

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Dawn Clark Netsch

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

Interview # ISL-A-L-2010-013

Dawn Clark Netsch, an assistant in the Otto Kerner administration, IL Constitutional Convention delegate, longtime Illinois Senator, Comptroller and Democratic gubernatorial candidate in 1994, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft – Jim Edgar* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Mar 19, 2010 Location: Netsch's office at the Northwestern U. Law School

Date: Mar 20, 2010 Location: Netsch's residence in Chicago, IL

Date: Jul 29 & 30, Aug 27, Sep 17, Nov 30 2010, Mar 16, Mar 17, Mar 23 & Dec 7,  
2011 Location: Netsch's office at the Northwestern U. Law School

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Michael Czaplicki, Contract employee with ALPL & Rozanne Flatt, ALPL  
Volunteer

Total Pages: Volume I - 211 pgs Volume II – 204

Total Time: (1) 2:26 + (2) 1:51 + (3) 2:20 + (4) 2:00 + (5) 1:35 + (6) 1:24 + (7) 1:57 +  
(8) 1:43 + (9) 2:15 + (10) 1:03 + (11) 2:47 + (12) 1:30 / (1) 2.43 + (2) 1.85 + (3) 2.33 +  
(4) 2.0 + (5) 1.58 + (6) 1.4 + (7) 1.95 + (8) 1.72 + (9) 2.25 + (10) 1.05 + (11) 2.78 + (12)  
1.5 = 22.84 hrs

Volume I:

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Session 2: Work as an assistant with the Otto Kerner administration, 1961-1965

Session 3: Teaching career at Northwestern U. Law School and 1970 Con Con

Session 4: 1970 Illinois Constitutional Convention

Session 5: Netsch's 1972 and 1974 elections for service in the IL Senate

Session 6: Early experiences in the Illinois Senate

Volume II:

Session 7: Senator Netsch's involvement with the IL ERA fight; 1972 – 1982

Session 8: The 1980s – Politics & Legislative initiatives, esp. budget & finance

Session 9: Senator Netsch's run for and service as Illinois's comptroller, 1991-95

Session 10: The Gubernatorial election campaign of 1994

Session 11: The 1994 general election campaign for governor against Jim Edgar

Session 12: Life beyond the political arena, to 2011

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on Apr 11, 2012.

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

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## Abstract

### Dawn Clark Netsch, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISG-A-L-2010-013

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Dawn Clark was born on September 16th, 1926 in Cincinnati, Ohio, attending public schools throughout the depression and the Second World War. She attended Northwestern University from 1944 through 1948, then enrolled in the University's law school, where she graduated at the top of her class in 1952. After working on Adlai Stevenson's 1952 presidential campaign, she spent two years with a Washington, D.C. law firm before returning to Chicago, where she clerked for Judge Julius Hoffman. She again worked for Stevenson's presidential campaign in 1956, and also became active in the Committee on Illinois Government, a group of independent democrats seeking to carry on the spirit of Stevenson's legacy. After four years in a Chicago law firm, she served as an assistant to Governor Otto Kerner from 1961-1965.

In 1969 Netsch was elected as a delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention, and in 1972 was elected to her first term as Illinois state senator. She served in the Senate until 1991, quickly becoming one of its most prominent members. Among the many issues she championed were the Equal Rights Amendment (which never passed in Illinois), ethics reform, merit selection of judges, revenue and finance concerns, and a variety of gender related issues.

In 1990 she was elected as the state Comptroller, and served during a time of severe budget constraints in Illinois. She challenged Governor Jim Edgar for the governorship in 1994, advocating a raise in the state income tax with a near corresponding decrease in individual property taxes in order to restore fiscal health to the state's school system. She was soundly defeated in the general election. Following her defeat, Netsch returned to academia, still serving on the faculty of the Northwestern University Law School at the time of this interview, while staying involved in a variety of causes, and serving as one of Illinois's most respected elder statesmen. She passed away on March 5, 2013.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Northwestern University & University Law School; Judge Julius Hoffman; Adlai Stevenson, II; Committee on Illinois Government; Governor Otto Kerner; the “Crazy Eight” [Independent Democratic members of the IL Senate]; Gov. Jim Thompson; Gov. Jim Edgar; Equal Rights Amendment fight in Illinois; Gov. Jim Edgar; Illinois state Comptroller; Northwestern University School of Law professor; architect Walter Netsch; tax reform in Illinois; merit selection of judges; gender issues & gay & lesbian rights;

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