

Interview with Ross Hodel

E85-A-L-2014-026

Interview # 1: August 12, 2014

Interviewer: Phil Pogue

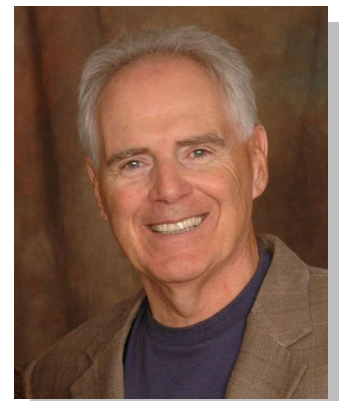
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Pogue: My name is Phil Pogue. This project is regarding the 1985 Educational Reform Act that had 169 pieces of legislation and reforms in it. Much of it was found in Senate Bill 730, but there were over thirty-plus bills that were included in this reform act.

I'm on the campus of Illinois State University, and I'm going to be talking today, August 12, 2014, with Ross Hodel, who was involved in the format of this legislation and at that time was involved with Governor James R. Thompson's staff. Ross, thank you for being part of this project and explaining the importance of the 1985 Act and somewhat of its legacy. At this time, could you give us a review of your family history?



Dr. Ross Hodel

Hodel: Certainly, thank you. It's nice that you asked me to be involved in this project. I was born in Peoria, Illinois; reared on a farm in Woodford County, near Eureka and Metamora, Illinois; went to Metamora High School; graduated from there; got my bachelor's degree, here at Illinois State University [ISU], followed by a master's degree in 1969; and then went on later to pursue my doctorate at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

We lived on a farm; my father was a cattle buyer for a couple of meat packing plants in the Peoria area. My father had only an eighth-grade education. My mother, however, was valedictorian of her high school class, 1918. I spent the first twenty years of my life on the farm, three miles east of Metamora, four miles north of Eureka. Then, as I was in college, my parents retired to Eureka, Illinois.

Pogue: What about your work history?

Hodel: After graduating from ISU, I took my first teaching job in the Pekin Elementary Schools in Pekin, Illinois, followed by work at West Aurora Public Schools, where I taught for two years, then moved to the Administration Office as director of business services and later as the superintendent's assistant for planning.

Following that time in Aurora, I took a leave of absence and went to Ohio State, where I worked in the Ohio State University Field Services Bureau in the Department of Education Administration. I had a half-time job there, was there for two years, completing my doctorate and was involved in several field services projects.

Upon completion of that position, I took a job at the Illinois State Board of Education—then the Illinois Office of Education in Springfield—working for Dr. Fred Bradshaw in the school finance area, where I was manager of school finance. I've worked at the State Board from 1975 to the beginning of 1983.

Early in 1983, I left for Governor Thompson's Office. I was hired as his assistant for education. I worked with Governor Thompson for almost three years, from the beginning of '83, all '83, all of '84. At the end of October of '85, I went to work at the Board of Higher Education as deputy director.

I was at the Board of Higher Education for fifteen years, from '85 to 2000, actually then worked part-time with them on a contractual basis, following that, as I became director of the Education and Policy Center here at ISU. So, for a couple of years, I was half-time here at ISU and half-time at the Board of Higher Education, until 2003. Then I was up here until I retired, basically in the summer of 2012 from Illinois State.

Pogue: As you look back to some of this work that you talked about when you were at the State Board, you indicated you were in the area of finance. What were some of the major duties for that department?

Hodel: The Department of Finance and Reimbursements was responsible for all of the distribution of all the monies for the various state educational funding programs, the general state aid formula, transportation reimbursements,

driver's education, on and on. There are a myriad of categorical programs that we disbursed monies for.

I also oversaw the Finance Unit, which at the time worked with school auditors on their annual financial report. We implemented the statewide new budgeting and accounting system, the Illinois Program Accounting Manual.¹ That was a three or four year period implementation. I was also the board's point person on corporate personal property replacement tax of 1979 and traveled the state with a group of other state officials, explaining that to schools and leading up to that whole initiative in late '78 and early '79.

Pogue: How difficult was it to put the accounting manual into practice?

Hodel: We started with, I think, as I recall, twelve pilot schools and opened it up the following year for. . . expanded the pilots to twenty-four, then to like forty-eight. Then we opened it up voluntarily to any schools that wanted to. It was easier in the progressive schools and the schools with business service staff that maybe they had a school business manager and a set of bookkeepers.

In the small, rural school districts, it was a burden for a part-time bookkeeper in many cases to adapt to a new financial system. They frequently had to seek the assistance of their CPA firm to help them get set up. So there was some resistance for a while.

Then after, I think, five years or four years, Superintendent Cronin, State Superintendent Joe Cronin at the time, said it's time we quit having two reporting systems and having trouble consolidating information because we had to cross walk numbers from one to the other to do his annual report and semi-annual report for the superintendent on the state of school debt and those types of things.

Pogue: What was complicated about the corporate personal property?

Hodel: When they passed the new constitution, there was a requirement that the corporate personal property tax be phased out by 1979, I believe or 1980, I forget, maybe in July of '79. Of course, the legislature didn't do anything for years, until they put in the corporate property, the personal property replacement tax. Then schools had to determine how much they could levy, how they could handle the funds, the various . . . It was basically a series of accounting and budgeting techniques that schools adapted for the new tax that replaced the old corporate personal property.

Pogue: You talked about audits of schools. What was the most challenging part of doing school audits?

¹The Illinois Program Accounting Manual provides the basis for complete accounting of all district receipts and disbursements, systematic development of program budgeting, and the accumulations and dissemination of program-oriented costs. (<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Illinois-Program-Accounting-Manual.aspx>)

Hodel: We were working with CPA firms, and I found that very rewarding. I represented the State Board at the Illinois CPA Society's Local Government Committee in Chicago. I found the CPAs in this state to be a very talented group. The school auditors, by and large, were very professional. That was just a tremendous and rewarding experience.

The toughest part was the Chicago Public Schools, who . . . It took them forever to get their financial reports together, and then their attorneys believed that they didn't have to comply with state law requiring an annual financial report. So, each year it involved cajoling, jawboning, begging (laughs) to finally get a financial report out of the Chicago schools, so we could have a comprehensive look at what had happened in school finance and the way schools spent their money in the prior year.

Pogue: You talked about working fifteen years at the Higher Education Board; what were your duties there?

Hodel: I was deputy superintendent, and at the time . . . For most of the period I was there, we had two deputy superintendents. Dr. Kathleen Kelley was head of academic affairs, and I had basically the rest of the office that included at the time, finance, external relations, governmental relations, the press. That was my primary focus, on governmental relations and the media. We had very competent people in the finance area, and it pretty much ran itself.

The director of the board, Dr. Richard Wagner, was also very interested in higher education finance, so that area took care of itself. I mainly focused on governmental relations, external relations, and working with legislative liaisons from the various colleges and universities.

Pogue: During that fifteen-year period, what were some of the bigger issues that came up, that you were involved with?

Hodel: High school graduation requirements was a constant issue. They were trying to upgrade the high school graduation requirements. Teacher quality was a big issue. The board had a major initiative in the late '90s called PQP which stood for Priorities, Quality and Productivity. That basically tried to refocus monies from lower priorities to higher priorities in universities. We adopted focus statements for each college and university, where they should put their money, eliminate programs. Universities eliminated hundreds of programs as a result of that initiative.

