

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Ray Ackerman

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

Interview # ISC-A-L-2016-021

Ray Ackerman, former legislative Chairman for the RSEA (Retired State Employees Association), 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: April 20, 2016      Location: Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

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

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

Transcript  
being processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_      Total Time: 0:51 / 0.85 hrs.

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

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## Ray Ackerman, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISC-A-L-2016-021

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Ray Ackerman was born in Morton, Illinois in January, 1918. He attended a one room school for eight years and graduating from Morton Township High School in 1935. Following graduation, Ray worked on his family farm and did seasonal work in a local Morton canning factory. He also measured farm cropland for participation in USDA farm programs. In 1943 Ackerman graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in Civil Engineering. This led him to a position at Douglas Aircraft in California. He then joined the Merchant Marine during World War II, serving in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of war. After the war Ray worked for the American Bridge Company, then in 1949 he joined the Illinois Division of Highways working first in Peoria and then in Springfield. As a result, Ray was involved with the design of the Peoria bridge over the Illinois River, as well as planning for Interstates 74 and 474. Ackerman then moved to Springfield, Illinois, and served in such capacities as Assistant Engineer of Planning in the central office of the Division of Highways, Transportation Systems Plan Manager with the Illinois Department of Transportation, Chief Highway Program Planning, and Section Chief, Aviation Program Planning. He retired from the state in 1980, and then worked part time in a land surveying business, then a local engineering firm, and then an investment firm. Ray also served as the Legislative Chairman for the Retired State Employees Association from 1984 to 1995, and wrote a report on his legislative experiences entitled “Ten Years at the Statehouse” in 1998.

Ackerman discusses the state’s pension legislation from 1980 to 1995. Topics he addressed include the Prudent Person Rule (1982), COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) language (1989), the elimination of state taxes on retirement income, the Pension Reform Bill of 1995, Illinois’s early retirement plans (“Tier 0” employee pre-1998), and the creation of a survivors benefit. Also, discussed were the legislature’s and governors’ under-funding of pensions level, the role of taxes in political elections, Governor Jim Thompson’s Retirement System Task Force recommendations in 1986, and the diversion of pension funds to general operating funds. Ackerman also discusses Senate Bill 1 of 2013, and the court challenges to that legislation.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** 1989 COLA legislation compounded at 3% per year; runaway inflation of the early 1980s; 1995 Illinois pension reform; Gov. Jim Thompson’s Retirement System Task Force; Retired State Employees Association; survivor beneficiaries retirement law; state income tax debate during gubernatorial elections; diverting pension funds to general revenue funds; Illinois early retirement plans

**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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## POSSIBLE EXCERPTS

21-creating the compounded COLA language in 1989

28 & 48-the role of Governor Thompson's Retirement Task Force 1986

35-the impact of the 1995 Pension Reform legislation

31-the forgotten Tier 0 state employees who did not benefit from the formula change of 1998.