



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
COMPTROLLER  
SUSANA A. MENDOZA

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## **COMPTROLLER JOINS WOMEN’S RIGHTS ADVOCATES TO TALK ABOUT RAPE CULTURE LANGUAGE**

*Comptroller Mendoza was joined today by women’s rights advocates to condemn an attack on her by WGN AM radio host Steve Cochran during a segment with Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner*

CHICAGO – Over the last five months I traveled the State to speak to people who are suffering through the worst financial crisis in the history of Illinois.

As Comptroller, I have tried to give them a voice, and in doing so, I have spoken truth to power.

Earlier this week, on Tuesday, a newspaper editorial board referred to me as a “slave” to one of my male counterparts.

On Wednesday morning, the Governor of the State of Illinois, Governor Bruce Rauner called me an “attack servant” and laughed when a Chicago radio host suggested I be silenced using duct tape to cover my mouth.

That afternoon, a staffer and I were stalked on the grounds of the Capitol, my workplace, by a political operative. What’s next? My house? My family?

Intimidation tactics and this type of language: Language that portrays women as subservient; Violent imagery that is used to intimidate; or language that dehumanizes an individual, that suggests that they are powerless or should know their place ...



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This type of language is unacceptable and I'm here today to speak out on behalf of all women who have been marginalized, threatened, demeaned or made to feel that they are helpless.

The attacks on women who speak their mind need to stop.

The use of the language of a rape culture needs to stop.

I am calling on WGN, on radio host Steve Cochran, and on Governor Rauner to issue an apology. Not for me, but for the millions of women who've been victims of violence or sexual abuse, who could turn the radio on, and hear a radio personality suggest to the Governor that duct tape be used to silence a woman and rather than have the Governor denounce that type of language, instead laugh right along with him. Rape culture language is not a laughing matter and it's never ok.

Today is the last day of Women's History Month. This is a time to honor the women who came before us and teach young women – our daughters, women we mentor – about the struggles of the past, about the people who fought for our basic rights.

To the women out there I want to tell you: You matter. Stand your ground in the face of opposition. We cannot be victimized.

As your advocate, I will continue to speak truth to power. Too many people in Illinois are suffering because the Governor refuses to muster up the courage and will to do his job and introduce a balanced budget for the General Assembly to act upon. I fought for this position as Comptroller, and was duly elected, so I could fight for you, and that's what I intend to do.

**Speakers:**



Mendoza was joined by Rev. Marvin Hunter of Grace Memorial Baptist Church , Dr. Phalese Binion, Executive Director of Westside Baptist Ministers, Kathy Ragnar, Executive Director of Sarah's Circle, Vickie Smith, Executive Director of ICADV and Rev. Stanley Watkins of New Covenant Baptist Church

**Also in attendance:**

1. Jackie Algee, Director of Community Relations, SEIU and organizer of the Women's March on Springfield in April
2. Dr. Phalese Binion, Executive Director of Westside Baptist Ministers
3. Mallory Littlejohn, staff attorney, Chicago Allegiance Against Sexual Exploitation
4. Kathy Ragnar, Executive Director of Sarah's Circle

**The following are statements in support of Comptroller Mendoza**

**State Sen. Toi Hutchinson:**

*"There is nothing funny about duct taping a women's mouth shut when you don't like what she is saying. This ridiculously charged language is inappropriate in political discourse and does nothing to solve our state's problems."*

**State Rep. Kelly Cassidy:**

*"Throughout my career, I've advocated for victims of domestic violence. More significantly, as an adult who witnessed my father's abuse of my mother - it's not something to joke about. WGN Radio host Steve Cochran needs to apologize and the governor could show his sincere support for victims of domestic violence by proposing a balanced budget that once and for all funds the services these victims and their families need and deserve."*

**Polly Poskin, Executive Director, Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault:**

*"The comment from WGN radio personality Steve Cochran regarding duct-taping Illinois Comptroller Susan Mendoza's mouth shut is a prime example of sexism and acceptance of violence toward women that plagues our society. There is no time to joke about silencing women who might not agree with a particular viewpoint. There is no time to joke about committing acts of violence against a woman. That Cochran did this on a media platform is abhorrent. Violence against women occurs on a routine basis in Illinois and laughing about committing it against a public official or anyone should not be tolerated."*



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*Cochrane and WGN should apologize to all women for the abysmal approach to the seriousness of violence against women. Equality should be the standard that we strive to achieve instead of making fun of silencing a woman. The sexist, violence-condoning comment by Cochrane or by anyone provides a perfect time for bystander intervention from those who want to end violence against women. ICASA implores anyone that hears sexist and violence-condoning comments to step up and tell the person that our society is striving for something better than that, striving for equality and striving to end violence against women.”*

**Alderman James Cappleman**

*“Because of cuts in state funding, a domestic violence shelter in my ward, can no longer afford to pay staff and must rely solely on volunteers. This reflects misplaced priorities in our state.”*

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