of "God and country," but also spoke of bipartisan reforms he would like to see occur in the State of Illinois.

Rauner said the traditional Democrat control of Illinois has contributed to a decline of jobs being created and money generated by those jobs over the last three decades. He said Illinois has been "flat" on job growth for 17 years, and the population is migrating out of the state in droves. He said these facts were unfortunate, because he believes "Illinois has some of the best people in the best nation in the world."

Proposals to fix this perceived Democrat hold on Illinois by Rauner were rather bipartisan, however. Rauner called for proper redistricting in Illinois, saying the current gerrymandering has "rigged" Illinois elections. He said some states use gerrymandering to retain Republican grasps on power just as Illinois does for Democrats.

"Before leaving his position as president, Barrack Obama came and addressed the Illinois General Assembly about how states need redistricting," Rauner said. "I would say he should have highlighted Illinois specifically in that case. I think that is something both Democrats and Republicans can agree on."

Those elections are also "rigged," Rauner said by "career politicians who work more for the political machine than the people they represent." He said two thirds of elections for positions in the Illinois General Assembly were run unopposed. He said that was unfair.

"Whether a person's a Democrat or Republican, we need competition to ensure fair elections," he said.

To remedy that issue, Rauner proposed term limits as well as redistricting. He said too many elected officials in Illinois are career politicians and work for a partisan machine instead of the people whom they are elected to represent.

When asked about Sen. Bill Haine (D-Alton) who ran unopposed last election as well as the election before, Rauner did not address Sen. Haine directly, instead reiterating his earlier points.

"We have many people in office who support statutes like tax hikes, have blocked term limits and school funding initiatives," he said. "We need the people they represent to say, 'enough is enough.' Why can't we pass a property tax freeze, or redistricting reforms

or pension reforms? Leaders here in the Metro East are part of the majority, and they need to represent their districts, not the machine."



Property tax freezes were another aspect of Rauner's visit. He said the people of Illinois should have a right to vote on their property taxes instead of simply being told they owe an additional 10 percent (or some other arbitrary number). He said tax rate increases should be determined by a public ballot instead of government.

Illinois Working Together Campaign Director Jake Lewis released the following statement in anticipation of Gov. Bruce Rauner's campaign stop in East Alton:

"With the state in the midst of a fiscal emergency and Election Day more than 18 months away, it is downright shameful that Gov. Rauner would rather campaign for his re-election in Metro East than do his job. Rauner's refusal to compromise has hurt students, seniors, and the Illinois economy.

"The question Illinois residents should be asking is: why is Rauner campaigning for re-

election when he has failed to propose a balanced budget, his most basic responsibility as governor? Instead of campaigning in Metro East, the governor should drop the political games, propose a balanced budget, and do his job."

Rauner addressed Lewis's concern when asked about it by a St. Louis media outlet, stating he was in fact campaigning for a Republican majority in the state. He said taxpayers did not fund a cent of the trip, and he was working in the governor's office without a salary or pension - citing his own independent wealth.

"I am a volunteer for the people of Illinois," he said.

Rauner said he earned his money through intelligent investments, which he said saved taxpayers in Illinois money by providing for police and teacher pensions.

On the subject of schools, Rauner said he passed a record-setting \$750 million in school funding through the Illinois General Assembly. He said Democrats have cut school funding four times, and Illinois's school funding is currently some of the worst in the nation, despite being based on property taxes, which Rauner said are some of the highest in the nation.