

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Ron Michaelson

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Illinois Statecraft* Oral History project

Interview # IS-A-L-2011-047

Ron Michaelson, who was the Executive Director of the Illinois State Board of Elections for 27 years, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Oct 3, 2011      Location: Michaelson's office at U. of Illinois at Springfield

Date: Oct 10, 2011      Location: Michaelson's office at U. of Illinois at Springfield

Date: Oct 21, 2011      Location: Michaelson's office at U. of Illinois at Springfield

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Betty Workman & Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteers

Total Pages: 82      Total Time: 1:44 + 1:37 + 1:44 / 1.73 + 1.62 + 1.73 = 5.08 hrs

Session 1: Michaelson's early life, and his work at the IL State Board of Elections

Session 2: IL politics, 1978 thru 1988, from perspective of Board of Elections

Session 3: Michaelson's years at the Board of Elections, 1990 – 2003, & beyond

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on May 14th, 2012.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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# Abstract

Ron Michaelson, *Illinois Statecraft*, IS-A-L-2011-047

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Ron Michaelson was born on December 31st, 1941 in Chicago, and grew up in Park Ridge, Illinois. Shortly after his graduation from Wheaton College, he moved to Springfield, Illinois, where he worked for the Richard Ogilvie administration. Following that, he found work at the Illinois Board of Elections in 1974, and in March of 1976 he became the Director of the Illinois State Board of Elections. He remained in that position until his retirement in 2003.

During his long tenure in that position, the Board of Elections was involved with several of the most notable events of Illinois's modern political history. Election controversies during those years included the vote on the Cutback Amendment in 1980, the very close gubernatorial election of 1982 between incumbent Jim Thompson and challenger Adlai Stevenson III, which ended with a failed court challenge and Thompson's victory, and the unique gubernatorial election of 1986, when two Lyndon LaRouche statewide candidates were elected as democrats during the primary, leading to Democratic gubernatorial candidate Adlai Stevenson running under the new Solidarity Party. Michaelson discussed the operation of the Board of Election in detail. While the director, he oversaw many changes in Illinois election proceedings, including campaign finance reform, and changes resulting from the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (following the presidential election fiasco in Florida in 2000). He decided to retire in 2003 when, according to Michaelson, it became apparent that Governor Rod Blagojevich had little interest in governing, and was willing to tamper with the Board of Elections staff.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Illinois State Board of Elections; Cutback Amendment of 1980; cumulative voting; Illinois gubernatorial election of 1982; gubernatorial election of 1986; Adlai Stevenson III; Governor Jim Thompson; Illinois campaign finance reform; Governor Jim Edgar; Governor George Ryan; Governor Richard Ogilvie; Governor Rod Blagojevich; Barack Obama when Illinois senator; election reforms following 2000 presidential elections; Help America Vote Act of 2002; absentee voting; provisional voting;

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