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GOP gov hopeful ripped for Rahm ties

By: Dave McKinney - August 16, 2013

The two Republicans who dueled for the governorship in the photo-finish 2010 primary used Republican Day at the Illinois State Fair Thursday to deliver a one-two punch against 2014 rival Bruce Rauner, zeroing in on the billionaire venture capitalist's close ties to Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

State Sen. Bill Brady (R-Bloomington), the 2010 GOP nominee, and state Sen. Kirk Dillard (R-Hinsdale) initiated the dust-up on a day otherwise devoted to making catcalls at Democrats and giving the quartet of Republican gubernatorial wannabes that also included state Treasurer Dan Rutherford a platform to energize the GOP base heading into the 2014 elections.

A larger crowd than at past Republican Days at the fair showed up to see U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), who suffered partial paralysis from a stroke last year, start the event by hobbling onto the stage with a cane and delivering an emotional message to several hundred party followers: "Never give up."

But such calls for unity among the gubernatorial cast of characters lasted only until the speeches ended when the storyline of the day evolved, focusing on Rauner's friendship and past dealings with Emanuel.

Brady called that association a "non-starter" for Republican primary voters.

"People are tired of this one-city, one-party rule and the connections to Rahm," Brady told the Chicago Sun-Times.

Dillard jumped on Rauner, as well.

"It's incredibly troubling that a man who is constantly referred to as a member of Rahm Emanuel's inner circle, who vacations with the mayor, according to the Chicago Sun-Times columnist Mike Sneed, and [who] also is another city of Chicago resident is running for governor," Dillard said.

Rauner resides in Winnetka but has a Chicago condo overlooking Grant Park.

Rauner encouraged Emanuel to choose a career in investment banking after the future mayor stepped down as a Clinton aide, and Emanuel represented Rauner's private equity firm in the 2001 purchase of a home-security firm from SBC Communications. At the time, SBC was headed by Democratic gubernatorial candidate Bill Daley.

Rauner and Emanuel also have collaborated on several education-reform initiatives since then - work Rauner said Thursday he would "never apologize for."

Rauner said his true ideology and wallet are vested in conservative causes not aligned with the mayor.

"I'm as conservative as anybody in this race by a lot. And my donations to conservative causes - Club for Growth, Americans for Prosperity, the Illinois Policy Institute, the Cato Institute - are 100x what I gave to Rahm. And I've given to far more Republicans, far more money, than to Rahm," Rauner told the Sun-Times.