



News Release

19-11
March 17, 2011

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Former Gov. Jim Edgar oral histories now on line

Conference on Edgar's years as Governor to be held April 15 – 16 at Lincoln Presidential Library

SPRINGFIELD – Even twelve years after leaving office, Jim Edgar remains the state's most popular chief executive and his counsel and endorsements are sought by leaders of both political parties. Now, the history of former Governor Edgar's years in government service, told by Edgar himself as well as the people who worked with and worked against him, is available on line through the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum's "Illinois Statecraft" Oral History Program.

In addition, the eight years Jim Edgar served as Governor of Illinois will be the focus of the 2011 Governor's Conference to be held Friday and Saturday, April 15 and 16 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield. Edgar and several key staff members from his administration are scheduled to participate.

The oral history interviews and registration information for the April conference are available at www.presidentlincoln.org.

"Jim Edgar left an indelible impression on Illinois government, and we are very fortunate that he and several key people around him have recorded these first-person accounts that can be accessed by anyone with a computer," said Illinois State Historian Thomas Schwartz.

More than 30 individuals, including Edgar administration officials, political allies, opponents and journalists, provided more than 230 hours of interviews for the oral history project. Website visitors may hear interviews from such people as Gov. Edgar; Press Secretary Mike Lawrence; key aides Al Grosboll, Carter Hendren, George Fleischli, Mike McCormick, Andy Foster, and Sherry Struck; Lieutenant Governor Bob Kustra; Budget Directors Joan

Walters and Steve Schnorf; Legislative Director Mark Boozell; agency directors Howard Peters, Kirk Brown, Jess McDonald and Brent Manning; Chiefs of Staff Kirk Dillard, Jim Reilly and Gene Reineke; Legal Counsel Arnie Kanter; election opponents Neil Hartigan and Dawn Clark Netsch; legislators Phil Rock and James “Pate” Philip; and First Lady Brenda Edgar. Several journalists who covered the Edgar administration have also contributed oral histories. The collection also includes numerous photographs, cartoons, and even campaign advertisements.

The Jim Edgar Oral History Project is the latest addition to the “Illinois Statecraft” portion of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum’s Oral History Program. Interviews in this section are also available from Former Governor Dan Walker, former Senate President Emil Jones, and journalists and key administration officials who have been around state government for decades. Other sections of the Oral History Program deal with the experiences of veterans from World War II to the present, the story of agriculture in Illinois, and memories from the African American community of Springfield. More oral histories will continue to be added from a variety of individuals on a range of topics.

The Governor’s Conference on the Jim Edgar Administration opens Friday, April 15 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library with “Jim Edgar as politician,” taking a closer look at Edgar’s life as an astute politician and life-long political junkie. Panelists will include Carter Hendren, Andy Foster, Mike McCormick and Tom Livingston, moderated by Bernie Seracki from the Illinois Institute of Technology. A reunion reception will follow.

Scheduled sessions on Saturday, April 16 include:

- The Edgar administration preserved: Highlights of the Edgar Oral History Project. This session will introduce the Presidential Library’s Oral History Project and include clips of interviews from Gov. Edgar and key administration officials.
- Budget deficits – Then and Now. A comparison of the administration’s budget fights of 1991 through 1993, compared to the state’s current budget deficit and strategies for addressing it. Panel members will include Joan Walters, Kirk Dillard, Felicia Norwood and Mark Boozell, with David Racine of the University of Illinois at Springfield serving as moderator.
- Edgar Administration Goals and Accomplishments. This panel discussion will focus on the Edgar administration’s main accomplishments, including education reform, government reorganization, and human service improvements. Participants will include Mike Lawrence, Howard Peters, Al Grosboll and Gene Reineke, with Ron Michaelson of the University of Illinois at Springfield the moderator.
- The Journalists’ View of the Edgar Administration. A panel of journalists who covered the Edgar administration will share their views, including Rick Pearson, Bernie Schoenburg and Kevin McDermott. The moderator will be Paul Green of Roosevelt University.

Jim Edgar, a Republican, was a member of the Illinois House of Representatives between 1977 and 1979. In 1979, then Governor James R. Thompson named Edgar his legislative liaison. Two years later, when then-Secretary of State Alan Dixon moved to the U.S. Senate, Thompson named Edgar to fill the vacancy. In 1982 and 1986, Edgar was re-elected to the office. In 1990,

he won the first of his two terms as governor, defeating Neil Hartigan; Edgar was re-elected in 1994, defeating State Comptroller and former State Senator Dawn Clark Netsch.

Edgar is currently a Distinguished Fellow with the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

For more information about programs at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, visit www.presidentlincoln.org.

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