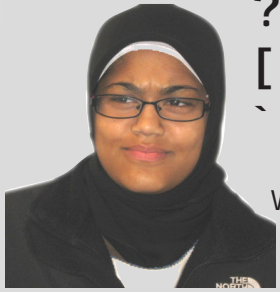


EDITORIALS



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w Uzma Ahmad
Editorials Editor

Recently, President-elect Barack Obama and his advisors drew plans to enable the shutting down of the Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba sometime after the Obama's inauguration. Under this proposal, some detainees will be released, while others will be tried here in America under the Constitution. Our President-elect's decision will definitely prove to be a positive step for both our nation and the world as well.

The prison at Guantanamo Bay, unlike prisons in America, does not adhere to *habeas corpus*, the right to a speedy trial. Instead, prisoners are unjustly detained for hardly any reason at all. Many of the detainees are held in Guantanamo for crimes they have never committed. These detainees are illegally convicted without any proper evidence, and can be held for an indefinite period time. Thus, Guantanamo is irrefutably an immoral and unwarranted institution. Closing down such an inhumane prison and releasing these prisoners is essential.

Such an inequitable prison system is a slap in the face to America's highly renowned judiciary system. Even though it is an institution administered by our nation, prisoner rights that are present in our own courts and jails are not reflected at the prison in Guantanamo Bay. Through this hypocrisy, the United States is creating ill will. People of other nations will be more likely to believe that the ideals of justice that our leaders so openly espouse are not actually held up when it come to foreigners. Obama's plan to shut down such an immoral prison is not only ethical and righteous, but it reinforces the idea of equality for all people and suspects—an ideal that is truly woven into the fabric our nation.

This prison has been criticized by many countries and important political figures, and more important, it is considered illegal by the United Nations (U.N.) and international law. Under the United States' own Military Commissions Act, the prison does not meet standards because the evidence that it extracts from prisoners has been obtained under inhumane and degrading treatment. Also, the prison orders death sentences after unfair trials. For these and numerous other reasons, international law deems this prison flawed and cruel.

However, even though the prison breaks international law, President George W. Bush has kept the prison running, despite the fact that prison conditions at Guantanamo are unimaginably cruel

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and degrading. Simply at the will of the guards and administrators, detainees are openly tortured and abused in countless ways. The unwarranted treatment of prisoners is demeaning, and thus, Guantanamo Bay prison has become a symbol of cruelty. Closing down such a harsh prison may not erase the serious mental, physical and emotional pain that it has already afflicted on its detainees, but it will ensure that immorality is discontinued in the future. Shutting down Guantanamo will secure our accordance to international and the U.N.'s laws.

Obama proposes that Guantanamo's prisoners who are not allowed to leave will be tried in American courts under all of its rights and laws. Although an international court would probably be more impartial and unbiased, any court trial is better than no trial at all. Allowing proper convictions with a court process that adheres to imprisonment for definite time frames (unlike the indefinite periods of imprisonment of Guantanamo prisoners), is more moral and allows for the fair treatment of prisoners. Through Obama's proposal, the criminals of Guantanamo will finally receive suitable punishments and a fair trial.

It is highly propagated by our media that Guantanamo Bay is a nest of murderers and terrorists. If this is true, the government should be able to press charges, commit to an actual trial and be able to produce substantial evidence against them. This has not happened.

The Guantanamo Bay prison is a stain on America's reputation and justice system. Under President-elect Obama's proposal, one hopes that these people will finally be able to taste the sweet justice for which our country stands.

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w Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

As reported on page one of this issue, 33 teachers in District 219 are completing the process of National Board Certification (NBC), the most stringent set guidelines for teacher certification in the United States.

The NBC guidelines are significantly more rigorous than those required by Illinois and most other states. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, educators in all 50 states are required to have a bachelor's degree in education. This bachelor's degree must consist of a completed approved teacher training program with a prescribed number of subject and education credits, in addition to student teaching. In order to obtain a teacher's certificate in Illinois, teachers must obtain a bachelor's degree in education (or take the required education courses in addition to their subject area bachelor's degree) and must pass basic skills and subject area competency tests.

While the Illinois standards for teacher certification are sufficient, according to www.nbpts.org, NBC offers teachers the opportunity to reflect upon their teaching in efforts to improve methods in the classroom. NBC calls for teachers to meet precise standards through intensive study, evaluation and self-assessment. The

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standards have a base of five core propositions that form the foundation of knowledge and skills that differentiate NBC teachers from those who are not certified. NBC standards include the following: teachers are committed to students and their learning; teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students; teachers are committed to students and their learning; teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning; teachers think systematically and they practice

and learn from experience and are also active members of learning communities.

These are the maximum requirements? One would think that such standards would be the bottom line criteria for state certification. The Illinois Department of Education should reconsider their teaching certification requirements and mandate all teachers receive NBC.

