



# Fixing Illinois: Politics and Policy in the Prairie State

*James D Nowlan, J Thomas Johnson*

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Persistent problems have left Illinois the butt of jokes and threatened it with fiscal catastrophe. In *Fixing Illinois*, James D. Nowlan and J. Thomas Johnson use their four decades of experience as public servants, Springfield veterans, and government observers to present a comprehensive program of almost one hundred specific policy ideas aimed at rescuing the state from its long list of problems. Nowlan and Johnson start with the history of how one of the most prosperous states of the 1950s became a present-day mess riven by debt and discord and increasingly abandoned by both businesses and citizens. Among their more than ninety proposals to restore Illinois to greatness: An overhaul of state pension systems that includes more reasonable benefits and lengthening of the retirement age, among other changes; Reducing one of the nation's highest corporate tax rates to attract business; Medicare reform through an insurance voucher program; Demanding that schools raise expectations for success, particularly in rural and impoverished urban areas; A new approach to higher education that includes a market-driven system that puts funds in the hands of students rather than institutions; Broadening of the tax base to include services and reduction in rates; The creation of a long-term plan to maintain the state's five-star transportation infrastructure; Raising funds with capital construction bonds to update and integrate the antiquated information systems used by state agencies; Uprooting the state's entrenched culture of corruption via public financing of elections, redistricting reform, and revolving door prohibitions for lawmakers. Pointed, honest, and pragmatic, *Fixing Illinois* is a plan for effective and honest government that seeks an even nobler end: restoring our faith in Illinois's institutions and reviving a sense of citizenship and state pride.

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