



Mary Schmich
mschmich@tribune.com

Rhyme, reason for the end

And now it's goodbye
To the Rich Daley reign
The fun and the glory
The pleasure, the pain.

For more than two decades
He ruled like a king
And answered his critics:
"Put dis up your thing!"

They called him "Boss Junior"
A nod to his dad
Who also was mayor
For good and for bad.

But Richard M. Daley
He was not Richard J.
He made his own city
He had his own way.

He said, "I will make
Dis old town like Patee!"
Tres chic and tres global!"
His minions cried, "Oui!"

The sky filled with towers
The parks with cute chairs:
A gitzzy new look
For da city of Bears.

The streets sprouted tulips
And wrought-iron rails
(And mean while his cronies
Were hauled off to jails.)



He knew every alley
Each corner and wall
(But nary a thing
About rot in the Hall...)

He moved out of Bridgeport
His old Irish spot
As downtown went upscale
And condos got hot.

He biked and he peddled
His countless grand schemes:
"Let's plant on the rooftops!"
Let's dream the big dreams!

Let's get the Olympics!
Let's court the Chinese!
Let's name streets for Oprah!
I'll do what I please!"

He took over schools,
And in cover of dark
He bulldozed Meigs Field
To make way for a park.

He tore down the projects
His father had built
But poor is still poor
In Chicago's new gilt.

No, all was not gold
In the Kingdom of Rich
The people got angry
They often did (express their
grievances impolitely.)

He chewed up the language
He barked at the press
And, yes, he sure bungled
That parking-box mess.

The budget's a wreck
And recycling still stinks
(At least we can still
Eat foie gras with our drinks.)

And yet in the end
Richard Daley was great
A leader, a thinker
Who guided our fate.

In Uptown and Pilsen
Along Lake Shore Drive
Chicago was changed
By that big Man on Five.

For all he did wrong,
He did good with his clout
He made this town better
And loved it full out.

So now he retires
To be with his wife
Chicago's next chapter
Will start his new life.

Yes, time marches forward
And Rahm marches in
A new gang's in power
The new games begin.

But in this last moment
Let's make a brief stop
To say we were lucky
With Daley on top.

Time running out for workers' comp reform

Key hurdles slow lawmakers' bid to meet governor's deadline

By Monique Garcia
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Illinois businesses have complained for years about the billions they spend on injured workers. With other states courting companies with promises of lower costs, lawmakers are considering major changes to the workers' compensation system.

The challenge is how to rein in expenses and weed out fraud while providing benefits for those legitimately hurt on the job. With only a few weeks left before the General Assembly goes home, reaching a deal is proving difficult.

Employee unions and trial lawyers argue businesses are trying to protect their bottom line on the backs of workers. Businesses maintain that the current setup is too lax and too pricey — Illinois is second to Alaska in what it pays doctors to treat injured employees. Doctors don't want their fees slashed as a way to reduce costs, lest they have to turn away patients.

"Politically, it's a minefield," said Sen. Kwame Raoul, a Chicago Democrat leading discussions. "I think in the end nobody will be happy ... but you want everybody to put some skin in the game."

Democrats and Republicans agree the system needs to be overhauled. Legislative leaders are determined to pass some changes. They want to pacify businesses upset with January's major income tax hike, but also address alleged abuses at a downtown prison where hundreds of guards have been awarded millions of dollars for injuries they say happened at work. Federal authorities are now investigating.

Raoul, who hopes to quickly introduce a reform proposal, said lawmakers agree on a number of broad issues, but sticking points remain.

The various interests have reached consensus on going after health care providers who submit bills for treatment they did not provide and being more aggressive in punishing companies that fail to maintain proper workers' compensation insurance.

There's also a desire to eliminate what Raoul calls the "coziness" in the system. Arbitrators who decide cases at the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission frequently encounter the same attorneys representing clients, leading to the possibility of more favorable rulings.

To fight that, Gov. Pat Quinn suggests dumping the current arbitrators, some of whom have served for decades, and replacing them with licensed attorneys for three-year terms.

Trickier to sort out are what standards arbitrators should use when determining a worker's impairment and disability. Republicans and business groups say there's not much in the way of standards, which means there's little uniformity when it comes to deciding how much time off a worker needs to heal, what kind of treatment is best or how much money a worker should get for an injury.

Some Republicans want to require arbitrators to use American Medical Association guidelines. The level of impairment then would be used to set a worker's level of disability or



State Sen. Kwame Raoul, center, a Chicago Democrat, hopes to introduce a workers' compensation reform proposal but concedes there are key points on which lawmakers are divided.

inability to do a job because of an injury. But doctors say the guidelines weren't intended to be used in workers' compensation cases.

Perhaps the biggest disagreement centers on how much responsibility a worker has to prove he was injured on the job. The technical term is "causation."

Business groups and Republicans say state law does not require workers to prove they were hurt while working. They argue an employee could be injured over the weekend but come to work Monday and claim it happened there.

One proposal would require workers to prove their job was more than 50 percent responsible for an injury compared with other factors, such as old age or an underlying condition.

"If we don't address causation, I'm afraid you have instantly watered this bill down to the

"Politically, it's a minefield. I think in the end nobody will be happy ... but you want everybody to put some skin in the game."

— Illinois Sen. Kwame Raoul

point that it's just a political stunt," said sponsoring Republican Sen. Kyle McCarter of Lebanon.

But labor unions, trial lawyers and Democrats argue such a requirement is unnecessary and would be unfair to workers. Raoul said current law, which holds that an injury must "arise out of or during the course of employment," is strong enough.

Democrats predict imposing such a standard would lead to more legal fights, undermining the very purpose of the workers' compensation system: a no-fault way to determine benefits for injured workers.

