



# Laborers' International Union of North America

## Midwest Regional Office

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### Illinois Legislative Update

January 29, 2016

*The General Assembly returned to the Capitol Wednesday to hear the governor give his State of the State Address. They next return on February 10.*

#### **Dr. Rauner and Mr. Hyde**

**Gov. Bruce Rauner (R-Winnetka)** gave his 2016 State of the State Address one year (to the day) after he unveiled his plan to make massive cuts to construction worker pay and eliminate full collective bargaining rights for government employees. Little has changed over the last 365 days despite the fact that less than one percent of Illinois local governments answered Rauner's call to support his anti-union, anti-worker agenda and the fact that state lawmakers rejected Rauner's proposals more than a dozen times.

So, when news stories covering Rauner's speech reported that he moved away from his combative swipes at Democrats, particularly **House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago)**, and toward preaching cooperation and bi-partisanship, was it possible that Rauner was truly softening on his demands?

In a word, no. The speech was just another example of the "Dr. Jekyll" side of Rauner's personality putting aside "Mr. Hyde" for a moment, just like it did during the General Election when Rauner didn't utter a word about unions after bashing them throughout the Primary.

Rauner made only two direct references to unions in his speech: one, generally, and the other regarding the contract negotiations with state employees, specifically, AFSCME. And though he did not outline any specific proposals on worker issues, his intent is clear and unchanged.

*"Illinois' existing policies were meant to help working people and the middle class, but are now having just the opposite effect," Rauner said, "To see more people employed at high pay, we need to stop crushing employers. To create good jobs, we need more job creators."*

The message? Illinois must weaken or eliminate laws that protect workers, their pay and their unions. In Rauner's mind, weak laws and weak unions will attract businesses who will then to compete to hire workers (because, assumedly, there won't be enough to go around) which will, in turn, increase wages. Pay cuts mean pay raises. Make sense?

*"Our job is to improve the quality of life for ALL the people of Illinois," Rauner said, "That means more economic opportunity, to increase real incomes for all families: higher pay and lower cost of living for everyone."*

Well, not EVERYone. Rauner still wants to cut construction worker and public employee pay. The "kinder, gentler" Rauner just avoided saying it in his speech. Instead, he suggested Illinois adopt the recommendations of the Lt. Governor's task force on "unfunded mandates" – which proposed prohibiting the Prevailing Wage Act from applying to projects costing less than \$250,000 or eliminating the law entirely. (Though Rauner claimed it was a "bi-partisan task force," no Democrats supported any anti-worker proposals.) And Rauner got around specifically mentioning his desire to restrict collective bargaining rights by repeatedly saying the State should give local governments "more control."

*"I understand that union leaders... are putting pressure on you to keep the status quo – but if we don't offer a competitive environment for businesses, pretty soon the unions won't have any more jobs to unionize..."*

And unions need to continue pressuring lawmakers to maintain (and improve) worker protections because a "competitive environment" in Rauner's mind is a race to the bottom at breakneck speed. Even though he did not voice them, Rauner's anti-worker, anti-union attacks on the middle class have not gone away. Even a casual observer can see that, never far from the sunny surface of "Dr. Rauner," there is always the dark side of Mr. Hyde.

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*Feel the Power*

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