As a result of this 1985 Education Reform Act, we developed a High School Feedback Study, where the universities annually sent data back to the high schools on how well their students were doing at that university.

Then one of the greatest experiences I had there was in 1988 and 1989. We had a Citizens for an Educated Illinois, and I co-chaired a statewide initiative that pushed for a tax increase for education. We did most of our

work in the spring of '88, but we did not get a tax [increase] passed then. The tax increase came in 1989, but I think the work we did in '88 paved the way for the later tax increase.

Pogue: In your position for the Policy Center, what were some of the responsibilities there, and what kind of tasks were you involved with?

Hodel: The Policy Center did a lot of research projects for state government and state government agencies. We worked with the Board of Higher Education a lot. We worked a great deal with the Illinois State Board of Education and with the Illinois Community College Board. We did a number of Foundation funded projects. We had a major project here called... We called it the Three R Project, which stood for Recession, Recovery... and I'm blanking on the third R... Recession, Retrenchment and Recovery. It looked at how the states handled student financial aid after the major recessions in the '80s and the '90s and prior recessions. That was a very rewarding project. We did that for the LUMINA Foundation in Indianapolis.²

We did a teacher quality project for the Board of Higher Education, which is still going on. It had two aspects. We helped the Board of Higher Education, serving as extra arms for their staff to review their grant-funded projects, wrote a lot of their RFPs [Requests for Proposals] for their grant-funded projects, reviewed grant proposals when they came in, made recommendations to board staff on which projects they should fund.

Then the second item... We had a teacher leadership initiative that was school quality, and that is still ongoing. Both of those projects have won national awards, received national recognition. The state higher education officers, executive officers in SHEO [State Higher Education Executive Officers] in Denver had us come to a national meeting and explain our teacher quality project, review what we were doing, incidences where a university and a state education agency worked cooperatively and closely for the betterment of the students in higher education.

We also, here in the center, published "Grapevine," which was a compilation of how much money is spent each year by each state in the union on higher education, state tax funded support for higher education. Each January, when those numbers are released, you see that in the national media, and "Grapevine" is used extensively by governor's staff, legislative staff, the state budget agencies in each state, as well as the national executive higher education officers. It's put Illinois State on the map in some ways, and it's received widespread recognition. It's been published since the '60s, I believe, here at ISU.

² Lumina Foundation, an Indianapolis-based, private independent foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school.
(<https://www.achievingthedream.org/org/371/lumina-foundation>)

Pogue: What led you to go work with Governor Thompson's staff?

Hodel: During the work I did on corporate personal property replacement tax, we traveled the state with people from the Department of Local Government Affairs, and a couple of the members of that touring group later became members of Governor Thompson's staff.

In 1983, when they had a vacancy for education person, Rich McClure, who was the governor's deputy chief of staff, and Tom Johnson, who had been, I believe, head of the Department of Local Government Affairs and then later director of the Department of Revenue for governor Thompson, and also is now head of the Taxpayers' Federation of Illinois, Tom and Rich recommended me for the position. Paula Wolf, who is the governor's program staff director, interviewed me and recommended me for an interview with the governor. So, it was, I think, an extension of the work I had done at the board on corporate personal property that led me there.

Pogue: As we look and start talking about the 1985 Educational Reform Act, you were with the State Board up to 1983, and then you were on Governor Thompson's staff. What conditions did the General Assembly, State Board of Education, face that led to this major reform act?

Hodel: That particular era was a time of great, sort of, grass roots—initiated by the states—reform of educational programs across the country. I recall that Lamar Alexander, who was governor of Tennessee at the time... He was the chair of the Education Commission of the States. Chairman Alexander, Governor Alexander, then [brought] significant reforms to Tennessee, put it on the map in the early '80s. They required kindergarten for the first time. They changed their school calendar. They had a career ladder for teachers. He had brought forth a number of reforms, so he was a perfect person to encourage governors to take action.

Then, of course, in the national environment, we had the "A Nation at Risk" report.³ In looking back, all fifty states, as I understand it, had established education reforms, some reforms, in '84, beginning the groundswell. So, '83-'84, leading up to '85, was a major year across the country. In April '84 Terrell Bell, who was then secretary of education, said forty-four states had raised or were planning to raise high school graduation requirements. Twenty states were giving thought to a longer school day. Forty-two states were reviewing laws on teacher preparation. Thirty-six states [were] exploring alternative methods of meeting staffing needs. Thirteen states were involved in some phase of Master Teacher Plan.

³ A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform is the 1983 report of the United States National commission on Excellence in Education. Its publication is considered a landmark event in modern American educational history. Among other things, the report contributed to the ever-growing assertion that American schools were failing, and it touched off a wave of local, state, and federal reform efforts. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Nation_at_Risk)

Illinois was singled out because it had initiated an incentive program in their legislature that created the commission that the State Board of Education had, [for] the improvement of elementary and secondary schools. So there was just a flurry of activity going on nationally and in the state. At that time, every organization, it seemed like, formed a commission or a committee to study a certain aspect of school reform, so there was incredible activity state and nationwide.

Pogue: How involved were you with the Illinois Commission on the Improvement of Elementary and Secondary Education?⁴

Hodel: We followed that. At the time, I was a member of the governor's staff. We had two appointments to that commission. As I recall, we appointed Dr. Robert Goodall, who was a professor here at Illinois State University, a curriculum professor, curriculum instruction. We also appointed the president of the Illinois Education Association at the time. I'll think of her name in a minute (laughs).

Pogue: In addition, Speaker of the House, Mike Madigan, was holding statewide conferences on educational issues. What role did they play, and were you following along with them?

Hodel: We did follow them. Again, we had limited staff in the Governor's Office, but we were cognizant of all this. I had an intern at the time named Mary Reynolds. Mary was a recent University of Illinois graduate and interested in higher education. Between Mary and another summer intern that I had from SIU, the three of us tried to attend some of those meetings, and we tried to keep our pulse on all of these activities.

I think we probably recognized the State Board's Commission on School Improvement as the key one because it had some very key influencers on that commission, Senator Arthur Berman, Senator John Maitland, State Representative Gene Hoffman, some of these people who were the movers and shakers in the legislature. So we tried to monitor most closely.

We got feedback, had regular meetings, with the people we appointed to the commission. I think the governor felt that we needed to pay close attention. I know that he did. We needed to pay close attention to the work of that commission because he felt they would come out with a report that reflected practitioners' views, as well as state legislators' views. So, our focus

⁴ The Illinois commission on the Improvement of Elementary and Secondary Education was but one of a mosaic of groups and individuals seeking to reform education. House Speaker Michael J. Madigan convened a statewide conference on education. Gov. Thompson devoted a State of the State speech to school reform and proposed a Better Schools Program. A university-based Illinois Project for School Reform, the Illinois State Chamber of Commerce and the state's two leading teachers' unions all had a hand in trying to fix that rusty sputtering old school bus. (<https://www.lib.niu.edu/1991/ii910514.html>)

was keeping track of that commission. In the end, I think a lot of the work they did, their reforms, ended up in the package.

The governor had some things that he felt strongly about and that our staff felt strongly about that were in addition to the work of that commission. But for the bulk, particularly of the curricular and instructional and school day reforms, we were focused on the work of that commission.

Pogue: How did the commission function when you were observing it?

