

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

More game playing in Springfield

It's springtime in Illinois. The birds are singing. The grass is greener and the buds on the trees and shrubs are appearing. The Cubs and Sox have emerged from their winter dens of cactus and palms in Spring training and are back in Chicago.

It's playoff time for our Blackhawks, and they will soon bring joy to us hockey aficionados. And, of course, our legislators in Springfield are scrambling, trying to support the belief that they actually work for a living. Tax or not to tax is the big question. But it will probably not be resolved until after the next election. Pension reform is another grand idea from our elected representatives.

But the big one is the game of musical chairs as they attempt to re-position themselves for reelection. Hmm, they say, what chair can I grab when the music stops to gather support from the press and the public to keep my dream job in Illinois in November? How about the Red-Light camera issue?

Tough decisions there, but it's a hot topic now. Ban red-light cameras and make the people happy, but lose thousands of dollars in revenue for comrades throughout the state? Forget that one—no way will reform eliminate this local cash cow. They will "tweak" it and convince many that it is good to pay \$100 for a red light violation. People will soak this up if we don't bang them for crossing the white line anymore, they think.

What about the Illinois Senate last February convening in private to discuss the state's immense debt? Did the legislators in the Senate talk about taxes, the cameras, pension reform, or whether the Cubs have a better team? No media allowed in that meeting. No taxpayers, either. But as one press report stated, "it ought to infuriate every citizen."

But it doesn't, because few pay attention. People trust the politician for some ungodly reason, even though, as the media states, "this is nothing less than an outrageous and audacious abuse of power."

No big deal, the politicians say—we met just so we can ask questions and have a free exchange of ideas, without worrying what the press might say, is how this inquiry was answered. Not good enough for me and hopefully not for you, either.

Shortly after, and I am not making any connections here but it's kind of suspicious, the entire Illinois legislature changed pensions for everyone in government except police and fire, commencing in 2011. You'll have heard about it I'm sure and we think cops' pensions are next on the list. They did all this in one day? So, when did these fine folks talk about this issue and agree in both chambers to do this?

The House and the Senate both rammed it through and it wasn't pretty. You're living on Pleasure Island if you think it won't happen to law enforcement in the future. Once this is accepted, your pensions, your amount of payment at the age you can retire will be drastically altered.

This is the game of musical chairs that they all agreed to sit in on. No one left standing here. Taxes? We'll wait until the governor is elected. Red light cameras? Tweak it so municipalities can't reduce the sequence of yellow to ensure more \$100 tickets.

Spring time will come and turn into summer. The Hawks will play into June (I hope). The Cubs and Sox—nobody can help them, as they will certainly self-destruct.

But you can get mad at the unchecked abuse in Springfield. No one living in your community will do it for you. It's your pension and you've got to fight with us to make your feelings known. Make the call, people.

Tell your legislators to stop with the backstabbing regarding your pensions. Reforming your pension in just one day should tell you something about their motives.

You as police officers still have the opportunity to make your voice heard. Let them hear it. If they don't respond, you need to make sure they hear you by voting them out come November. It's your future. Take charge. Don't let them steal it away from you because a seat at the game is worth the risk to them. You may need to take more than one chair away to get these clowns to listen to you.

Vita e'bella (Life is beautiful)

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