

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Mayor Robert Butler

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Statecraft-Illinois Pension Crisis Oral History project

Interview # ISC-A-L-2015-059

Robert Butler, longtime Mayor of Marion and a participant in the 1970 State Constitutional Convention, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft- Pension Crisis in Illinois* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Dec. 10, 2015 Location: Mayor's office in Marion, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:00 / 1.0 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January 27, 2016.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Robert Butler, Illinois Statecraft, ISC-A-L-2015-059

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Robert Butler was born in Marion, Illinois in 1927, and is a lifetime resident of Marion, graduating from high school there. He attended Southern Illinois University-Carbondale for a year and half, then transferred to the University of Illinois. Taking advantage of a unique 2+4 program, Butler earned a law degree in 1951. His first job was as an assistant state's attorney for Williamson County from 1952-63. Robert then ran for mayor of Marion, and was elected in 1963. He continued to serve as mayor for fifty-two years. In addition, Mayor Butler was elected to the 1970 State Constitutional Convention. He served on the Local Government Committee. Currently, Mayor Butler serves on many boards of both local and state committees. Through his efforts, Marion has been recognized as a progressive community.

This interview explores the severe fiscal problems facing Illinois state pensions, and Mayor Butler's involvement as a state constitutional convention delegate and as the longtime mayor of Marion. Mayor Butler discusses the state constitutional convention, the election of delegates, the home rule language in the constitution, the pension clause, and the work done by the committees, especially the Local Government Committee. The home rule inclusion was explored, which gave municipalities greater authority over operations without legislative oversight. The interview also covers the problems faced by local governments due to state mandates and legislative requirements that lead to local financial problems. Butler covers the differences between the funding of the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund and firefighter and police retirement plans, which have impacted local property tax payers. The latter pension funds are of concern to municipalities statewide. The interview also covers recent judicial rulings and their impact upon local and state governments as well as the differences between the federal and state selection of judges.

Subject Headings/Key Words: 1970 Illinois State Constitutional Convention; home rule clause in IL State Constitution; pension clause in Illinois State Constitution; differences between the 1970 state constitution and the 1870 constitution; Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund; local fire and police pensions

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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