

## Good move on Guantanamo

**THE ISSUE** | President Barack Obama sets deadline for Guantanamo Bay detention center to close.

**OUR OPINION** | Condoning torture at Gitmo undercut our credibility and moral authority.

President Obama followed through on one of his most important campaign pledges Thursday by ordering the closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, within a year.

For the U.S. to continue to condone torture or look the other way undercuts any moral authority this country hopes to have in the world.

Or, in Obama's words: "It is precisely our ideals that give us the strength and the moral high ground to be able to effectively deal with the unthinking violence that we see emanating from terrorist organizations around the world. We intend to win this fight; we're going to win it on our terms."

It's a needed reminder our soldiers are fighting in dangerous wars on two fronts for

more than security. They are fighting for American values.

Take it from John McCain, a former prisoner of war who, before he ran for president, took the high ground about the "moral imperatives" that should govern our conduct in war.

Even in captivity, McCain said, he and other POWs in Vietnam "took great strength from the belief that we were different from our enemies, that we were better than them, that we, if the roles were reversed, would not disgrace ourselves by committing or approving such mistreatment of them."

Guantanamo Bay, in its systemic denial of basic human rights, has been a disgrace.

Good riddance.

## NATIONAL VIEW | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## We need to do better

The sweep of Illinois government's first 190 years included a panoply of servants and scoundrels elected to lead. Most survived their terms or died trying. But come 2009, the breathtaking abuses of Rod Blagojevich, criminal defendant and former governor, so stirred public passions that Illinois lawmakers had no choice but to expel him.

This was not, though, the curative removal of one rogue tumor from an otherwise robust body politic. We're a sick state, stricken as much today as yesterday by the Illinois culture of political sleaze. For lawmakers who despised him, amputating one friendless governor was easy: He was defiant, a bumbler – and indisputably dishonest.

The uncomfortable truth, though, is that his disgusting story is as much about the rest of us as it is about him. Which confronts the people of Illinois with three questions:

■ Years from now, will the defrocking of Blagojevich be renowned for provoking a course correction in the history of this state?

■ Or is this a momentous event whose repercussions won't last past ... the moment?

■ And the clincher: How can each of us make Thursday truly historic – not some footnote to our culture of political sleaze?

Look at what Illinois has to show for its last 10 years of scandal.

Neither major political party stands tall.

A Republican governor, George Ryan, went from the Statehouse to the Big House: The foul cloud of corruption that enveloped Ryan and his phony claims of innocence restricted him to one term as chief executive. He knew better than to ask voters for a second term. A federal jury did the rest.

Next came a Democratic governor, elected in 2002 on his promise to "end business as usual." He didn't – but you couldn't discern that from the behavior of his party's swells:

By 2006, when Blagojevich sought re-election, his friend and fundraiser Antoin "Tony" Rezko had been charged in a 24-count corruption indictment – including allegations that he had sought kickbacks for the governor's campaign fund and had used the governor's office to plant operatives in state positions of influence. Investigators were probing illicit state hiring, diversion of pension investments in exchange for political contributions, the awarding of state contracts, a mysterious \$1,500 check made out to the governor's then 7-year-old daughter by a man whose wife had just landed a state job after failing a hiring

exam ... and on and on.

Yet the state's Democratic leaders rallied around Blagojevich. They looked askance as the scamster spent millions of dollars not just to smear his GOP opponent, Judy Baar Topinka, but to incessantly portray her as human trash.

A *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* pollster found that 78 percent of Illinois voters knew about Rezko's problems – and only 37 percent said they believed Blagojevich when he said he didn't know about Rezko's alleged illegal acts. Yet Blagojevich led Topinka 47 to 38 percent in that poll. How so? "They're basically calling (Blagojevich) a liar, but they're still going to vote for him," Research 2000 pollster Del Ali told the *Post-Dispatch*.

Do you remember all those honorable Democratic leaders denouncing Blagojevich's bold hypocrisy? Criticizing his perpetuation of business as usual in Illinois? Telling voters to think seriously about how they invest their votes?

Neither do we.

Blagojevich reminded state senators Thursday of "the things all of us in politics do." There was nothing criminal about his actions, nothing wrong with his exercise of judgment – or, by implication, theirs. "Zero. ... I didn't do anything wrong!"

