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**Rauner on minimum wage flap: 'My mistake'**

By Dave McKinney

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DECATUR, Ill. - Republican Bruce Rauner on Friday tried to shoehorn his dizzying array of positions on the minimum wage into his campaign theme that he is an outsider, not a slick politician.

And that he's "human" and makes mistakes.

Going from "adamantly" opposing an increase in the state's $8.25-an-hour minimum wage to wanting to move it back to match the $7.25-an-hour national rate to wanting to increase either the state or national minimums - all in four months time - is not a flip-flop, Rauner said, but a failure to fully explain himself.

"I support raising the national minimum wage so that Illinois is competitive. I am all about Illinois' competitiveness. If Illinois is not competitive, we lose. Our workers lose. We have to be competitive. So I was talking about it not in the right context. My mistake. I should be thoughtful and more thorough in my words. I'm not a politician. I'm sorry. Made a mistake. I'm a human being. It is what it is," he continued.

Appearing in Decatur during a leg of his Downstate bus tour, the Republican gubernatorial candidate offered his first public response to the September video, posted Friday at suntimes.com, in which he told a Downstate audience he was "adamantly, adamantly" opposed to raising the state's minimum wage.

Asked to explain his transformation from an ardent opponent of a minimum wage hike to suddenly a supporter of one, Rauner said, "It's not a transformation. It's a fuller explanation of my position. We have talked about it in a broad context, and that's what I'm doing now. I was quick, and I was flippant talking about it as a stand-alone issue."

The private equity investor from Winnetka, who reported $53 million in earnings in 2012, has been reeling for much of the week as a result of his evolving position on the issue.

Gov. **Pat Quinn** and other Democrats painted Rauner as the miserly Mr. Burns character on "The Simpsons" and a "robber baron" for appearing to favor taking cash away from short-order cooks and other minimum-wage employees who number 1.1 million in Illinois.

Rauner's Republican rivals also have piled on, with state Sen. Bill Brady, R-Bloomington, calling him "out of step" with families and workers and state Sen. Kirk Dillard, R-Hinsdale, assailing Rauner for his "47-percent moment," an allusion to Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney's fatal gaffe in which he dismissed low-income Americans in a secretly videotaped appearance.

Rauner minimized the damage that his minimum-wage stance and self-acknowledged flippancy has caused his gubernatorial campaign and insisted he empathizes with low-income Illinoisans.

"I don't believe that at all," he said, when asked if he believed he has hurt his campaign by appearing insensitive to minimum-wage earners. "I'm running for governor to help everybody in this state of all income levels. And to do that, I've laid out my mission, my vision. And I'm going to get that done.

"You know, I'm not a politician. I'll have bumps in the road. Sometimes, I'll speak in a certain way, or be inartful in my word selection or be incomplete in my explanation," Rauner continued. "I'm sorry. I'll correct it, and I'll move on. We're going to win this race."