Hodel: Gail Lieberman from the State Board of Education was the chief staff person, but as I recall, there would be extensive debate. Senator Berman was the chair of the commission. He would listen to this debate. I always chuckled because he'd listen to the IEA's (Illinois Education Association) view; he'd listen to the school management side's view; he'd listen to some legislators, and then he would turn to Professor Goodall, and he'd say, "Bob, will you write this up?" (laughs)

They'd have ten different viewpoints, but somehow, Art [Berman] would summarize that orally, and Bob would write this up. They did a wonderful job. The two of them made a great pair. I know that probably people on the State Board staff spent a lot of time and effort working on that report and authored it, but I would say the difficult areas, Professor Goodall, here from ISU, played a huge, behind-the-scene role in writing up that report. He was in a position where he wasn't wed to the IEA, or he wasn't wed to the School Board Association. He knew the schools and school practitioners, and he could write that in a language that Senator Maitland and Senator Berman, the key movers and shakers could agree on.

Pogue: Well, Governor Thompson had a State of the State Address on Education in February of 1985. That included an Illinois Better School Program. How did all that get put together?

Hodel: Backing up just a little bit, we were under intense pressure, the governor was. Everyone was screaming, "Take leadership on education." The governor had concluded—to my disappointment, but for every reason I understood—in 1984, that we were going to make '85 the year of school reform. He explained to me that, "Yes, every other state is doing something; yes, Illinois is doing a lot, but the funds are not there in '84 to support huge reform efforts, and I think the climate would be better politically and financially in '85 to do school reform." So, there was great disappointment in '84, when people accused the governor of not taking leadership.

Then, in '85, we were monitoring closely the work of the commission, the State Board's Commission on Improvement of Elementary and Secondary Education. But the governor also had some things that he felt strongly about and also a group of items that key legislative leaders had brought to him. The

Republicans were in the minority in the House and in the majority in the Senate. They had some issues they felt that the State Board, in their report and the other reports, weren't giving full attention to.

We had a couple of initiatives that we put in that report that the governor felt was very important to bring those initiatives forward, because conservative members of the Senate would not vote for educational reform without accountability measures. The Senate leadership at that time was very conservative, and we had to continually put accountability measures on the table for schools, to get them to move on the revenue side, to get them to move on approval of the educational reforms, curricular and instructional reforms, which by and large, they weren't as concerned about as they were the taxes aspect in particular and some of the other issues around school funding. Each of them probably had a little different pet area of reform, but the governor knew. So as a result, there were about a dozen initiatives that we put in that.

The governor was interested in more work on the Master Teacher Performance Pay for Teachers. The governor had raised himself some monies, which they gave to me to hire a whole series of consultants to do studies in various areas that we identified that were critically important. Most of these studies were completed in late '84, January of '85. We had a whole group of people that were sort of experts from around the state and around the country that put together work on these topics.

The governor had an advisory committee on Master Teacher Program that was chaired by Dr. James Parker from SIU [Southern Illinois University] Carbondale. We had papers written on that. We had a School Finance Advisory Committee that just a number of local school superintendents... Tom Oates from Marion at the time, I recall, had a major role; Ray Lowes, a superintendent at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; Ron Everett, professor at Northern Illinois University DeKalb, played a role. Dr. Vern Cunningham, who is an education expert from Ohio played a significant role. He was an urban education reform expert. He came out and consulted for the governor. Dr. Cunningham had worked with the Detroit schools, the Cleveland schools, and he made a number of recommendations in Chicago for us that didn't really show up in this act but were put in place a year later in the Chicago School Reform Packages.

But performance pay for teachers was a big thing. As part of that, the governor felt teachers ought to take a bar exam, like attorneys did. That was one of his pet things, that we needed to have a bar exam for teachers, which later, the way it shook out in the end, was the teacher exams that teachers take for basic skills and then, later, teaching.

We had followed the Board of Higher Education's study on teacher quality that spring. They had two major concerns: one, that the quality of

students entering the teaching profession was not as high as it should be. So the Board of Higher Education's recommendations were also to raise that bar on people going into teaching. Then the second area they identified was improving the skills of existing teachers. So professional development became a big piece of our program

The Illinois Principal's Academy, I think that came, the School Board Association and others, I think, the Illinois Principal's Association, State Board of Ed. There were a number of players that had brought that through. We were worried that it might not make it through the commission, and we put that on.

Regional Education Centers, this was in the area that I was very interested in and led this initiative. At the time, the state had created twenty computer consortia around the state. They had seventeen Teacher Centers scattered around; the State Board of Education had these places. They had nine Gifted Centers.

What made me start thinking about this was, my son was in a gifted program at the Rochester Schools near Springfield, but the closest Gifted Program that offered services was in Macomb. I thought, There's a computer center here in Sangamon County. Why can't we consolidate all these various centers into educational service regions and push for...

At the time, we didn't think we needed to put them in every educational service region because some of them...like, there were only seventeen of this, nine of this, twenty of this. So we began working with the State Board. This didn't get any attention, I don't believe, in the Education Improvement Commission's Report, but it was an important issue to the governor's Chief of Staff, Jim Reilly, and myself. We pushed hard for this all the way along.

Another area that we felt that the commission wasn't giving credence to and was important to the governor and us was the area of reading. Interestingly, how this came to attention... I wrote the Better Schools Program, and then the governor said, "You know, Ross, what I'd like to do is have somebody do a poll on this program and see what John Q. Public thinks," sort of a different mindset. I was always worried about what school superintendents were thinking, what the IEA would think, what the School Board Association would think. The governor was always worried about "What will John Q. Public think about this?"

He commissioned his pollster at the time, his financial advisor, a gentleman named Robert Teeter, who was also, at that time, George Herbert Walker Bush's financial advisor and pollster. He [Teeter] did a poll in Illinois of our Better School Program. Their representatives came and met with me and the governor's Chief of Staff, Jim Reilly, and said, "Your Better Schools

Program is extremely popular statewide, but the public believes there's one major gap in it, and that's reading. They've got to spend more time on reading, more money on reading programs, more efforts in the area of reading."

As a result, out came reading grants and some other initiatives that I don't think any of the other commissions that were active at the time, whether it was teacher unions or whoever had a commission in that era, dealt too much with reading, but it came out of public perception of our Better Schools Program.

Another area in that was the Illinois Math and Science Academy [IMSA].⁵ The governor was very interested in that. He sent me to North Carolina to visit the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. I toured that program, came home . . . He said he wanted to pursue this. We wrote legislation.

IMSA shook out and became successful, but the governor—and I still think today he probably still believes this, and I can never convince him otherwise—he said the location of the Illinois Math and Science Academy was put in West Aurora because Ross Hodel had worked on the staff of the West Aurora Public Schools, and he wanted to do a favor for his former colleagues there.

The truth of the matter was that the former mayor of Aurora, Jack Hill, was in the House of Representatives at the time and was kind of a close person to Speaker Madigan. Senator Forrest Etheridge of Aurora was in the Senate at the time and also close to Senate President Pate Philip. The Math and Science Academy being located in Aurora was Senator Etheridge's highest priority. Representative Hill convinced Speaker Madigan's leadership team that they would not support the Math and Science Academy unless it was placed in Aurora.

