

The Carmi Times

Tax cuts, not increases, needed in Illinois: Brady

By BARRY CLEVELAND Of The Times Staff

Tax cuts, not tax increases, are the key to improving Illinois' economy, a likely candidate for governor in 2010 told a White County audience Friday night.

State Sen. Bill Brady of Bloomington was the guest speaker at the annual Lincoln Day dinner of the White County Republican Central Committee, held at the VFW Hall.

Brady, introduced by U.S. Rep. John Shimkus, said Democrats favor new programs and higher taxes, but that won't restore Illinois' economic health. By lowering taxes, he said, Illinois could lure new business and industry to the state, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs and generating billions for the state treasury.

The 44th District lawmaker, who unsuccessfully sought his party's nomination for governor in 2006 and hinted strongly that he'll run for the position again in two years, said Illinois is in sad shape. The state comptroller admitted the state doesn't have the money to pay \$1.7 billion in bills, he said, and the state is in debt to the tune of \$100 billion, or \$8,800 per person.

Democrats can't lay all the blame on the unpopular Gov. Rod Blagojevich, said Brady, because their own legislative leaders (House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President Emil Jones) have had a hand in creating the mess. Not only has the governor failed to follow through on promises to stimulate the economy and improve healthcare, but he has hiked taxes on businesses, wants to impose fees on park users and hopes to add a \$5 per barrel tax on crude oil produced in Illinois.

Illinois is rich in natural and human resources but is among the lowest ranking states in the Union in job creation, the speaker said. "And the governor just doesn't get it." Blagojevich seems not to understand that there is more to Illinois than Chicago. "I believe that it's the greatest large city in the nation and it's important to all of Illinois," he said of the Windy City. "But our needs are important, too." He charged that Blagojevich and the state's other constitutional officers, all Chicago Democrats, "don't care about our needs. We need to bring about a more balance government in Illinois," he said.

"Can we win?" he asked, acknowledging that Illinois leans Democrat these days. But he said it can be done. About a quarter of the state's voters identify themselves as conservative Republicans, about a quarter as liberal Democrats and the rest are moderate independents. The key will be to cultivate votes in that group, he indicated.

"We have to field candidates who bring our strengths to the front," he said, asserting that Republicans historically have believed in smaller government, lower taxes and personal responsibility.

"People are thirsting for answers," he said.

Brady said that rather than raise the state income tax, as some Democrats propose, taxes should actually be cut. He said the proper measures would restore 700,000 jobs to Illinois, generating \$3 billion in annual state revenue.

"Our jobs have fled to nearby states," said Brady, noting that Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, a Republican, recently told a Chicago business audience that he is a firm backer of Blagojevich--because of all the jobs which have fled Illinois for Indiana.

Brady noted that Democratic candidates for president are calling for "change," but he sought to paint one of those candidates, U.S. Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois, as an agent of the wrong kind of change. Brady cited the links of Obama to indicted fundraiser Tony Rezko and controversial preacher Jerome Wright, and he criticized remarks made by Obama's wife, Michelle, about being proud of this country only after her husband decided to run for the presidency.

The right kind of change is that which presumptive GOP presidential nominee John McCain would bring, Brady said, urging his listeners to speak out and tell others why Obama isn't the right candidate for 2008.

Brady (who has been in the Legislature since 1993) urged his audience to work hard for Republican candidates in 2008 and prepare the way for a statewide push in 2010. He noted that legislative and congressional districts will be drawn by the Legislature, after the 2010 census, and it's important that Republicans have a voice in that process, preferably by electing a BOP governor.

Brady said his 2006 gubernatorial effort fell short, and he acknowledged that some of his listeners may not have voted for him then. "I hope to give you a second chance in 2010!" he said in closing.

In introducing Brady, Shimkus (whose 19th Congressional District includes about half of White County) said he had spent 2 1/2 hours talking with constituents earlier in the day in McLeansboro. And about three-quarters of them had complaints about state government, he said. "The sad thing is that I couldn't offer them any hope.

"They're concerned about the direction of the state. We [republicans] are in a minority; this mess has occurred on the Democrats' watch."

Shimkus said the Democrat-controlled state government is guilty of "criminal negligence" in not addressing the state's problems, including the slow payment to healthcare providers (detailed earlier in the week in a Times story by Braden Willis).

Among other Republican office-holders on hand (but not speaking) were state Sen. John O. Jones, state Rep. David Reis, Ken Burzynski of Benton (running for state senate against incumbent Democrat Gary Forby), State's Attorney T. Scott Webb, Coroner Carl McVey, Supervisor of Assessments Nancy A. Winter and county board members Ron Wooten, Wayne Nelson and Wes Trout.

A large crowd was on hand for the meeting, which featured a buffet smothered steak meal. Entertainment was provided by twins Maggie and Gracie Ackerman, granddaughters of Gene and Glenda Ackerman, chairman of the county GOP committee and ladies' chair, respectively. Ron Wooten was the master of ceremonies. Maggie Ackerman won the 50-50 drawing worth \$110. Several door prizes were also given away.