By a vote of 59-0, the senators – many of whom had enabled his furies and refused to give citizens a voice on a recall constitutional amendment – begged to differ.

Now how will the rest of us vote?

The real history here needs to be what happens next. The people of Illinois are one year shy of a 2010 primary election that will betray what we have, or haven't, learned.

If this state's cunning ploys convince us that lousy government is all about bad governors, they'll skate to easy re-elections.

If we instead question our own tribal loyalties, to this party or that organization and their pet candidates, we can stop being victims of this state's corrupt culture.

We can conduct our own private impeachments and expulsions.

And we can elect better candidates.

House prosecutor David Ellis spoke a grave truth Thursday at the Senate trial's conclusion: Governing, he said, is not a politician's constitutional right. It is a privilege.

We voters of Illinois chronically have been reckless with that privilege. We have embarrassed ourselves and our state.

We need to do better.

Office by office, candidate by candidate, we shall.

## ARTIST'S VIEW



COMMENTARY | U.S. REP. ERIC MASSA

## A time for action

On Monday, it was announced that more than 71,000 jobs were being cut nationwide. On Tuesday, it was announced that Corning Inc. had no choice but to lay off another 3,500 workers. On Wednesday, I voted for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the economic stimulus package, because we cannot allow our recession to deepen without taking bold action to stem these losses.

An economy that works results in a country that works. Doing nothing while our economy shuts down would put us into record unemployment levels. I took an oath to protect and defend our nation, and I refused to stand idle at the moment of truth. While I have listened to the voices of opposition on this issue, I know that doing nothing would have been negligent. I stand against deficit spending unless we are in a national emergency – we are in a national emergency.

This is an opinion shared by hundreds of leading economists, business leaders and organizations around the country including Paul Krugman, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics. Even John McCain's former economic adviser, Mark Zandi, supported this plan because strengthening our economy should not be a partisan issue.

The stimulus package will provide hundreds of millions of dollars for investment in the 29th Congressional District at a time when we need it the most. Investing in education, infrastructure, affordable housing and water projects is an important step in not only creating new jobs for

our district, but also in protecting our existing jobs.

Specifically for education, the stimulus bill includes two-year boosts of \$2.4 million for the Corning City School District, \$7.5 million for the Elmira City School District, \$1.6 million for the Olean City School District, \$1.8 million for the Hornell City School District, and \$1.5 million for the Canandaigua City School District. There are specific figures for every school district available on the Internet as well.

In the 29th Congressional District alone, this plan will also invest:

■ \$95,710,930 for higher education school construction.

■ \$163,816,000 for Department of Transportation infrastructure.

■ \$17,550,000 for NYS Thruway infrastructure.

■ \$11,100,000 for waste water infrastructure.

■ \$35,000,000 for clean water projects.

■ \$4,175,000 for state parks.

■ \$51,373,100 for affordable housing and community economic development.

We need to rebuild America, recommit ourselves to funding public education, and jumpstart our economy by putting America back to work. With over a 7.2 percent December nationwide unemployment rate and an 8.5 percent unemployment rate in Steuben County, now is the time to act.

Many skeptics have cited the failures of the TARP funds in their attacks on the economic stimulus, so I want to be very clear on a number of the differences. TARP spending, or the Wall Street bailout as it's become known, was passed before I

was sworn into office. I opposed TARP during the campaign and recently voted to block any further spending through this program because there was not enough accountability or transparency. When it was revealed that AIG was giving out \$450 million in bonuses to their failed executives while receiving TARP funds, those of us that opposed the program were proven right.

The stimulus package is critical to getting America back to work. This bill has several key main components. First, this plan will provide the funds to create and protect 3 million to 4 million jobs nationwide, including hundreds of thousands in the education sector.

Next, this plan will give significant tax cuts to working Americans, because we cannot ask middle-income Americans to bear the full burden of this recession.

Finally, unlike the TARP plan, the stimulus package has unprecedented levels of transparency. In fact, once it is completed and signed into law, you will literally be able to go on the Internet and read where the money is being spent, line by line.

This is George W. Bush's recession but it is our task to correct course. By voting to support the economic stimulus plan, I took action to strengthen our economy and help American families.