NBC standards surpass all state standards, in that they allow

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teachers to self-reflect upon everything they do in the classroom. NBC standards induce teachers to self-evaluate their teaching, something state and federal standards do not. NBC has effectively created a system of assessment and evaluation that gives teachers the opportunity to question their teaching and to improve to the benefit of their students.

Such assessment is so important that states should require new teachers to acquire NBC by the end of their 10th year of teaching. Why 10 years? According to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), in order to seek NBC, teachers must meet the follow requirements: hold a bachelor's degree, have completed three full years of teaching experience and possess a valid state teaching license for that period of time.

By allowing 10 years for new teachers to obtain NBC, teachers have the time frame to focus on adjusting to the new profession, to satisfy NBPTS minimum guidelines and to acquire a master's degree (important both for state certification and for advancement on the district's salary scale). A decade offers teachers ample time to complete all of the above and the process of NBC.

By mandating NBC as a requirement for all teachers statewide, Illinois' students will be taught by the best. According to the NBPTS, NBC is the highest symbol of professional teaching excellence. NBC standards form an excellent benchmark to which all teachers should aspire.

By requiring all new teachers to obtain NBC by their 10th year in teaching, teachers can raise the bar by improving and altering methods by evaluating exactly what occurs in the classroom.

The NBC should replace current basic state certification requirements, as its guidelines promote the true meaning of being a teacher—helping each student succeed.

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Managing Editor

Adding to the ongoing drama that is the failing economy, Congress recently denied a plan for bailing out the giants of the automotive industry. General Motors (GM), Ford and Chrysler, also known as The Big Three, recently asked Congress for a \$14 billion bailout after a decrease in car sales over the past few months. The bailout, if it had been approved, would have kept the car companies afloat for another three months. Congress' rejection of the bailout will have many negative aspects. Automakers may not survive past March, and hundreds of thousands of jobs might be lost, not to mention the loss of America's major source of transportation.

Congress' denial of the plan puts automaker employees at the brink of unemployment. According to www.money.cnn.com, GM (335,000), Ford (300,000) and Chrysler (130,000) would be forced to lay off hundreds of thousands of employees. If these companies cannot afford to continue producing cars, these auto workers will lose their main source of income and have trouble providing for families. What will happen to their future if they no longer have a job? These employees depend on car sales, so that they can have a home to live in and food to eat. Furthermore, with the federal government's coffers already stretched to the breaking point, where will the Department of Labor find the funds to pay

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Editorial

Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich was arrested Dec. 9 and charged with felony conspiracy and bribery charges, including allegations that the governor sought to benefit financially from his appointment of a successor for President-elect Barack Obama's vacated United States Senate seat.

The *Washington Post* reported that Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) wiretaps captured Blagojevich and chief of staff John Harris discussing the financial arrangement. Further, noted the *Chicago Tribune*, the governor allegedly threatened to withhold state financing to the Tribune Company for assistance with Wrigley Field, the home of the Chicago Cubs, unless the *Chicago Tribune* newspaper fired critical editorial board writers.

Blagojevich flirted with disaster in the past with the Tony Rezko scandal. According to National Public Radio (NPR), Rezko is accused of using his position on two state boards in an extortion scheme that would enrich him and his co-conspirators, while also adding to Blagojevich's campaign coffers.

Prosecutors allege that Rezko used his clout to try to collect bogus fees from companies that wanted investments from the pension fund and permits from the hospital board, NPR reported.

Blagojevich has not been charged with any wrongdoing in the Rezko scandal, but two other members of his inner circle are under indictment. U.S. District Judge Amy J. St. Eve has publicly named the governor as the anonymous "Public Official A" who appears in court papers as a beneficiary of the alleged scheme.

While Blagojevich might have escaped prosecution in the Rezko case, he was caught red handed by the FBI. However, when freed from custody after paying a \$4,500 bail the next morning, Blagojevich simply resumed the state's highest political post as if nothing had happened.

Despite pressure from the media, President-elect Barack Obama, Illinois Speaker of the House Mike Madigan and daughter

unemployment and welfare benefits to over three quarters of a million laid off auto workers?

If the specter of thousands of employees being laid off were not ominous enough, imagine the impact on public transportation should domestic automobile production be ceased. Without a doubt, cars are the country's main source of transportation. This is evidenced by the sheer volume of traffic coming to and from downtown Chicago during each rush hour. Imagine all the people in those cars taking Chicago Transportation Authority buses and trains. The system would not be able to handle such a massive influx. Let's face it: cars are necessary for the working class.

Fortunately, even though Capitol Hill denied any bailout funds to The Big Three, the Bush administration is willing to give money to the automotive industry. While I don't approve of the majority of the administration's decisions, they are doing their best in bringing America out of the massive economic crisis. Ironically, according to www.money.cnn.com, most of the people who voted to reject the bill were Republicans, President George W. Bush's own political party. Could it be that after the beating the GOP took in November's election, Republican legislators seek to distance themselves from the Bush administration?