I recall being called down to the governor's office to meet with the governor and Jim Reilly. They said, "The House isn't going to move this unless we put it in Aurora, and Pate strongly wants it in Aurora too." I said, "Well, that's a good place for it." The rest is pretty much history (laughs). The governor still believes it was because I worked in the West Aurora Schools that it ended up there along I-88, in the old North High School in West Aurora, [which] had closed a couple of years prior to the Academy moving in.

Not to dwell too much longer on this, but we had some initiatives on vocational education and job shadowing program[s] that we saw in work at SIU-Carbondale, where high school students were shadowing employers' key

⁵ Ranked the #1 public high school in Aurora, Illinois and #2 in the U.S. by Nice.com, Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy® (IMSA) develops creative, ethical leaders in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. (<https://www.imsa.edu/discover-imsa/>)

people. There was some work on student assessment, which was an important thing for House Minority Leader Lee Daniels, student assessment at grades three, six, whatever. Leader Daniels kept telling the governor, “Nobody’s paying any attention to this, but it’s an important area, and to get my caucus to vote for school reform, we need something on school management.”

The report card on schools was an initiative that... Actually, I guess I picked it up from the... The State Board of Education had a couple of people in their Assessment Division; Tom Kerins and Carmen Chapman were both staff at the State Board. [They] came to see me one day. They talked about school report cards and how some people were playing with the idea. I took the idea to the governor’s staff meeting, and immediately Paula Wolf, the head of the governor’s program staff, and Jim Reilly, the governor’s chief of staff, and the governor himself liked the idea of the school report card because it was the accountability measure that the Senate was demanding.

We thought this report card would not cost the schools an extensive amount of money. It might cause them some PR [Public Relations] problems, but maybe the PR problems would come into areas where reform was needed.

So, I developed the first school report card and put it in our Illinois Better Schools Program that was released February 27, 1985. Then the State Board, over time, has made numerous refinements. People at Northern Illinois University have done a wonderful job on putting that online, and it’s still a thing today that, hopefully, schools are using to improve.

A side effect of the report card was all the realtors (laughs) in Illinois saw it as a gold mine to find out which were the best schools in the community and recommend people to go live there or whatever. That was a bit of a downside. But I think there were many good aspects to the report card. It certainly wasn’t perfect in its initial years, but I think it has been improved on over time.

The governor, coming out of a law enforcement background, was concerned that the commission wasn’t paying attention enough to school discipline and substance abuse and safe learning environment. And Speaker Madigan, with all his hearings and stuff, surprisingly one of the things he was really interested in was social promotion.⁶ I don’t know if it was his wife that was bugging him on this, but later, when we were trying to work out the specifics of Senate Bill 730, he’d keep sending messages that he wanted something with a lot of teeth in it on social promotion (laughs). That was a difficult area, but we included some language on that, particularly on

⁶ Social promotion is the practice of passing students along from grade to grade with their peers even if the students have not satisfied academic requirements or met performance standards at key grades. (<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/social-promotion/2004/09#:~:text=Social%20promotion%20is%20the%20practice,performance%20standards%20at%20key%20grades>)

discipline and violence and balance in schools. The governor held a major school discipline conference in Chicago, and we invited sort of experts from around the country. It was a hugely successful and widely attended conference.

And then the whole school organization and consolidation . . . The governor felt that one way to bring the conservative Senate Republicans along on this area was to make some improvements in school efficiency, not only rural schools but the suburban schools, where we had so many dual districts that . . . So that was improving the efficiency. That was the final of the twelve items in the package. I may have muddied those up by not listing them individually, but . . .

Pogue: How well received was the governor's State of the State Address?

Hodel: I think it was well received. I recall when he decided that we had to do something on education for '85, and it was important. The governor said "Look, we've got all these commissions, the IEA (Illinois Education Association); the Teacher's Unions had studies going; the board had its improvement commission, [Illinois Superintendent of Schools] Michael Bakalis had a group going. I forget the name of his commission.

The governor basically said . . . At one time, he had me write into a report exactly (laughs) what he said and how he was feeling. He said, "There are twelve national studies, ten state studies going on, task forces and commissions that have completed their work or are nearing completion of their reports, all focused on the need for basic reforms." He said, "We had the Contract for Educational Excellence in '84 that was a call for improvement and reform to bridge the gap. The State will agree to spend more money for our schools, only if our schools do not continue with the business as usual attitude."

He didn't feel like this needed to be **his** set of reforms, but he said, "We've got to take the best of all these reports and put them together into a comprehensive package." And he said, "To do this, rather than having a special address to the state on education, I'm going to make the '85 State of the State, the State of the State's Education System."

So, we put in the Better Schools Program. I'm sure in that message he recognized the work of the School Improvement Commission that Senator Berman and Maitland and others, the State Board of Education, were... The IEA had several little studies going; the IFT had a task force; everybody had something going. Numerous legislators had introduced bills on various topics. I recall, I don't know, dozens of bills, literally, on some topic of school reform.

We knew the menu was out there. It was a matter of making the selections off the menu. That was the way we approached it. He delivered the address. I think it was well received. A lot of people in the school community felt that... I heard, as a staff member from the practitioners, "Well, he's finally taking leadership on school reform." I think what we were doing was letting all of this, the best of everybody's thinking, come together and evolve, which I think was the hallmark of the governor, was bringing people together and getting their best ideas from everybody and then putting them together in some fashion, working with the legislature.

Pogue: This was in February of 1985. Could you kind of walk us through the process that... You have all these studies now being presented; the governor has added his dozen. Now, what happened between February and June of 1985?

Hodel: It was an extremely tense and stressful (laughs) part of my career. As I said, I think we had . . . I had a full-time intern, Mary Reynolds, and I was relying on summer interns and part-time interns to help. We were trying to keep our pulse on all these committees. We couldn't attend every meeting. We were also using . . .

The governor's Office had a Bureau of the Budget, an education division in the bureau. Pat McKinsie was the head of that division. She had three staff, I believe, three or four staff. So, between her three staff, Pat and three or four. . . I think they had a couple of fellows or interns there also. So, between her four people and me and Mary, we were doing our best to keep up with what was (laughs) going on, [to] keep our pulse on what was emerging, follow the commissions, who was reporting what, who is doing what, what legislators . . . Our bill review sessions were intense.

We would meet with a member of the governor's press staff, one of the governor's attorneys, the interns, the members of the bureau and a member of the governor's legislative staff. We would discuss all this pile of bills and what was behind this. Who was moving and shaking? What impact would this have at the end of the day? So, we were seeing it from a financial point of view, from a programmatic point of view, a legal point of view, the media's point of view and then the legislative point of view. You're trying to keep track of all these things and monitor the bills that were being introduced.

Then at the same time, the number of invitations we had was just overwhelming. With all the reports, people wanted to have panels of people who had served on this commission or that commission, and then, of course, they wanted someone from the governor's Office, someone from the State Board. So, trying to allocate our time, make the best use of my time, was just one of the most stressful and difficult points of my career.

The fortunate thing was the staffs and the four legislative staff members, key education persons, the point persons, were just wonderful to

work with. In the House, Warren Page was a former school superintendent and was the House Republican staff person that we worked closely with. Warren was a wonderful person. In the Senate, Brenda Holmes was an outstanding professional and close to the Republican senators, who knew how they thought. Brenda went on to work for the School Management Group and was later a governor's assistant herself.

