

THE CENTERPIECE

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- UIS will be well represented by Center faculty and staff at the Midwest Political Science Association's annual meeting in April. Political science professor **Michael Miller** will present two papers. One, co-authored with David Doherty of Loyola University and Conor Dowling of the University of Mississippi, examines whether the passage of time changes how the public evaluates politicians who make political mistakes. Using data from two survey experiments, Miller and his colleagues find that the effectiveness of using prior mistakes to challenge a candidate's character declines, although not entirely, as missteps recede into the past. The research also shows that the consequences of the passing of time for a policy flip-flop depend on whether the politician moved in the right or wrong direction from the voter's perspective. Voters prefer politicians who consistently support the "right" position over politicians who only recently made the switch.
- In his second paper, **Miller** draws on data from 18 states to examine whether the amount of time a state house candidate spends campaigning affects his or her share of the major party vote. While there is no significant relationship between time and vote margin in open-seat elections, there is when challengers go up against incumbents. The expected return from additional campaign hours declines as challengers devote more effort, dropping off to 0 after about 60 hours a week.
- Two papers will also be presented at the meeting by **Dr. Ashley Kirzinger**, director of the Center's Survey Research Office (SRO), and two of her colleagues, **Valerie Howell** and **Alan James Simmons**. One paper combines results from the Sangamon County Economic Outlook Survey, which SRO conducts, with content analysis of local media coverage of the economy. It shows that business owners' outlook for the economy is very similar to the tone of economic news in local media. The other paper, which also taps into data from the Sangamon Economic Outlook survey, shows that business owners who prefer local news over national news sources have a more positive economic outlook.
- **WUIS'** new local journalism desk devoted to food and agriculture issues has gotten off to a strong start. The desk's editor, **Bill Wheelhouse**, has produced two stories that quickly became top online reads for the station's audience. One story detailed the views of the president of ag giant Monsanto on the labeling of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in food, something grocer Whole Foods plans to starting doing. The other story looked into the impact of post office closings in rural areas, which was picked up by postalnews.com.

- The cover article for the April edition of **Illinois Issues** describes how former U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. rose to become one of the brightest new stars of the Democratic Party and then plummeted to the ground owing to his involvement with then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich in seeking to replace Barack Obama in the U.S. Senate and his guilty plea to using campaign money for lavish personal items. It is written by **Natasha Korecki**, who covered the Jackson saga for the *Chicago Sun-Times*.
- **Jonathan Grayson**, who the **Illinois Innocence Project** helped get exonerated this time last year, recently attended the first hearing on his petition for a Certificate of Innocence, which will officially declare him exonerated of the crime that he was wrongfully convicted of committing 13 years ago in Kane County. Also, coming up on April 6th, the Innocence Project will hold its annual Defenders of the Innocent reception in the Artisan Building on the state fairgrounds. This year, the event will honor, among others, *Chicago Tribune* columnist **Eric Zorn**, whose investigative reporting has helped to shine a bright light on wrongful convictions in Illinois.
- The Center's **Office of Electronic Media** has been contracted to produce a video for the **Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services** to educate and promote the successful transition of patients from nursing homes to community settings. The video is one way the Department is responding to a consent decree, stemming from *Colbert v. Quinn*, in which the state reached an agreement with a federal court to give persons with disabilities in nursing homes the opportunity to choose to live in their own residence.
- **Gwen Jordan**, a member of the Legal Studies faculty with a joint appointment in the Center, and **Matthew Holden**, Wepner Distinguished Professor in Political Science, in mid-March completed UIS' massive open online course (MOOC), "The Emancipation Proclamation: What Came Before, How It Worked, and What Came After." The eight-week course will remain available on coursesites.com. In addition to outside scholars, the MOOC features presentations by UIS faculty **Heather Bailey** (history) and **Steven Schwark** (political science).
- Sixty percent of users of the **Illinois Tobacco Quitline** in 2012 indicated that they were very satisfied with their experience, according to a recent evaluation of the Quitline by the **Survey Research Office**. In addition, one in six respondents reported that they had been tobacco-free during the seven months prior to being surveyed. This is the third year that SRO has conducted the evaluation of the Quitline. Using mail, web, and telephone surveys, responses were received from 986 people who used the Quitline.
- Political scientist **Michael Miller** has just been named to the advisory board for a project funded by the Open Society Foundation and the Democracy Fund to conduct a series of field experiments on campaign finance.

David P. Racine, Ph.D.

Interim Executive Director, Center for State Policy and Leadership

Director, Institute for Legal, Legislative, and Policy Studies
University of Illinois Springfield
One University Plaza, MS PAC 409
Springfield, IL 62703-5407
Phone: (217)206-8417