

Thursday, January 17, 2008

A Third Rail on Transit - Part 2

Yesterday, I held forth on how the Chicago Tribune's bad, bad advice for more Republicans to vote for the RTA sales tax bill (656) would further decimate suburban Republicans in the legislature.

Today, I turn to the root cause of the problem:

DuPage County's rapacious county officials.

You know, the ones who never

have enough money and--in the worst way--do not want to have to ask their constituents for permission to raise their taxes.

It's as if this black cloud sweeping over Chicago has reversed course and headed due West.

The cloud of high taxes, heavier tax burdens.

In the State Senate, three DuPage County Republicans took a dive for DuPage County Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom and voted for the CTA/RTA bailout:

- Dan Cronin
- Kirk Dillard and
- John Millner

This fall, how will any of these suburban Republicans explain why railroad commuter fares soared, even though RTA sales taxes only increased 25% in Cook County, while tripling in DuPage County? (And, yes, I know the county folks are going to take half of the increase.)

Maybe the senators are not up for election.

In an article by Meg Dedolph, the Naperville Sun reports the blowback that Schillerstrom is getting from

- State Rep. Joe Dunn of Naperville,
- State Sen. Randy Hultgren of Wheaton and
- State Rep. Jim Meyer of Bolingbrook

And, Schillerstrom should be taking grief.

"All" he has to do is pass a February 5th referendum to impose a quarter cent county sales tax and the legislation would not be needed.

Winnebago County did it by referendum.

Why can't DuPage, if it is really needed and the "will of people?"

But local officials like Schillerstrom, of course, simply don't trust the will of his people?

Local officials always want state legislators to take the heat for raising local taxes.

My belief is that those who spend tax dollars should take the responsibility for raising them...or at least proposing raising them. If they can convince a majority of the electorate to approve a referendum, they should feel free to pass the blame.

Undoubtedly there will be consequences.

The obvious one will be to give a boost to Democrats in DuPage County.

Let me tell you a consequence that may be unintended, but one which could affect national politics.

After misreading the Senate roll call on SB 656, I wrote an [article](#) about how State Senator Debbie Halvorson's "Yes" vote could hurt her in her attempt to win Jerry Weller's congressional seat. I have apologized elsewhere for my mistake, but I do so again.

Nevertheless, the three DuPage County Republican state senators who cast "Yes" votes allowed Halvorson to skate. She is recorded as not voting.

Now, if her vote had been required and cast, the chain of logic I laid out in my article showing how Republicans could benefit would be in play.

If Halvorson wins the seat for the Democrats, fingers ought to be pointed at Schillerstrom and these three state senators for helping allow it to happen.

Of course, she still might be required to vote "Yes," if the DuPage County senators change their minds and vote "No" on the amendatory veto. One is the GOP county chairman and another is immediate past chairman. Too bad they haven't shown their concern for the GOP's future in their RTA votes.

But, they have another chance to help undo the damage they have inflicted on the Republican Party's anti-tax brand.

Schillerstrom is following in the footsteps of DuPage County Republicans in the 1980's. Then the biggest legislative goal of DuPage County officials

was to get their legislators to raise local taxes without a referendum.

They succeeded. Think DuPage County Airport's and Water Commission's, not to mention the school and park districts' borrowing without asking voters. I once had a study done by the Legislative Research Council that found about 90% of the outstanding debt in DuPage County resulted from non-referendum bonds.

No wonder there was a revolt.

DuPage County successful hiking of taxes without referendums led to Governor Jim Edgar's property tax cap proposal.

I guess we outside of DuPage County should thank its taxpayers for allowing us to have the protection that they did not have when they needed it.

posted by Cal Skinner :