

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with David Vaught

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Illinois Statecraft – Gov. Quinn* Oral History project

Interview # ISQ-A-L-2020-029

David Vaught, budget director for Governor Pat Quinn and a life-long friend, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft – Gov. Quinn* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 26, Jun 1, 9, 16 & July 7, 2020

Location: Telephonic interview with Vaught at his home in Naperville and DePue at his Springfield home, with the last session recorded at the ALP Library. This interview was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

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

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

Transcript being  
processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time: 2:19 + 2:13 + 2:25 + 2:37 + 2:02 /2.32 + 2.22 + 2.42  
+ 2.62 + 2.03 = 11.61 hrs

Session 1: Early life, West Point cadet and challenge over mandatory chapel

Session 2: Early Army career, conclusion of chapel challenge & Dan Walker campaign

Session 3: Gov. Walker administration, law practice in 1980s and Quinn as treasurer

Session 4: Experiences with Quinn from mid-1990s thru Quinn's first year as governor

Session 5: Experiences in Quinn administration as the budget director

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on ( 02/26/2021 ).

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

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## Abstract

### David Vaught, *Illinois Statecraft - Quinn*, ISQ-A-L-2020-029

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** David Vaught was born on November 1, 1947 and grew up on a farm near the small town of Burnt Prairie, Illinois. He attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, graduating in 1969. During his last year at the Academy David was involved with a cadet sponsored initiative to do away with compulsory chapel, something that angered several officers in the school's administration, which led to David's harassment his senior year. The initiative turned into a Federal lawsuit that played out following his commissioning, finally resulting in mandatory chapel being discontinued.

David served for two years in the Regular Army, resigning his commission in early 1971 to attend law school at Southern Illinois University. He also decided to assist political newcomer Dan Walker that year; Democrat Walker was beginning a campaign for governor of Illinois, taking on the Democratic machine's preferred candidate, Paul Simon. David helped with Walker's southern Illinois campaign, met another young campaign worker, Pat Quinn, and worked in the Walker administration for a short time before returning to law school at SIU. He also married Kathleen Walker, the governor's oldest daughter, and made an unsuccessful run for the state legislature in 1974. In 1976 Vaught helped Quinn with a petition drive and did so again in 1978 in a petition drive that resulted in the adoption of the Cutback Amendment in 1980.

Vaught spent most of the next several decades building a successful law practice. When Quinn became the state's Treasurer following the 1990 election, David took a position in the Treasurer's Office, specifically as the Director of Agriculture and Director of Community Investment. In 1995 Vaught returned to his private law practice. When Quinn became governor in January 2009 following the impeachment of Gov. Rod Blagojevich, Vaught worked as Quinn's budget director, inheriting that job on very short notice during a severe fiscal crisis, a legacy of the Blagojevich administration, and in the midst of a severe economic recession. Vaught helped Quinn on legislation for a two-tier pension system in 2009-2010 as well as an income tax increase following Quinn's reelection in 2010. He stepped down as budget director in 2012 and became the Director of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Gov. Pat Quinn; Gov. Dan Walker; budget director for Gov. Pat Quinn; Illinois's two tier pension system; Illinois income tax increase of 2011; United States Military Academy at West Point; abolishing mandatory chapel at West Point; Cutback Amendment; Kathleen (Walker) Vaught; Speaker Mike Madigan; 1972 Illinois gubernatorial election; 2010 Illinois gubernatorial election; Victor DeGrazia; Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

**Notes 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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