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Successor in Illinois Is the Anti-Blagojevich

By [SUSAN SAULNY](#)

CHICAGO — Temperate, unfussy and, at times, so independent that he can be out of the loop, the 41st governor of [Illinois](#) could not be any more unlike the man he replaced — the attention-loving showman, [Rod R. Blagojevich](#), who was removed from office on Thursday.

And that has a lot of people in Illinois breathing a sigh of relief.

The new governor, [Patrick J. Quinn](#), was once known as more gadfly than political heavyweight. He eased his way into state politics more than 30 years ago on the dry work of petition drives (one led to a reduction in the size of the Illinois General Assembly), getting ahead despite shallow pockets and a disdain for the [Democratic Party](#) machine.

Mr. Quinn, 60, can be so unassuming that he watched the inauguration of [President Obama](#) in Washington crunched down on his knees so that people behind him could get a better view. When prone to boasting, which is not very often, it can be about miserly stuff, like staying in budget hotels and eating discount meals.

His idea of a political stunt is walking more than 150 miles from the Mississippi River to Lake Michigan to raise awareness of health care needs. And with a hairline more [John Lithgow](#) than Elvis, he does not even look the Blagojevich part.

“What you see is what you get,” said one of Mr. Quinn’s longtime allies, State Representative John Fritchey, a Democrat. “He is an apolitical creature in a political world.”

As a team, Mr. Quinn, who was until Thursday the lieutenant governor, and Mr. Blagojevich were always more odd couple than twins, thrown together in their first race for statewide office in 2002 after winning separate Democratic primaries. Shortly after their re-elections in 2006, they stopped speaking altogether.

Already, in his first hours as governor, Mr. Quinn was charting his own course: in a series of interviews and public appearances he promised an honest, transparent and accessible administration. He reached out to include in his decision-making some of the state’s other elected officers who had long been shut out by Mr. Blagojevich. And he signed an executive order that made an official state entity out of a reform commission he established as lieutenant governor last month.

Unlike Mr. Blagojevich, who disdained the capital and lived in Chicago, Mr. Quinn, a divorced father of two adult sons, plans to move into the governor’s mansion. That alone signals a whole new day.

“He’s the anti-Blagojevich, for sure,” said State Representative Jack D. Franks, a Democrat.

Mr. Blagojevich is, apparently, not a fan.

“He’s going to raise taxes on people,” the former governor said of Mr. Quinn on Thursday after being ousted from office. “He’s going to hurt people. And that’s part of the deal here. Get me out of the way. He’s going to raise the income tax on people by [Memorial Day](#). And he’ll probably allow a sales tax on gas, too.”

But even Mr. Blagojevich vouched for Mr. Quinn’s straight as an arrow reputation. Asked whether Mr. Quinn was corrupt, Mr. Blagojevich said simply, No.

Still, this being Illinois, Mr. Quinn probably should not grow accustomed to such political generosity.

His critics, particularly Republicans, have already pounced, angered that he changed his mind after initially supporting a special election to fill the [United States Senate](#) seat now occupied by [Roland W. Burris](#), a Democrat whom Mr. Blagojevich appointed.

Detractors also claim that Mr. Quinn was not vocal enough in denouncing Mr. Blagojevich before his arrest in early December on federal corruption charges.

“I think you can tell something about someone based on who they associate with,” said State Representative Roger Eddy, a Republican. “There was an opportunity to make a bolder statement two years ago. That’s the part that really troubles me.”

Although far from a political novice, Mr. Quinn is untested at meeting the kinds of challenges before him now: a crisis of confidence in government, a \$4 billion budget gap, and a record level of unpaid bills to day care and health care providers and others.

And he knows it: “This is not a garden variety crisis,” Mr. Quinn said in an interview. “It will be a test for all of us, starting with me, to keep our eyes on the common good.”

Even members of Mr. Quinn’s party acknowledged that he has been something of an outsider over the years — not someone who has a vast array of political allegiances and close allies. When the day is over, he likes to be alone, shooting hoops in the gym at a high school where one of his brothers is a basketball coach.

At any other time, that isolation could cause a politician to falter, but in this moment, supporters say, there is a level of confidence in Mr. Quinn’s ability to calm nerves, get to work and restore some humility to the governor’s office.

“Historically, outsiders have not done well in our state,” Mr. Franks said. “But I think Pat Quinn is going to get a lot done. It’s a much different climate now. This is a guy who brags about staying in Super 8s. Pat could care less about money.”

It was money that is alleged to be at the root of Mr. Blagojevich’s problems. Federal agents arrested him at his home on Dec. 9 on charges that, among other things, Mr. Blagojevich had schemed to sell the Senate seat vacated by Mr. Obama.

Since that morning, at 6:45, when Mr. Quinn said he got a call about the arrest, life has not been the same.

“It’s a bit surreal, when you think about it,” he said.

A White Sox fan who was born in Chicago, Mr. Quinn has a law degree from [Northwestern University](#) and, years ago, used to teach tax law and consumer economics at two local colleges. Growing up, his mother was an assistant at a middle school. His father was a personnel director for a group of cemeteries.

In 1980, one of Mr. Quinn's petition drives ended the practice that allowed Illinois legislators to collect their entire salaries on the first day in office. Along with his other petitions, like the one that reduced the size of the legislature, he was not earning a lot of friends in state government.

One afternoon in 1976, he visited the Capitol and took a seat in the gallery.

"They said, 'Up there in the gallery is that Pat Quinn,' " he remembered one lawmaker saying. "And they stood up and booed for three minutes. One guy called it a standing boo-vation."

A few years later, he was elected commissioner of the Cook County Board of Tax Appeals, his first elected office. He has served in a number of other positions, usually gravitating to veterans affairs, environmental and consumer protection issues. He was elected state treasurer in the early 1990s.

Mr. Quinn said he was not sure whether he would run in 2010, when Mr. Blagojevich's term ends. As it was, he had not decided what to do when his term as lieutenant governor was up.

One thing he will not do, he said, is let his newfound popularity go to his head.

"You want to know my philosophy?" Mr. Quinn said. "One day a peacock. The next day a feather duster."

Monica Davey contributed reporting.

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