

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robert W. “Bob” Kustra

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft – Jim Edgar Oral History project

Interview # ISG-A-L-2011-006

Bob Kustra, Governor Jim Edgar’s lieutenant governor (1991-1999), was interviewed on the dates listed below, as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library’s *Illinois Statecraft – Jim Edgar* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: January 28, 2011 Location: Phone interview between ALPL and Boise State University, Boise, ID

Date: February 1, 2011 Location: Phone interview between ALPL and Boise State University, Boise, ID

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mike Czaplicki, ALPL contract employee

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Mike Czaplicki, ALPL contract employee & Jan Culp, ALPL volunteer

Total Pages: 44 pgs Total Time: 1:07 + 1:03/ 1.12 + 1.05 hrs = 2.17 hrs

Session 1: Pre-Edgar professional career; 1990 gubernatorial campaign & 1994 decision to leave government

Session 2: Appointment as Edgar’s senior advisor on economic development; Illinois River conservation work; higher education reform

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on March 1, 2011.

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

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Abstract

Bob Kustra, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISG-A-L-2011-006

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Robert Walter Kustra was born to Walter and Loretto Kustra on March 21, 1943 in St. Louis, Missouri. After graduating from Laboure High School, Kustra attended Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas. Inspired in part by John F. Kennedy's call to public service, Kustra earned his B.A. in political science in 1965 and then enrolled in a master of public administration program at Southern Illinois University. As part of this program he interned as the assistant city manager for Carbondale during a time of student unrest. Following graduation in 1967, he worked as an administrative assistant to Illinois Speakers Ralph Smith and Jack Walker. When W. Robert Blair became Speaker in 1971, Blair replaced Walker's staff with his own, forcing Kustra out of the legislature. Kustra worked as a criminal justice planner for Champaign and Vermilion Counties and returned to academia, completing his Ph.D. in political science at the University of Illinois in 1975.

Kustra was elected to the Glenview Village Board in 1978, the same year he began work as head of U.S. Senator Charles Percy's Chicago office staff. In 1980, Kustra won election to the Illinois House, representing the 4th District. He soon won recognition as the "Best Freshman Representative" by the *Illinois Political Reporter*. In 1982, he was elected to the Illinois Senate from the 29th District and remained in the Senate until his election as lieutenant governor in 1990. Although he announced his decision to leave the Edgar administration and join WLS radio in 1994, Kustra agreed to stay on, following Edgar's heart surgery in early July. As lieutenant governor, he shaped several important initiatives, including Project Success, Illinois River conservation, and higher education reform, and served as Edgar's senior adviser on economic development during the second term. Defeated in the 1996 Republican primary for U.S. Senate, Kustra served as lieutenant governor until he became president of Eastern Kentucky University in July 1998. He later served on numerous higher education boards and became president of Boise State University in 2003.

Subject Headings/Key Words: 1990 gubernatorial campaign; abortion; W. Russell Arrington; Mike Belletire; W. Robert Blair; Carbondale, Illinois; Chicago education reform; Chicago machine politics; J. Douglas Donenfeld; Jim Edgar; ethnic politics; George Fleischli; Al Grosboll; heart surgery, Jim Edgar; Carter Hendren; Stanley Ikenberry; Illinois Board of Higher Education; Illinois River; John F. Kennedy; David Kenney; Kathy Kustra; Mike Lawrence; lieutenant governor, Illinois; Brent Manning; Todd Musburger; Charles Percy; James "Pate" Philip; Poles, Chicago; John E. Porter; Arthur Quern; Project Success; Al Salvi; Regine Schlesinger; Ralph T. Smith; super-cabinet, Edgar administration; teachers' unions; Jack E. Walker; WLS radio.

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