Furthermore, Congress tends to be a haven for the well-to-do. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that legislators would move quickly to provide a bailout plan for the finance industry but not for car companies that sell millions of automobiles to people who need them. Shame on them!

With the future of many jobs at stake and the possibility of a transportation nightmare, Congress should take a closer look at the consequence of its actions. Legislators have underestimated the need for America's automotive industry to survive. If the automobile industry falls, it will be the beginning of a large domino effect that could lead to another economic crisis that this country does not need.

Lisa, state Attorney General, Blagojevich has yet to do what everyone except the governor and his family know is the right thing to do—step down. Blagojevich's shady actions are an outrage. Thus, *West Word* calls for Blagojevich's immediate resignation.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Speaker Madigan has already called for impeachment of the governor; however, this is a time-consuming process that will keep state government in limbo for months. Meanwhile, Blagojevich legally can appoint Obama's successor, a circumstance that state legislators hope to avoid, especially considering recent revelations.

If Blagojevich does not resign, Illinois legislators have another alternative. According to Yahoo! News, "there also has been talk of the legislature passing a law that would strip the governor of the power to name a replacement and call for a special election instead." However, WLS-TV Chicago quoted Illinois State Senator Susan Garrett, who estimated that the special election could cost taxpayers \$30 - \$40 million.

If the governor resigns, Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn would replace him. The relationship between the two long has been strained, and Quinn has called for Blagojevich's resignation. One would suppose that Quinn would go out of his way to make a more enlightened choice.

Now that Blagojevich has been revealed to be the fraud that many have suspected him to be all along, it will be extremely difficult for the public to trust Blagojevich's choice for the senate seat. Blagojevich has abused his responsibilities, using his governor's seat for personal gain—all at the expense of hard working citizens. These people, most of whom initially voted for this corrupt politician, are being cheated. Thus, it is essential that Quinn replace him immediately.

Blagojevich, who is narcissistic enough to return to his position even after his deceptive crimes were unveiled, is a stain on Illinois' political scene. He is an embarrassment to Illinois and to Democrats around the nation.

His corruption threatens to taint Illinois politicians' reputations, including that of the President-elect.

Our governor's actions have become so notorious that a recent *Saturday Night Live* sketch mocked Blagojevich, a humiliation that is normally reserved for New York, national or international political figures. Blagojevich and the state that he serves have become a punch line. The citizens of Illinois deserve better.

If Blagojevich resigns now, Illinois will be saved further embarrassment and millions of dollars on a special election.

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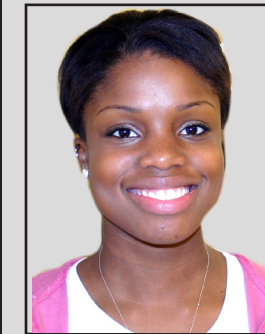
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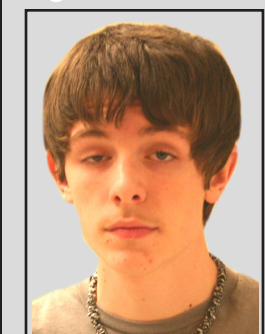
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Blagojevich better bet in gubernatorial race

Editorial

On the second Tuesday of this November, as they do every four years, residents of Illinois who are registered to vote, will most likely cast their votes for one of two candidates for governor of Illinois, Democratic incumbent Rod Blagojevich or Republican State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka.

In this case, *West Word* has made the decision to endorse Rod Blagojevich for governor of Illinois.

One of the aspects about Rod Blagojevich that convinced *West Word* that he is a man of the people is his background. During his first four years as governor, he raised the minimum wage for 450,000 workers.

His track record for creating jobs is also something of note, because his work to bring investment to the state of Illinois has created 95,000 jobs over the past two years. He has also helped put into law a program that would give \$600 million every year to help house 115,000 people.

During his four-year term, he has spent \$3.8 billion on education. This is more than 43 other states, more than any other state in the Midwest and the most in Illinois history. If elected

again, his proposed education plan would spend an additional \$6 billion on Illinois education that would be used as merit pay for school teachers, mandatory afterschool tutoring, parental involvement, textbook replacement and many other necessities.

His work to improve healthcare in the state of Illinois has been absolutely astounding. His program *All Kids* has put Illinois a step ahead of every other state. Illinois is now the only state that offers full healthcare coverage to every child.

If one were to take a look at Topinka's website, one would get the idea that there was more effort put into convincing those to vote against Blagojevich, not for Topinka. Granted both candidates are guilty of "mud-slinging" efforts in order to convince voters in Illinois to vote for them (see Jenna Temkin's column in the *Wire* section), but when one visits Topinka's site, (s)he is likely to find very little that would convince him/her that she would do anything to improve upon our "situation," as she would refer to Blagojevich's term in office.

West Word thinks that those who are of voting age should cast their vote in favor of Rod Blagojevich at the polls next Tuesday.