

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Thomas Ewing

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

Interview # ISL-A-L-2018-056

Thomas (Tom) Ewing, an Illinois state legislator from 1974 to 1991 and a Congressman from 1991 thru 2000, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft – Legislators Oral History project*.

Interview location: Ewing home in Pontiac, Illinois

Session 1: Oct 10, 2018

Session 2 & 3: Oct 11, 2018

Session 4: Jul 9, 2019

Session 5: Jul 10, 2019

Session 6 & 7: Jul 23, 2019

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

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

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

Transcript  
being processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time: 2:39 + 2:30 + 2:02 + 2:38 + 2:22 + 1:27 + 1:04 /  
2.65(1) + 2.5(2) + 2.03(3) + 2.63(4) + 2.37(5) + 1.45(6) + 1.07(7) = 14.7 hrs.

Session 1: Early life and election to the IL House of Representatives in 1974

Session 2: Years in the Illinois House from 1975 through 1984

Session 3: Service in the Illinois House until 1991 and election to the U.S. House

Session 4: Service in the U.S. House during Bush 41 and thru 1995 and Republican majority

Session 5: Clinton impeachment thru retirement from the U.S. House in late 1990

Session 6: Retirement year activities and memories of 9-11

Session 7: Reflections on U.S. and Illinois politics since 2000

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on August 27,  
2019.

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

## Abstract

### Thomas Ewing, *Illinois Statecraft-Legislator*, ISL-A-L-2018-056

**Biographical Information/Overview of Interview:** Thomas W. (Tom) Ewing was born on September 19, 1935 in Lincoln, Illinois and grew up in nearby Atlanta, Illinois. His parents owned farmland, and both parents had extended families living in the area. Tom attended local public schools and graduated from Millikan University in 1957. He joined the U.S. Army Reserve in 1967, serving for six years. His early working career included the Illinois Farm Bureau, then he was associated with the Hobit Seed Company in Atlanta and then was the chief executive officer for the Pontiac, Illinois Chamber of Commerce. He attended the John Marshall School of Law at night and earned his J.D. degree in 1968. From 1968 through 1991 he maintained a thriving law practice in Pontiac, Illinois (Satter, Ewing and Bayer).

In 1974 Ewing decided to run for a seat in the Illinois House of Representatives as a Republican, and won. He served there until 1991 during both Governor Dan Walker's and Jim Thompson's administrations. He was present for a marathon IL House Speaker fight in 1975, survived the impact of the Cutback Amendment in 1982 (when the membership in the IL House was cut by one third), and continued to serve through the economic boom of the late 1980s. His roommate and close friend during many of these years was Dennis Hastert. He developed a reputation as a fiscal conservative and an advocate for the agricultural issues.

In 1991 Ewing decided to run for the open seat of Congressman Ed Madigan, whom George W. Bush had selected to become his Secretary of Agriculture. Ewing won a special election for Madigan's seat in Illinois's 15th district and moved to the U.S. House, once again rooming with Dennis Hastert, who was now in Congress. During his years in Congress Ewing was a reliable conservative vote, supporting Newt Gingrich's Contract in America, and continuing to support the Speaker following the Republican's sweep in the 1994 election. In subsequent years, Ewing helped Republicans reform the U.S. House, pass welfare reform and took great pride in the balanced budget achieved while he served in Congress. He also suffered through a government shutdown in December 1995-January 1996. During his years in Congress, Ewing continued his advocacy for agricultural issues, was a strong supporter of ethanol production and biomass research, was active in legislation dealing with commodities trading, and supported agricultural and technological research at the University of Illinois, which was in his district. He also voted for impeachment of President Bill Clinton in January 1999 and was a supporter of Dennis Hastert's candidacy for the Speaker of the House following Gingrich's departure in early 1999. By that time, Ewing was serving as a Deputy Whip in the U.S. House. He decided to retire from Congress following the 2000 election.

After his retirement Ewing remained active in agricultural and commodity related issues for many years. Among other activities, he served as chairman of Monsanto's National Grower Advisory Council for twelve years. He closed the interview with his reflections on both Illinois and U.S. politics since 2000.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Illinois House of Representatives; Dennis Hastert; Cutback Amendment; Gov. Dan Walker; Gov. Jim Thompson; Rep. Mike Madigan; U.S. House of Representatives; redistricting in Illinois; Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich; President George W. Bush; President Bill Clinton; welfare reform in the mid-1990s; ethanol production and biomass research; growing up in rural Illinois in 1940s; budget fights in mid-1990s; University of Illinois; Congressman Ed Madigan

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