

Illinois Lt. Gov. aims to tax the rich

Constitutional amendment would raise \$1.15B

By Jennifer Wig

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SPRINGFIELD — A Robin Hood-style constitutional amendment that would increase state income taxes on the rich to relieve property taxes may be on the November ballot if Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn gets his way.

Quinn's plan, the Taxpayer Action Amendment, would increase income taxes for residents who earn more than \$250,000 annually. Quinn estimates the revenue generated would provide \$575 million for education funding and \$575 million in property tax relief.

The measure was on Tuesday's primary ballots in 23 counties and 10 municipalities in all parts of the state. It received 525,242 "yes" votes and 173,076 "no" votes.

Sen. Maggie Crotty D-Oak Forest, is sponsoring Senate Joint Resolution and Constitutional Amendment 20 to put the amendment on the November ballot. Individuals who earn more than

\$250,000 would be taxed 6 percent on any earnings above that mark. The rest would be taxed at the present 3 percent rate.

Quinn observed Thursday that 6 percent still would be under the Midwest's average tax rate of 6.27 percent on a \$250,000 income. He said putting more money into education is the best way to improve the job market and that changing Illinois' tax system is a necessary step to enrich education.

"The people of Illinois want action on this issue," he said. "Let the people have a chance to vote on this. We should follow a principle as old as the Bible that says taxes should be based on ability to pay."

Jim Tobin, spokesman for the National Taxpayers United of Illinois, said the amendment only will put more money into a system that does not need it. He also said any education money would be spent on salaries and pensions, two areas that have more than enough.

"If this thing passes, it will be a signal to the governor: Go ahead and raise income taxes," he said.

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