

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with David Luechtefeld

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

Interview # ISL-A-L-2018-017

David Luechtefeld, a high school history teacher and winning basketball and baseball coach from Okawville before beginning a twenty-year career in the IL Senate, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft - Legislators Oral History* project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: April 6, 13, 20, 27, May 4 & 21, 2018

Location: Luechtefeld home in Okawville, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcript  
being processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time: 2:03 + 1:38 + 1:57 + 1:43 + 1:35 + 2:01 / 2.05 + 1.63 + 1.95 + 1.71 + 1.58 + 2.02 = 10.94 hrs.

Session 1: Growing up on a dairy farm near Okawville, Illinois

Session 2: Teaching and coaching career at Okawville High School

Session 3: Battling cancer and early Illinois Senate career

Session 4: The Jim Edgar, George Ryan and Rod Blagojevich administrations

Session 5: Blagojevich impeachment and memories of IL state Senator Obama

Session 6: The Governors Pat Quinn and Bruce Rauner administrations

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on August 28, 2018.

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

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## Abstract

Dave Luechtefeld, *Illinois Statecraft-Legislators*, ISL-A-L-2018-017

**Biographical Information/Overview of Interview:** David Luechtefeld was born on November 8, 1940 on a dairy farm near Okawville. He grew up on that farm with his two younger brothers, learning the values of hard work and responsibility from his parents. He attended a two-room school at St. Anthony Catholic Grade School in Lively Grove before attending Okawville High School, and due in part to his six-foot seven-inches height, he excelled at basketball and baseball. Following graduation in 1958, Luechtefeld attended St. Louis University on a basketball scholarship, majoring in pre-law and history. He also obtained a teaching certificate.

He graduated in 1962 and took a job at his former high school in Okawville as the head basketball coach. He soon was also teaching history and social studies, as well as coaching baseball. For the next thirty-three years he taught and coached, twenty-eight of those as head baseball coach, while he also served as athletic director. His 1970 basketball team had a seven-footer and two six-six players; the team went to the elite eight in an era when the state had only one class. That established the school's reputation as a basketball power, and he went on to take several teams to the state tournament, while tallying 738 career coaching victories.

Luechtefeld retired from teaching in 1993, after winning a couple of battles with cancer. (He coached basketball for five more years after that.) He then was petitioned by Senator Frank Watson to fill a soon to be vacant Senate seat in his district in 1995. He finally accepted, and soon faced his first political campaign in a swing district. At the time, that race was the most expensive in U.S. history as both parties pumped money into the campaign. He won by a narrow margin in 1996. Senator Luechtefeld went on to serve for twenty-one years, representing one of the largest Senate districts in the state. He developed a reputation as a solid fiscal conservative and became one of the Republican leaders in the Senate until his retirement in 2016.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Illinois state Senate; dairy farming in southern Illinois in the 1950s; Okawville, Illinois; Okawville High School basketball; Governor Rod Blagojevich; Senator Barack Obama; Senator Frank Watson; Governor Jim Edgar; Governor George Ryan; Governor Pat Quinn; fiscal policies in Illinois; Justice Lloyd Karmeier; Michael Madigan; James Pate Philip; Emil Jones; St. Louis University

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