But the key person in all of this, I think, was. . . The Senate Democrats had Carol Lampard, and Carol was most . . . Excuse me, House Democrats; she worked for Speaker Madigan. The Speaker trusted her immensely; she was smart; she knew the legislators. She was a little brash and outspoken and frequently offended people, but she was very good to work with. I had an outstanding working relationship with Carol. She and I basically authored the final Senate Bill 730. We worked most all night, putting that together, taking pieces . . . Most of it came from legislation that either the governor had introduced, Senator Berman had introduced through the Commission on the Improvement of Education.

Some legislator carried the recommendations on almost every one of these reform reports. So, it wasn't like we had to sit down and write everything, but we basically set out to do Senate Bill 730, the five staff people. I think the fifth staff person I am missing is Steve Hendrickson, who was the Senate Democrat staff education person.

So, the five of us worked through the night on that, although I know that Carol and I were the two that stayed all night (laughs). She and I went through everything, and it was critically important because we had to have Speaker Madigan's okay on things. We had to have the governor's okay on things, and then Pate Philip. Brenda Holmes was there for much of it, so they were very key people, especially Brenda, Carol and I.

In many instances, we were cutting and pasting or writing a new paragraph. As I recall, in the middle of this, sometime (I guess it was the next morning) we had the bill put together. I'm jumping ahead here to implementation, but this was all going on during legislative session.

The governor's chief of staff called me and said "Ross, you've got to take the all-day kindergarten out, separate it from the bill because we want the legislature to move it right away." The negative calls were beginning to come in from a very conservative group of people who were organizing to oppose all-day kindergarten, and it was a bill in the legislative arena. So the governor's chief of staff and some of the legislative leaders had had a meeting and discussed, "Well, let's separate that" because it had become so controversial. We did not want to sink the bigger education reform because of all-day kindergarten. In the end, it ended up passing earlier and faster, but it worked out.

During the legislative session also, the House had a couple of committees, the Senate had a committee, and I know that Ted Sanders, who was the new state superintendent at the time, became very frustrated. He thought nothing was happening. I recall the *Springfield Journal Register* [local daily newspaper] interviewing me and Ted. He said he just thought nothing was going to happen, that people were all over the map. I remember telling the reporter at the time, "To a degree that's true, but there's an important winnowing process going on. We've got two House committees narrowing the number of bills. We've got the Senate committee doing the same thing. Some of these bills are going to be weeded out, and the important will survive, and a conference committee will emerge." And that's exactly what happened.

There was a conference committee of ten people that were appointed. Each of the legislative leaders appointed two members from their caucus and the governor appointed me and his chief of staff, Jim Reilly, to be members of that group. As I recall, the ten members were Jim Reilly and myself from the governor's Office; for the House, Republicans appointed State Representative Gene Hoffman of Elmhurst and Ron Stephens of Belleville; the Senate Democrats on the conference committee were Senator Joyce Holmberg from Rockford and Senator Vince Demuzio from Carlinville; Senate Republicans were Senator Bob Kustra from Park Ridge and Forrest Etheridge from Aurora; and the House Democrats had an interesting situation; they had State Representative Jim McPike, who was the majority leader in the House, and then they had a rotating group that came through (laughs) for the ten.

They had multiple chairs. They had... The House Education Committee Chair was Helen Satterthwaite from Champaign; Representative [Barbara Flynn] Currie was interested in this whole project. [And there were] the chairs of the two House Committees on Education Reform. So, the Speaker didn't want to name one person. He trusted Representative McPike and Carol Lampard to do this, but he wanted these other players to all see what was going on.

So, the group of ten would get together. It would always be Representative McPike and somebody else. One time it was Helen Satterthwaite; the next time it would be another member, and then . . . We met, I don't know how many times, probably seven or eight times, and the staff would then go... We'd go compare notes, and then at the end of the day was when we spent the night writing up Senate Bill 730. Even after we had the bill put together, it wasn't done.

To get it passed, I can remember . . . The funding mechanisms were an increase in the cigarette tax, a twenty cent increase in the cigarette tax, and an increase in the tax on interstate phone calls. They were the two revenue-generating items in the whole package. I can recall the bill being on the Senate floor and Senator Berman calling me in and saying he didn't like the way we

had targeted the cigarette tax, and he wanted to be able to say, on the floor, that the intent of this bill is that all the proceeds of the cigarette tax would be targeted to education. He was concerned that it would be like the lottery, and it would just go someplace else.

I recall Senator Berman and I going to a phone booth in the back of the Senate, getting on the telephone with Dr. [Robert] Mandeville, the governor's Bureau of the Budget director, and working on and agreeing on a statement that Senator Berman could read into the record on the intent of the cigarette tax and the mechanism and the way it would work and what the language in the bill meant. That was a part of the whole record of the discussion, as I recall.

Senator Maitland had an amendment he wanted to put on. He felt so strongly about it, he said, "Ross, come on; you and I are going to the office that transcribes the bills." We tore downstairs. The clerk at the reception desk didn't recognize that he [Maitland] was a senator. He got so angry; I never saw John Maitland mad, but that day he really was, and he just stormed out of there and said, "You take care of her" or something (laughs), and he left me to get this little change in his amendment drafted.

Until the last hour, it was touch and go. We had all these egos, and everybody had something in that bill that was near and dear to their heart. But somehow we got it across the finish line. I remember the night of the Senate vote. It was about 7:30 in the evening, and Pate Philip broke out cigars for all his caucus. They were smoking cigars on the Senate floor when that bill passed. Some people said it was because the Senate Republicans were actually voting for two tax increases (laughs). Pate said, "Well, this is just to . . ." In Pate's words, "This is just to pimp the press, to make them think we're all a bunch of do-gooder educators here." (laughs) So there were just a lot of nuances along the way.

One more thing I would say about that time period and the passage is we had a unique set of educational leaders in Illinois at that time. We had . . . Hal Seamon was the head of the Illinois School Board Association, who went on to head the National School Board Association. David Pierce, who was head of the Community College Board, he went on to head the National Association of Junior Colleges in Washington. We had Ted Sanders, who was the state superintendent, who went on to become under secretary of education under President George H. Bush.

In the legislature you had people who were in key positions. Gene Hoffman, a former teacher, was in leadership in the House of Representatives in the minority caucus. John Maitland, who was close to the Illinois Farm Bureau—and they were interested in education reform—was in Senate leadership. Art Berman, who is the most articulate spokesperson for education in the Senate, was chair of the Senate Education Committee and chair of the

School Improvement Commission. So, you had this set of people. Jim Reilly, the governor's chief of staff, had always been involved in it, and in the legislature, he had been on education committees and was always viewed as education interested. You had this set of unique educational leaders at the time. Probably we've not had that since.

The chemistry of the things were just right. Forrest Etheridge, a former community college president, was in Senate leadership. Dick Wagner at the Board of Higher Education and Stanley Ikenberry at the University of Illinois, they were both in leadership positions for nearly twenty years. President Ikenberry went on to head the National Council of Education, another national, prestigious group. We had Ken "Buzz" Shaw at Southern Illinois University as president, who later went on to become president of the University of Wisconsin and Syracuse University, held a number of leadership positions, Buzz Shaw. So, it was a time that... I don't think prior to that time or since that time, you've had that number of people with sincere education interests in the legislature.

