

Sex is not without its advantages

Now that the baseball season in town is effectively over, cook up a good local sex scandal or two to divert attention away from these far more serious issues.

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By Allen R. Sanderson

As Chicago's homicide rate and Illinois' pension crisis continue to garner national media attention and spiral out of control, our city and state politicians are Nero-like in their responses. We need some bold action, or at least diversion, and soon, or we risk sinking even lower on the political radar screen — we are only fifth in state population and thanks to Toronto, we are now the fifth-largest city in North America.

The "flyover" section of our country has a lot to learn from the coasts — and even abroad. Thus I offer this humble suggestion: Now that the baseball season in town is effectively over, cook up a good local sex scandal or two to divert attention away from these far more serious issues.

I'm not asking for an Anthony Weiner on any given day. And not even a John Edwards. But can't we at least produce in this city and state someone on the order of Eliot Spitzer or Silvio Berlusconi? I'd even settle for Mark Sanford or David Vitter.

Sure, we have had more than our fair share of high-profile felons — former Govs. Rod Blagojevich, George Ryan, Dan Walker, Otto Kerner. But for what? Corruption, racketeering, bribery, fraud. Boring stuff. Where were the sexting emails, prostitutes, strippers, mistresses, photos of a blue dress or the Appalachian Trail?

Our about-one-scandal-per-year Chicago aldermen have gotten their three squares a day at the public trough for the mundane: corruption, bribery, tax evasion. Then there's the soporific patronage and royal coronation sagas of the families Daley, Stroger, Lipinski, Madigan, Mell, Jones. ...

Sure, there was the case of former Congressman Mel Reynolds back in 1994, but a spellbinding sex scandal is not on a par with statutory rape. And Barack Obama's ascension to the U.S. Senate was due in no small part to titillating allegations in his GOP opponent Jack Ryan's divorce records, though that situation was largely intrafamilial tawdriness not an extramarital affair or paid-for R&R.

And who can forget convicted Cook County Commissioner and patronage king William Beavers referring to himself as "the hog with the big nuts" But even then the statement was one of defiance to the authorities, not an advertisement.

If there was ever a case ripe for personal scandal or rumor it was the attractive Jesse Jackson Jr. and the Mrs., and with that restaurant hostess, er "social acquaintance," it had real possibilities.

But then their poor math skills and extremely bad taste in home decorating trumped dalliances and could shortly land them in prison.

With the 2014 governor's race heating up, look at the likely GOP and Dem fields. Wouldn't you rather watch paint dry or sit through another Derrick Rose interview than suffer through a news conference or debate featuring Pat Quinn, Bill Daley, Bill Brady, Dan Rutherford, Kirk Dillard or Bruce Rauner? And our 2015 mayoral race could be the most forgettable on record.

Out in California, 2007 offered up a double feature. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa had an affair with a Telemundo television reporter. That and his tough re-election campaign in 2009 — which he won — distracted him enough that he blew LA's bid to host the 2016 Olympic Games. Richard M. Daley, dreaming only about bags of quarters, had no comparable distraction and took the bait.

At the same time up the coast, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom had an affair with an employee in his office, who just happened to be married to his campaign manager. Only in California? Apparently it didn't ruin his political career: He's now California's lieutenant governor.

On the Gulf Coast, David Vitter of Louisiana won re-election to the Senate despite playing more than footsie with a D.C. madam, while over on the Atlantic side former South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford maintained a long-distance affair with an Argentinian woman; with this mistress at his side on the evening of May 7, he claimed victory in his bid for congressional seat — in South Carolina, not Argentina.

Two of New York's finest, Weiner and Spitzer, recently hiked up their trousers and set out on paths of personal redemption and self-aggrandizement. Weiner's trousers are nearly short-shorts after his Tuesday news conference where he endured questions about yet another sexting scandal.

The 21st century appears to be not only forgiving but also welcoming of a steamy high-profile scandal. It just takes a brave man to embrace the obvious. Illinois pols should realize that it is far easier for them to loot the public coffers and feather their own nests while the press is distracted by sex. Sort of a win-win-win. Sometimes sacrifices are called for.

Plus, what could give Chicago's tourism — no pun intended — a shot in the arm like adding the hotel where particular so-and-sos had their tryst or where they picnicked in the park to the trolley tours?

So, what are we to do?

Hey, did you hear about . . . !

Allen R. Sanderson teaches economics at the University of Chicago.