

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Michael Bakalis

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

Interview # IST-A-L-2014-014

Michael Bakalis, the Democratic candidate for Illinois's governor in 1978 running against Jim Thompson, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft-Jim Thompson* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 19, 2014      Location: Mike Bakalis's office in Chicago, Illinois

Date: June 10, 2014      Location: Mike Bakalis's office in Chicago, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

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

Transcript  
being processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_      Total Time: 2:25 + 2:15 / 2.42 + 2.25 = 4.57 hrs

Session 1: Early years and experiences as Illinois's Superintendent of Schools

Session 2: 1978 gubernatorial campaign against Jim Thompson

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on September 25, 2014.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in  
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## Abstract

Michael Bakalis, *Illinois Statecraft*, IST-A-L-2014-014

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Michael Bakalis was born on March 23, 1938 in Berwyn, Illinois, and grew up in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago, the son of a hard-working Greek immigrant family. He attended public schools, and then attended Northwestern University from 1955-1959 before his first teaching jobs in Northbrook, Illinois and Evanston Township High School. He also began a doctoral program at this time, and by 1965 was an assistant professor for the history department at Northern Illinois University. While there he began the Democratic Club of DeKalb County, and soon was meeting some of the state's most influential Democrats, including Mayor Richard J. Daley.

In 1970 the Democratic Party Central Committee slated Bakalis to run for the state-wide position of Superintendent of Public Education, and after a spirited campaign, he won and served a four year tour. In 1976 the party slated him to run for the State Comptroller, a position he previously had little interest in, but won in a strong Democratic year. One year later he was chosen by the party leaders to run for governor in 1978 against 'Big' Jim Thompson, who had become governor in January, 1977. Once again, Bakalis ran hard, touring the state, but was handicapped by running against a popular governor who had served only one year in office, and who himself was a superb campaigner. Bakalis ran as a fiscal conservative and social moderate, but struggled to gain traction in a year that was more about image than issues. Bakalis pulled only 40 percent of the vote against Thompson's 59 percent. Following this, Bakalis returned to a very successful career in education, and at the time of the interview was President of American Quality Schools Corp., a charter schools organization.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Illinois gubernatorial election of 1978; Governor Jim Thompson; Illinois Superintendent of Public Education; Mayor Richard J. Daley; Democratic party's slating process; teacher's unions in Illinois; desegregation in Illinois; Paul Simon; Illinois State Comptroller; white flight to suburbs; American Quality Schools Corporation

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