Even on the staff, Brenda Holmes had some teaching experience; Warren Page was a former school superintendent; I had worked in the public schools and at the State Board. So we had a whole set of people who were familiar with, interested in education. We had the school problems commission, which interestingly, in the year of education reform, the School Problems Commission, which had done so much, was abolished. That was a tragedy. Of all the things that happened that year, that is probably one thing that was the downer. But so many other good things came out of that reform package that . . . Touching on 169 areas in the School Code, the Community College, so much of that, still today, all these years later, has a significant impact.

Pogue: When you talked about Senator Philip lighting the cigars, was this in June, when this was finally put together, or was this earlier, before the closing of the session?

Hodel: I'd have to look back at the date. It was near the end of the session, but probably not on the last day, as I recall. It would have been near the end . . . I think that was when the legislature still was finishing their work in June, rather than the change to May, as they did a year or two or three years later. So, I would say it was close to the end, probably the last week of the session before. I would have to check back. I'm sorry Phil; I didn't have that date.

Pogue: You said that early childhood was one that became controversial and was pulled out to be a separate bill but actually passed before Senate Bill 730. Were there any others that were pulled out and then went their own way and were later passed?

Hodel: I think a lot of the urban Chicago school reforms were kind of set aside. I think that Senator Berman felt that there was more work to do after the state School Reform Package, and there did. It happened right... It was sort of the following major initiative, the Chicago school reform effort, with the advisory councils and all the things . . .

During the '85 segment, there was continual frustration that principals in Chicago did not have enough authority. They weren't instructional leaders; they weren't leaders in any fashion. Many of them did not even have keys to the school building. The custodial unions and the teacher's unions were so dominant that the principal was sort of a forgotten character in the Chicago schools. So, there were some focus on Chicago but not the extent that it received within the next eighteen months, as I recall. I was leaving as these reforms were beginning to be put in place and play out, and the Chicago school reform was becoming a heavier issue at that point.

Pogue: Were there any items that were suddenly brought in at the last hour? You've talked about Senator Maitland's amendment, but was there anything else significant that you can recall that was added?

Hodel: One funny thing, as I recall our group of ten. In these meetings, Speaker Madigan would keep sending messages through Representative McPike that he wanted something on social promotion. Basically the whole group, everybody in the room—the ten people at the table, and then there was staff around the room, and the state superintendent was in the room—everybody in the room would be shaking their heads no to this. I recall one time, one of the latter meetings, he [Representative McPike] said, "You know what I'm going to bring up; don't you?" Then everybody would laugh, and he'd say, "Okay, I brought it up." (laughs) He wasn't for it himself, I'm sure.

I think Carol Lampard then suggested that why don't we put some language in about schools should have a policy on this? Maybe we can make the Speaker understand that the Republicans were against (laughs) this, that the State Board was against it, everybody, the governor's office, was against it, but they would agree to put in policy language in that schools should make this a priority and do something on social promotion. That was a humorous part that hung with us until (laughs) the very end.

I don't remember that there were any late additions because most of this had been contained... The reforms had been contained in bills that went through the General Assembly and had received some discussion, so elements, maybe something... There probably were at meetings something that the group of ten said staff didn't have correct or something that we had to change.

Carol was so good at this, saying, "You know, the language in the House version of that bill, sponsored by whoever, had the best language that we should use in this." So we'd dig through three versions of bills and pull out

that bill. Then we'd say, "No, I like the language in the Senate better." So we'd stick that in, and that was kind of the . . .

So, we didn't have a lot of last-minute things. Maybe there was one thing I recall. We got \$5 million added to the package. The item was in, but we got [an] additional \$5 million put in. I was stunned that Dr. Mandeville caved on this. He said, "Well, the reform package just went up by \$5 million." And that was for the vocational education initiative and the job shadowing that they targeted—\$5 million.

Over this whole thing, from the governor's point of view, this was all part of his Build Illinois initiative, which was a huge infrastructure package. There were bumper stickers that year that said, "Build Illinois," and there was huge dollars for math and science equipment, math and science education, vocational equipment, vocational education, as well as school construction, university construction, road projects. The whole Build Illinois public works passed that year too. This was a key part of that, so a lot of legislators who were maybe not interested so much in the education aspect, but they were interested in Build Illinois. They saw this as a key component of Build Illinois. But the Education and Reform Act was a big, big part of things in 1985.

Pogue: When you talked about the conference committee, apparently you were saying that, because of the camaraderie between the House and the Senate, working together, there was not that much difference between the two bills, as you were trying to put them all together in conference.

Hodel: I would say not. Each had some members' pet projects. Senator Holmberg from Rockford had a few things that were in the Senate bill that weren't in the House Bill, and the House had a myriad of things that weren't in the Senate Bill. But it was truly a bill that really wasn't a Democratic bill or Republican bill, but it was an education bill.

People like Gene Hoffman, Art Berman, John Maitland, Art Berman, they never wore the partisan labels. They were more apt to look at things geographically or educationally, whether it was school management, farm bureau, whatever their views, rather than, "Well, the Democrats don't like this." So much of what you see today, the poisonous attitudes that we have in 2014, just weren't there. This was a truly bipartisan initiative.

Pogue: As we look at some of the reform measures, just as I bring some of these up, would you comment if these were big, debatable issues. The idea of creating a purpose for schooling, which would then drive time allotment, resources, personnel and facilities.

Hodel: I think those were not too controversial. I think the Commission on School Improvement had dealt with a lot of this. They did the best to iron out

differences between school management groups and school union association groups. I think their work on the purpose for schooling, personnel, facilities, I think that was not real controversial, nor were establishing learning goals.

One that I think probably was somewhat controversial was the accountability in reading, math, language arts, those assessments. Many of the people in the education community weren't high on that. People that were, tended to be in the business community and political community, who wanted to do something about education, that didn't want to spend money, but they wanted to do something. And testing was kind of their way of doing something. I think, as I recall, minority leader, Republican leader Lee Daniels, in the House of Representatives, best articulated this viewpoint. He wanted some assessment measures that he felt could be used for accountability on school personnel and make sure our kids are being taught. He espoused that very well.

Social promotion, [as] I discussed, ended up in sort of a policy statement. Remediation plans, I think, were put in in its place. It offered extended school days, reduced class size, summer school, those program modifications. I think, again, a lot of these came out of the State Board's report that, some of them did. But these later things, I think Carol Lampard thought of a couple of these. She put them in to mollify people who wanted a "get tough" idea. It was like, "No, we don't prohibit social promotion, but we've got work in there to modify programs and extend the school day or have summer special programs, alternative schools, whatever, to address that issue." She could talk people out of that.

Pogue: One area we haven't really talked about much was the funds for truancy and dropouts and the alternative schools that were part of the legislation. Were there any critical discussions related to those programs?

Hodel: I think that was discussed in a lot of the various committee reports, task force reports. Truancy, dropouts, it was of concern of everyone. I'm not sure we had a major handle on what new things should go on. I think there was a desire to better fund programs that were already there and were demonstrating that they were working, especially some of the alternative school programs.

Pogue: What about the issue of limited English?

Hodel: That was a little bit controversial because Senator Philip and some of the Republican leadership had strong feelings about English being the primary language. That was sort of the beginning of a movement that became stronger later, that English should be the official national language or whatever. There was some, some limited beginning feelings of that. So, in a way, the education reform group, I think, used it as a way to improve funding for bilingual and transitional programs to . . . Rather than just taking a hard line, "You're going to speak English," it was a softer approach, "We're going to fund these

English as a second language programs,” so kids do indeed learn to be proficient in English.