Todd Smith, president of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association, said businesses are trying to "browbeat and bully the legislature into doing things that frankly aren't needed."

Also at issue is how much doctors get paid by employers through their workers' compensation insurance to treat injured workers.

Quinn's office estimates that

Illinois businesses spend \$3 billion a year to cover workers' compensation, and the governor has said he wants to cut that by at least \$300 million.

Quinn argues the easiest way to curb those costs is to lower the payment rates for doctors and medical providers. The governor has suggested a 30 percent cut, a move many Democrats support but Republicans approach with caution.

The Illinois State Medical Society, which typically aligns with Republicans, argues cutting rates by that much would lead some doctors to refuse to treat patients.

That, the doctors' lobby argues, would delay care for injured workers and ultimately drive up costs in a state that also has high medical malpractice premiums.

"There is this concept of being penny-wise and pound-foolish,

Quinn's office worries the state's reimbursement rates provide incentive for doctors to push for longer periods of therapy because they will ultimately be paid more. The sticking point is who writes the rule book.

The debate heats up further when it comes to preventing what's known as "doctor shopping" — when a worker seeks a doctor willing to vouch that an injury claim is work-related even if it may not be.

Businesses insist that companies should have more say in what doctor an employee is allowed to see. Some unions say that's simply a way to force workers to see a "company doctor." Employers say they aren't trying to force what doctor a worker chooses, but rather weed out bad apples.

"If I really want to, I can shop my claim to as many doctors as I want until I find someone who is willing to sign off," said Doug Whitley, president of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce. "Now I'm not saying that's what the majority of people do, but if one really wants to not work, you have that option."

That's led to the idea of setting up a network of prescreened doctors that employees could choose from. Details are still being worked out, but the notion is building momentum.

"We think that's a reasonable solution," said Illinois Department of Insurance Director Michael McRaith, who is leading negotiations for Quinn's office. McRaith said his agency would have to sign off on any networks.

While all sides remain far apart on how to overhaul the workers' compensation system, Quinn said he doesn't want lawmakers to leave Springfield until they send major changes his way. It's a tall order as they simultaneously work to craft a state budget and redraw legislative districts, but Quinn said it's a priority to relieve some pressure on businesses.

"Nobody is going to get scalped," Quinn recently told a meeting of business groups. "But everyone is going to get a haircut."

mcgarcia@tribune.com
Twitter @moniquegarcia

Workers' compensation in Illinois

State lawmakers are considering major changes to the state's workers' compensation law to address a range of challenges, including maintaining a competitive environment for businesses.

HOW THE PROCESS WORKS

All numbers are estimates

Employee gets hurt, reports to employer → Employer reports injuries of more than three lost workdays to state → Case is resolved or employee files with commission; case is assigned to an arbitrator → If not resolved, the case goes to the full commission and on to the court system until a settlement is reached



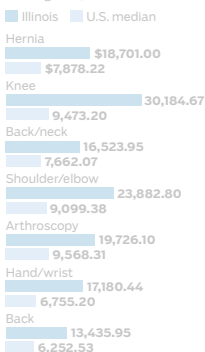
AREAS TARGETED FOR REFORM

- Cause:** Possible new guidelines for determining if employee was injured on the job.
- Fraud:** Going after health care providers who submit bills for services not provided, as well as workers submitting false claims.
- Cost:** Creating standards for rehab and lowering payments to doctors and medical providers.
- Arbitration:** Replacing arbitrators with licensed attorneys for three-year terms, new ethical standards.

SOURCES: Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission, Illinois Department of Insurers and Tribune reporting

How much state pays

Per diagnosis, in dollars



RICK TUMA / TRIBUNE

Rhyme, reason for the end

BY MARY SCHMICH

Sunday, May 15, 2011

And now it's goodbye
To the Rich Daley reign
The fun and the glory
The pleasure, the pain.

For more than two decades
He ruled like a king
And answered his critics:
"Put dis up your thing!"

They called him "Boss Junior"
A nod to his dad
Who also was mayor
For good and for bad.

But Richard M. Daley
Was not Richard J.
He made his own city
He had his own way.

He said, "I will make
Dis old town like Preee!
Tres chic and tres global!"
His minions cried, "Oui!"

The sky filled with towers
The parks with cute chairs:
A glitzy new look
For da city of Bears.

The streets sprouted tulips
And wrought-iron rails
(And meanwhile his cronies
Were hauled off to jails.)

He knew every alley
Each corner and wall
(But nary a thing
About rot in the Hall ...)

He moved out of Bridgeport
His old Irish spot
As downtown went upscale
And condos got hot.

He biked and he peddled
His countless grand schemes:
"Let's plant on the rooftops!
Let's dream the big dreams!"

Let's get the Olympics!
Let's court the Chinese!
Let's name streets for Oprah!
I'll do what I please!"

He took over schools,
And in cover of dark
He bulldozed Meigs Field
To make way for a park.

He tore down the projects
His father had built
But poor is still poor
In Chicago's new gilt.

No, all was not gold
In the Kingdom of Rich
The people got angry
They often did (express their
grievances impolitely).

He chewed up the language
He barked at the press
And, yes, he sure bungled
That parking-box mess.

The budget's a wreck
And recycling still stinks
(At least we can still
Eat foie gras with our drinks.)

And yet in the end
Richard Daley was great
A leader, a thinker
Who guided our fate.

In Uptown and Pilsen
Along Lake Shore Drive
Chicago was changed
By that big Man on Five.

For all he did wrong,
He did good with his clout
He made this town better
And loved it full out.

So now he retires
To be with his wife
Chicago's next chapter
Will start his new life.

Yes, time marches forward
And Rahm marches in
A new gang's in power
The new games begin.

But in this last moment
Let's make a brief stop
To say we were lucky
With Daley on top.