■ U.S. Rep. Eric Massa, D-Corning, represents the 29th Congressional District.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A list of our national problems

**TO THE EDITOR** | I have reduced our national problems to 16 items:

1. Oil lobby sabotaging electric car research.
2. Religious Right gumming things up.
3. ABA-CIA-MOSSAD-Syndicate Bankers based in Elmira getting away with murder.
4. Greed and corruption on Wall Street.
5. Put the Supreme Court on C-SPAN.
6. Elect all Federal Judges in 10-year staggered intervals so Syndicate can't corrupt them.
7. National Health Insurance.
8. Nationalize the Federal Reserve like Lincoln did and pay off all debt.
9. Limit federal and state income taxes to & percent including churches and NGO's (eliminate or keep an

eye on money laundering).

10. Establish the department of Love and Caring in Elmira, N.Y. (Cabinet Level Department) to find run aways and missing people, help dysfunctional families and businesses, and find street people first loves complete with Orphanage, etc.

11. Legalize drugs FDA approved pills, sold through psychiatrists' prescription, DEA enforcement. No more bad dope murders.

12. 10 year working amnesty for illegal aliens, then citizenship is no felony convictions.

13. Energy, acid rain, and CO2 condenser research funding for coal power plants. Navy run nuclear power plants with DOD Civilian assist. Store milled and refined nuclear waste in indestructible 38,000 psi compression and 100,000 psi tensile glass lead lined balls with borosilicate inner

bulb at Yucca Mt. for future Fusion Reactor incineration or long storage or shoot into the sun rocket shots.

14. Canadian style bars where children are allowed in. A good bartender will report stray children without parents and drinking to social services. Breathalyzer tests on spot with Miranda rights read for DWI tests. 18 year drinking age.

15. Legalize prostitution and gambling.

16. Develop electric propeller glass and concrete tube bullet trains on old train or Interstate Highway right-of-ways for mass transportation. Dr. Foa-RPI 1960 invention.

P.S. Bill Clinton should be secretary of the UN to clean up that mess and enforce its laws.

Richard H. Tomb  
Corning

## There's a huge difference between Weeks, Big 3 chairmen

Corning Inc. CEO Wendell Weeks took a shot during his press conference Thursday for taking a company jet to Washington to meet with President Barack Obama.

The remark came from a photograph, of all people, who are usually paid to take pictures and keep quiet. But not this guy, who is a veteran in

the business but has a well-earned reputation for being, well, unlikable.

Weeks, who was beaming with pride that Corning Inc. was being consulted by Obama, began the press conference by saying his office was called by the White House a day in advance to be in Washington on Wednesday.

The photographer, who was sitting just a few feet from Weeks, piped up with: "I guess that means you didn't have the time to take a commercial flight then?" or words to that effect.

The room went silent and Weeks just lowered and shook his head dismissively.

A reporter's question posed to Weeks about meeting Obama quickly put the press conference – which Weeks was under no obligation to give – back on track.

But it's worth pointing out that Weeks' trip to Washington was nothing like that of the chairmen of the Big 3 auto makers who got ripped, and rightly so, for taking company jets to appear before Congress a few months ago. The Big 3 bosses were asking for a taxpayer-funded bailout whereas Weeks was assisting on a national economic plan.

Big difference.

Weeks was the first active Corning Inc. CEO to meet with a president in quite some time. The last was Jamie Houghton when he was named to the National Skills Standard Board by President Bill Clinton, sources say.

Of course Amo Houghton met with several presidents, but that was while he was a congressman and not the company's CEO. One exception, Amo told me, was when he met with President John F. Kennedy back in 1962, about two years before he was named president of the glassworks.

Wasn't the intent of Gov. David Paterson coming out in December with his proposed budget to give legislators time to work through it?

Well, here we are in February and the state Legislature hasn't yet done a thing about the budget and the huge deficit the state faces.

The Senate is just getting organized after Democrats assumed control and has yet to take up any business. In general, Albany lawmakers appear to be simply waiting to see how much the state will get in the federal stimulus package before making any financial decisions.

The concern here is that lawmakers will use as much federal money as possible to bridge the budget gap without making the cuts necessary to right-size state spending. If allowed, state lawmakers will take the easy way out rather than make the tough decisions they all promised prior to the November elections.

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