

2016 Golden Bedpan Presentation

By Jen Tayabji, Adani Sanchez, and Chris Garcia

By Jen Tayabji:

Before we announce the winner of the 2016 Golden Bedpan Dis-service Award, let's get to know your contestants a little better.

In one corner for the Golden Bedpan Award is Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner. He may have been knocked out at last year's inaugural vote, but he has "worked" hard to make a comeback this year.

Now ten months without a state budget, Governor Rauner has made clear his "turnaround" agenda for Illinois means holding our state budget hostage. Governor Rauner wants his pro-business, anti-union policy agenda tied to the budget process. And no amount of human need and suffering, nor the fact that his agenda is and should be separate from the budget process, will convince him to fulfill the most basic responsibility of his job as governor.

Let's be clear, plenty of people are also unhappy with Speaker Madigan. But he has been speaker since 1983, and Illinois has always been able to implement some sort of budget. And there are certain things, like the Governor trying to balance the budget on the backs of poorest and most vulnerable, that we cannot negotiate on. Rauner has been in office 16 months, 10 of those months we have gone without a budget. His job as governor is ultimately as the elected head of our state and to implement and execute state business, and that includes the state having a budget so we can pay our bills.

While Governor Rauner tours the state on his motorcycle, going to restaurants and ribbon-cutting events, vital community services are being cut and organizations are forced to close since Illinois can't even pay its own bills. Our state's most vulnerable residents are being harmed as the services and programs they rely on are shutting down for lack of funding.

Communities are losing psychiatry services. Illinois has a more than \$235 million backlog in payments to home health care service providers. Agencies are essentially being asked to bankroll the lack of a state budget, and many have tried to do so but are running out of money and soon we'll be seeing even more devastating closures.

Low-income seniors and families have already lost their energy assistance through LIHEAP and PIPP, as that funding has been cut.

Education has been hit hard as schools at all levels face cuts. Locally, we have seen schools like Parkland and Eastern Illinois University having to raise tuition while laying off staff. At the same time, low-income college students are being financially hit as state MAP grants have not been appropriated since last July.

Even the Illinois State Police are facing challenges as they lack the funding to hire the additional technicians needed to test evidence in collected rape kits, created a backlog of over 3,000 kits. Even worse, RACES, our community's amazing rape crisis center is just one of many organizations not receiving their state funding for the services that they are still providing.

And unfortunately, they are not the only local social service provider that has had to lay off staff and cut services.

On a side note, if you are looking for something to do after tonight's event, head to downtown Champaign to support the RACES fundraising event at The Accord.

So, if you are like me and think that health care and social services, education, workers' rights, and senior's well-being are important, and ought to be protected, then Governor Rauner is the most deserving of this year's Golden Bedpan Award.

By Adani Sanchez:

In the other corner, we have Martin Shkreli, the former Turing Pharmaceuticals CEO, also known as "Pharma Bro." He earned his claim to fame last September when his company, Turing Pharmaceuticals, acquired the medicine, Daraprim. Daraprim fights a rare infection seen in patients with HIV and cancer. The infection is so rare that Daraprim did not have many competitors, which proved disastrous when Shkreli raised the price of the medication from \$13 dollars and 50 cents to \$750 per pill. That's a 5,500% increase!

However, he didn't stop (or start) at Turing Pharmaceuticals. Shkreli went on to another pharmaceutical company and bought the rights to benznidazole, an anti-parasitic medication

used in Latin America. With the rights to manufacture this medication in the US, pending approval from the FDA, Shkreli would have again raised prices and put much needed medication out of reach for those who needed it.

Neither of these drugs were new, they were both decades old medications for uncommon illnesses that Shkreli had hoped to exploit for profit. A strategy he learned from his very first drug company, Retrophin.

At the *Forbes* Healthcare Summit, while showing no sign whatsoever of human emotion or decency, he baldly admitted his that his actions were motivated by money by saying, "My investors expect me to maximize profits." Let me repeat it-- he thinks keeping life saving treatments from the sick is a business model.

Before he could continue his price gouging crusade, Shkreli was arrested for securities fraud in mid-December. Surprising really, considering his upstanding business practices and ethics.

It is no wonder that he was considered the most hated man in the world up until the 2016 presidential election. Donald Trump even called him a spoiled brat-- talk about expert opinion! Shkreli perfectly embodies the greedy, entitled, and completely unregulated pharmaceutical industry. If you believe that we have the right to affordable medications and protections from price gouging, then Martin Shkreli deserves your vote.

By Chris Garcia:

Actually, there's something very few people know about Governor Rauner that might make him the top contender for this dis-service award.

Before he was Governor, and before anyone ever knew Martin Shkreli's name, Bruce Rauner pulled a similar stunt.

Rauner was chairman of a private equity firm that bought Ovation Pharmaceuticals. This company owned a specialty medication called Indocin, which treats a serious and life-threatening congenital heart defect in premature babies.

In 2006, Ovation sought out and acquired the rights to Indocin's only rival, NeoProfen.

The cost for these drugs skyrocketed over 1,250%.

Thereby, perhaps making Gov. Bruce Rauner the original "PharmaBro."

He set a bad example then about corporate greed and profits above human need, and as Governor, he's continuing his bad habits to this day.

Adani Sanchez:

Well, with that, we are now ready to announce the winner of the Golden Bedpan! Thank you to all of you who voted! And the winner --man, I really wish we had a drumroll right about now....

The winner is Governor Bruce Rauner!

Thank you to all of those who voted! Please enjoy our end of year slideshow after which our director will make her closing remarks. Thank you again!