

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robin Steans

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Education is Key--Public School Funding Oral History project

Interview # EF-A-L-2019-033

Robin Steans, former executive director of Advance Illinois, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key--Public School Funding* Oral History project.

Date: June 14, 2019 Location: Chicago, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:01 / 1.02 hrs

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

Interview being
processed

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Abstract

Robin Steans, *Education is Key-Funding*, EF-A-L-2019-033

Biographical Information Overview: Robin Steans was born in Lake Forest, Illinois in 1964. Robin earned a BA degree from Brown University in 1986. She later earned an MA in education from Stanford and a law degree from the University of Chicago. Robin taught special education and social studies in Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago. She also served two terms as executive director of Advance Illinois, a non-profit promoting education P-20, learning from preschool through adulthood. In addition, Robin was a director of the Small Schools Coalition, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, and North Lawndale Charter High School. She has also served on the Board of Ingenuity, focusing on Chicago Public Schools Arts Programming. She has presented across the nation on educational policy.

Steans discusses the involvement of Advance Illinois in helping promote and pass a more equitable and adequate Evidence Based School Funding Model. Her interest began when the Illinois State Board of Education had to start pro-rating state aid to schools due to the failure of the Illinois General Assembly to appropriate funds as required for per-pupil allocation. Steans reviews the partnerships forged with other non-profits and educational interest groups as well as state legislators to improve public school funding. The period from 2013-2017, which saw school funding commissions, task forces, legislative town halls, and numerous funding bills, were reviewed. Robin also recounts difficulties in passing school funding reform for greater equity, such as regional challenges, pension challenges, the high reliance on the property tax to fund schools, and differing viewpoints from educational groups. Steans highlights the leadership of Senator Andy Manar, the accountability requirement found in the new funding model, which now shows what Illinois public schools need in order to give students a high-quality education. She also talks about earlier Advance Illinois studies related to principal and teacher training and certification, and the emphasis on early childhood education.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Advance Illinois (2008); Illinois budget crisis; Illinois school funding; pro-rationing; Fix the Formula; Evidence Based School Funding; Professional Rule Committee

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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