

May 1, 2014

**Madigan moves Obama library bill in re-vote, defies Rauner**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD — This time, House Speaker Michael Madigan followed his own rules.

A House panel reconvened Wednesday and signed off — again — on a $100 million offering from the state to entice planners of President Barack Obama’s presidential library to locate the facility in Illinois.

The 7-4 party-line vote to send the spending measure to the House floor was the second in two weeks by the House Executive Committee and came as Republican gubernatorial hopeful Bruce Rauner weighed in for the first time Wednesday against publicly funding the library.

House Republicans demanded the second roll call after Madigan, D-Chicago, failed to give notice there would be a vote on his legislation at an earlier hearing April 17. That hearing occurred during the Legislature’s spring recess when most of the committee’s members, including all of its Republicans, were absent.

During that first hearing, Madigan used a surprise parliamentary tactic and unexpectedly used a roll call from the day before to rush the Obama library measure through committee but agreed to a re-vote after Republicans later protested.

On Wednesday, Madigan and a representative of Mayor Rahm Emanuel went before the panel again to make their pitches for spending the money.

“We’re talking about a son of Illinois who became president of the United States,” Madigan told the panel. “This library and museum will be dedicated to that son of Illinois, and it will become an international tourist attraction.”

Victoria Watkins, a top lobbyist for the city, said Madigan’s legislation has merit.

“He became our president, and he continued to always keep an eye on Chicago and make sure people knew it was an important place to him,” she said.

But Rep. Ed Sullivan, R-Mundelein, who was the most vocal in alleging Madigan broke House rules with the first committee vote, sounded a common GOP refrain in saying the cash-strapped state can ill afford to spend money on a presidential library that ought to be built through private fundraising, not with dollars from state coffers.

“We’re not opposed to the library, but we have lots of other needs,” he said, citing, for example, Emanuel’s push to outfit more city schools with air-conditioning.

“Do you want to pay for air conditioning in schools or a library? Do you want to pay for cops on the streets to stop the killing or do you want to pay for a library?” Sullivan said.

Meanwhile, shortly after the vote and during an event outside the Capitol, Rauner voiced his opposition to Madigan’s plan.

“I think it’s a great idea to have it in Illinois. We should definitely have it in Illinois and work hard to do that. It could be a great tourism draw, and tourism is a great economic opportunity for the state, which we should do more of,” he told Early & Often.

“But the flip side is, my understanding is presidential libraries fundamentally all over the nation are funded privately, and there’s no reason we can’t do that here in Illinois,” said Rauner, one of Illinois’ wealthiest men and philanthropists. “We should lead a private funding initiative. We shouldn’t necessarily take taxpayer dollars.”

After Wednesday’s vote, Madigan figuratively tossed cold water on the plan’s GOP critics.

“The people that are concerned about the optics are the people that are not supporting it. And you heard the roll call: They’re all Republicans,” Madigan told reporters.

“So I would say again, the state of Illinois has participated in the construction of university buildings, libraries at universities, other public structures all over the state. This is a building to be located in the state of Illinois that would be an international tourist attraction and would be named after a son of Illinois who became president of the United States. So those are all solid reasons to support this.

“We did it for Abraham Lincoln here in Springfield,” Madigan said, citing the presidential library and museum in Lincoln’s hometown for which $125 million in state funding was appropriated. “We should do it for Barack Obama in Chicago.”

To further tamp down the GOP concerns about state funding for the Obama library, Madigan’s spokesman, Steve Brown, added that presidential libraries across the country have been built on land that either was given or leased to those respective institutions by universities.

Despite making the big push now for Obama’s presidential library, Madigan hasn’t always been a big fan of the president’s, including as recently as 2006, when he derisively referred to Obama as the “messiah” after Obama’s favored candidate for state treasurer, Alexi Giannoulias, defeated Madigan’s hand-picked choice.

Asked Wednesday for a history lesson on what he originally meant by that term, “messiah,” Madigan laughed uncomfortably and asked a reporter, “What’s your next question?”

Pressed for an explanation, the speaker said, “No, I’m not going to speak to that. I’m not going to speak to that. I’m here to talk about the bill that was before the committee. If you have any questions on the bill, fire away.”