Pogue: You’ve talked about the issue of future testing and the basic skills and certification for teacher changes, which were some of the things raised by Governor Thompson in his address. Was there any controversy with the teacher-principal evaluation?

Hodel: I don’t recall there being a lot of controversy because it was, as you’ve noticed, new principals, new teachers (laughs). So the teachers’ associations and the existing administrators, I think, could nod their heads [and say,] “Some of these things are needed. I’m glad I didn’t have to do it.” (laughs) It did not become as controversial as [it would have been] had it been required of existing school personnel, I think would be the best way to say it.

Pogue: Another area was a pilot program for birth to three handicapped students. This was a new adventure for the state. Was that something of . . . ?

Hodel: As I recall, I think Senator Rock, the president of the Senate, and Senator Holmberg from Rockford and also the State Board, I think, had . . . There wasn’t much argument. I think that Gene Hoffman, as I recall, one of his sons was handicapped, or I guess it was Leader Daniels. So they were very supportive of this, and the House Republicans could at that point convince the Senate Republicans that this was what you ought to do. Of course, the Democrats had no problem with it, so it was sort of a bipartisan thing. The leadership of the House Republicans was very supportive, and the Democrats had no problems at all, so it didn’t receive any . . . It wasn’t a controversial item really. People kind of knew and understood that Representative Daniels had a child with special needs, and this is a key area, and to keep him and his Leadership team on board you needed to support this.

Pogue: Criminal background checks came in. Was that part of the issue that Governor Thompson was focusing on?

Hodel: Yeah, I think it may have come out of that, also some of the more conservative views that . . . This is an area the whole Chicago thing was kicking around at that time. There were probably some incidences statewide. I don’t remember the specifics, that somebody hired a teacher who should have never been teaching, and you know what happens with those. Somebody sneezes, and everybody reaches for their Kleenex box (laughs), you know.

Pogue: You talked about the role of educational service centers. That would become a hot button topic much later and the debate as to which group would survive, regional offices or educational service centers. When the final package was put together, was that an issue?

Hodel: I think no, not too strongly, but I do think there were a couple of people in the group of ten who had said at the time, “I predict that someday these things are

going to replace the regional offices of education.” Well, what happened is basically the regional offices replaced them (laughs). The good news was most of the staff of those service centers and the services were absorbed into the regional offices.

Another very positive outcome that I’ve seen from my later work is that that initiative developed some people who were very good in the area of regional education, who were really gifted at finding the best schools, the best people, the best teachers in a certain district and bringing them in to help other people in the region. So, I think we gained a lot of professional expertise in regional offices through those, even though, as you said, it became later a very hot button issue. A lot of the people who went into those regional offices initially were really highly professional people. They were practitioners, by and large, who had strong educational backgrounds, strong school experience. So, I think out of that whole thing, we gained an educational component of personnel who were really talented at regional education. It didn’t matter which structure, in my mind, survived. But what we gained was the services and the personnel throughout the state, so that there would be good gifted programs in every service region or every superintendent’s office.

Pogue: You talked about the role of Chicago principals, not having much authority. That would eventually help delay some of the Chicago reforms to another year. The statement in the act, that the principal was recognized as the instructional leader, was that controversial when that was put in?

Hodel: No, not among most of the people in Springfield, but somewhat to maybe the Chicago Teacher’s Union at the time. They and, of course, the service employees, the custodial unions, were, of course, watching their turf very closely, but they had no problems for the most part on the instructional leader.

The Teacher’s Union in Chicago had a Chicago Teacher’s Center where they developed instructional leaders among teachers. So they were monitoring it very closely; let me say that (laughs). They wanted to make sure all the p’s and the q’s were in the proper place, wouldn’t take anything away from their contract at the time.

Pogue: The Reform Act also had some modifications that allowed unit districts, K-12, to levy equal to the dual districts. That would lead to property tax increases in transportation, education, operations and maintenance, as well as some school aid formulas changes that would help unit districts. That also would be a tax increase, also placed on the property tax holders. Were there any issues or questions related to that?

Hodel: There were, but surprisingly, not as many as one would think. The year prior, in ’84, we had worked with the Illinois School Problems Commission and had passed a whole set of school consolidation incentives, where the two school combining districts had to use common accounting, and teachers’ salaries had

to be brought up, and there were state monies put into those initiatives. This just extended that.

Then later, as I was leaving the Governor's Office, that became . . . I was leaving the office, sort of as the new campaign was starting for the governor's final term, and the whole consolidation effort became a very controversial item. Adlai Stevenson and his staff picked up on this. Interestingly, Carol Lampard, who had done so much work on the educational reform, was staffing his [Stevenson's] campaign and was trying to tie it to the Board of Higher Education's graduation requirements. So, I was drug back to work (laughs) with Carol on a completely different area. Then they were trying to slow down an initiative that we'd worked on earlier, under different sort of circumstances, under two different bosses (laughs) to speed up. So, it was an interesting piece of my career (laughs). You look at both sides of things at some point.

Pogue: You talked about the issue of school reorganization becoming the future fire storm. You were not really part of that, but on the other hand, Build Illinois, I assume, would probably be a very popular thing because that's spreading money.

Hodel: Yes and, of course, that was how we got legislative votes on this. I think one disappointment I had was probably . . . Not me, but maybe the schools felt it wasn't enough in the line item for school construction. [It was] better than it had been in a long time, but not as much as some of the earlier school construction initiatives.

The other public works components in that Build Illinois program... Making Route 51 four lanes from Rockford to Decatur was such a popular thing legislatively. There were funds, as I recall, for a new community college in Decatur, Richland [Community College]. And I'm not sure that Heartland... No, Heartland wasn't ready yet at that point. But there were a number of school construction . . .

Universities benefited greatly with science initiative monies. There were a lot of really good things that came out of the school construction, and as you said, it spread some money around, and it probably brought some votes among legislators (laughs) that I'm not even aware of.

Pogue: I'd like to talk about three more things that were included in the 1985 Educational Reform Act. One of these dealt with the Educational Labor Relations Board. Was there anything significant with that one?

Hodel: That was another very stressful deal. First, it was very difficult to get that passed and to get the language just right. [For] the IEA, that was one of their prominent initiatives was the whole collective bargaining for teachers in state law. I can recall meetings on this topic and the Education Labor Board.

The governor had a bad back at that time. For a period of time, he was bedridden, and I can recall going to meetings in the mansion in his bedroom and in his home in Chicago, in his bedroom, where we discussed the Education Labor Board and the ability of unions to bargain collectively. It was a very tough and touchy initiative. A lot of compromises were made to get that pushed over the goal line.

I may have this out of order, but there was a senator from Chicago whose name is escaping me right now, a Polish senator from Chicago. I'm going to say Lewinski, but that's not right. [It was Norbert Kosinski.] At any rate, his big thing was Casimir Pulaski Day. I remember everybody on the governor's staff opposed that thing, and everybody, any school practitioner, opposed (laughs) Casimir Pulaski [Day].

I remember when the bill passed the General Assembly, and I had to write the review for the governor. He had told me he was going to sign it. So I recall, I just did a very short bill review, told him all the groups that were opposed to it. I think I had an attached list of (laughs) thirty or forty associations and names and key people and this type of thing. I said, "Governor, I asked my daughter what she knew about Casimir Pulaski, and she said, 'Did he invent the cashmere sweater?'" (laughs) The governor laughed and picked up his pen and signed the bill. There were goofy things like that.

