

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robert (Bob) Lenz

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Public School Funding Oral History project

Interview # EF-A-L-2019-015

Robert Lenz, a lawyer involved in the Committee for Educational Rights v Edgar lawsuit of the 1990s, 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: Apr 17, 2019 Location: Bloomington, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:08 / 1.13 hrs.

Interview being
processed

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on October 29, 2019.

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

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Abstract

Robert Lenz, *Public School Funding*, EF-A-L-2019-015

Biographical Information/Overview: Robert (Bob) Lenz was born in Freeport, Illinois in December 1936 and grew up on a farm. He attended Freeport schools, graduating in 1954. Bob earned a BA in political science from the University of Illinois in 1959. He earned a JD (law) degree from the U. of IL in 1963. In 1964 he went into private law practice, which he did ever since. Bob has been active in many community/public service organizations and has been a member of the Illinois Board of Higher Education from 1979-81, chairman of the State Universities Civil Service System (Merit Board), and a Trustee for the University of Illinois. Lenz was a candidate for the Illinois State Senate in 1972. In addition, Bob is very active with Abraham Lincoln related organizations. He has given numerous classroom lectures at Illinois State and Heartland College. Bob also has been the legal counsel for Illinois State University and was a recipient of the Law Day 2007 Lincoln Award. Finally, Bob was a delegate to a NATO conference in Istanbul in 1963.

Lenz talked at length about his involvement in a major lawsuit during the 1990s on the disparities in Illinois school funding. The Committee for Educational Rights v Edgar lawsuit was heard by the Illinois Supreme Court in 1996. Topics Bob discussed include the role of Alan Hickrod in the suit, the origins of the litigation in Mt. Morris, the selection of lawyers, the decision to focus on equity over adequacy, and the statewide public awareness campaign. He also laid out the arguments presented before the district courts and the Illinois Supreme Court and the effort to change the Illinois State Constitution (Article 10) regarding school funding. He tied in the impact this unsuccessful lawsuit had years later increasing public school funding. He also discussed the creation of the Education Funding Advisory Board and equalizing Unit School Districts on local levy rates as compared to Elementary and High School Districts.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Committee for Educational Rights v Edgar IL Supreme Court case; Alan Hickrod; Illinois State University; comparing Mt. Morris & Byron school districts – “A Tale of Two Cities” presentation; Article X of the Illinois State Constitution;

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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