Appointments to the Education Labor Board were so controversial, oh my goodness. The IEA was so interested in getting the president of the IEA or a key person, an IEA attorney, on that board. So the pressure on the governor and the governor's staff, from all angles, the School Board, school management people, [they all] had their person.

I recall the governor, one night, doing a radio program at Governors State University. And without warning me or anybody on his staff, without telling a soul, he just blurts out, "Well, here's who I'm going to name to the Education Labor Board. I'm going to ask this professor at the University of Illinois to chair it, and I have a woman who's a teacher in Elgin; I think a teacher ought to be on it." The IEA was not strictly in favor of her but, you know... He went on to name the five people he was appointing to that board. The gentleman who was named chair of the board was driving down the interstate highway, listening to this program. He told me he ran off the road (laughs) when he found out he was their chairman, of the Education Labor Board. He knew his name was being discussed, and I had interviewed him, but still the governor just surprised us all.

After the program he told me, "Well," he said, "I'd been out to dinner with Pate Philip, and I was feeling good, and I just felt like let's get rid of all the pressure; let's just get on with life." So he just announced it that night. There were no press releases; there were no nothing; it was just blurted out on

the radio program at Governors State University (laughs). And it went on to function quite well, I think, in the end.

Pogue: So all these bills that were passed become part of the 1985 Educational Reform Act. As members of the governor's staff, how did everybody feel, and what were they hearing from the local district leaders, the regional superintendents, the unions, the principals, the parents, business community, statewide media and even the students?

Hodel: I think there were so many tentacles to this thing that affected so many people in schools, and I think the overall reaction was positive. Now, probably the one group who you didn't hear much from where students because I don't think they sensed what was happening to them or going to happen to them.

Oh, I take that back. There was one group of students—mostly it was their parents—that we heard immensely about, and that was in the changing of the school age. We moved the date back to January first that you had to be six years old to attend school. So there were a number of young mothers (laughs) and six-year-olds who felt that impact immediately. I think the educational community was strongly in favor of that, to have the children be slightly older, but the state did get negative reaction. I remember Senator Berman saying, "Well, every principal and superintendent in the state, that they love the idea, but that they don't have to tell the parents that this is their idea. 'It's the state made us do it.'" (laughs) That was one that got us some fairly immediate feedback.

But most of it, I think, there were so many parts, somebody found something that they liked about it or some way it impacted them or their school in a positive fashion. I think that's probably why there hasn't been such a major effort since. There were so many parts to it, and the situation with the educational leaders in place at the time, made a huge difference.

Pogue: That issue, with the kindergarten age, December first had been the day that you had to be, and then you had a gradual . . . Then next year, November first, then October first, then September first. So, every year you were moving it up a little bit and getting certain youngsters not eligible at that time. After you left the governor's office, were you ever involved in a type of reform that even compared to this?

Hodel: Not on such a statewide scale. We did do a lot of work with state universities, but almost all the subsequent reform issues I was involved in may have been more focused and wouldn't have affected so many areas. The Board of Higher Education's Priorities Initiative, that touched on a lot of universities, but it didn't have the same statewide impact, and it didn't involve the legislature in approving or disapproving individual programs. It was all more in the higher education community, those reform efforts. So, I don't think . . .

We worked on a higher education project in Texas, here at the center, that was a fairly major reform in the Texas colleges and universities but nothing here in Illinois that matched that.

Pogue: You later worked for the Higher Education Board. As you think about the reforms that were in this 169 eventual package, what ones seemed to have the most impact for the Higher Education Board?

Hodel: Requiring all territory in the state to become part of the community college district was very important. There was a significant area in central Illinois, from Lincoln to Pontiac, that was not in the community college district. Jacksonville area was not; Evanston was not. David Pierce took the leadership in that. Later the net result of that was, in the years following 1985, we saw a greatly strengthened community college community. They had the resources; they covered the state; every legislator had a community college in their district or two.

That initiative had lasting impact, and it made the Illinois community colleges' leaders nationally. I know [that in] a number of other states, like Texas, [which] I just mentioned, not all the areas of the state are in the community college district in Texas. They have more pockets of influence. That had a lasting impact on the work the Board of Higher Education.

The teacher quality changes affected our work. The board began working closely with the State Board on...at that time it was "Eisenhower Grants" for teacher education. That later became "No Child Left Behind" grants for teacher education. They've since changed the name again of that program to "Teacher Quality Initiatives."

The whole bar exam idea raised the entry level of teachers, the testing and skills area. All those efforts led to improved quality, I think, in people going into teaching. Here at ISU, I think you have to have an ACT of twenty-five to get into the Teacher Education Program, which was unheard of in the '70s and '80s, [when] almost anyone could get into the program who finished in the top three-fourths of their high school (laughs) class or whatever.

One other one that resulted from State Superintendent Sanders and Director Wagner at the Board of Higher Education and Stanley Ikenberry at the U of I. They said, "Most of the state universities have an area where their feeder schools are." For instance, ISU draws heavily from the schools in this area and also some suburban student schools. Maybe each university, these regional universities, would get 70 percent of their kids from surrounding counties.

So they developed the high school feedback study—these came out of the '85 reforms too—where each year, each university... ISU would send to Fairbury High School or to Chenoa High School or Springfield High School

how well their students did in math at ISU, how well the freshmen did in various studies. That was an important initiative that was school/college partnership type of thing.

Those feedback studies went to all high school counselors in the affected schools. I think they had to have . . . I don't know whether it was ten or what the minimum number of student freshmen at ISU that . . . and then they'd send feedback to the school counselors on how well those kids did, so the schools in turn could beef up or change preparation and make curricular adjustments. There were some important things that filtered up.

Educational service region personnel and colleges began a lot of school/college partnerships. This was aided by technology that was spreading around the state. Regional universities and the educational service regions have a lot in common, so you'd get various university and service region partnering on various in-service activities for teachers or school personnel or principals, whatever.

Some of those things had had lasting impact that were passed, hopefully all for the good. That's my opinion, that it was largely for the good of the state and the educational system.

Pogue: Well Ross, you've covered a lot, describing the process that led to the development of the 1985 educational package from all the various participants and their ability to work together and perhaps, in the time of 1983, '84, '85, good interest by key people in the field of education. As you think back to that time, is there anything else that you think we should add as we conclude?

Hodel: I was surprised in 2001, when I came to Illinois State University to direct the Education Policy Center, to learn that there were a group of ISU professors who had tracked that time. They had gone to every State Board of Education meeting, they'd followed the Education Improvement Commission. They had gone to see the legislature, gone to education committees and had written extensively on this. Looking back, I was like, "Gee whiz, this guy named Paul Baker has been hovering over me for three years, and I never met him, didn't even know him," because he had insights that were just incredible.

Again, being able to work with people like Ted Sanders, Stan Ikenberry, Hal Seamon, Gene Hoffman, John Maitland, Art Berman, Jim Riley, the governor and Paula Wolfe, they were just incredible people, some of the brightest people I've known. Doing good for education was really in their hearts, and they've lived it out. It was a wonderful time.

Pogue: Again, I want to thank you for sharing the work that you did on the governor's staff and earlier at the State Board of Education, the Higher Education Board, and now for the work you're involved with at Illinois State. Thank you very much.

Hodel: You're welcome. Thank you.

(end of transcript)