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**Video: Rauner 'adamantly' against minimum wage hike**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD - First, Bruce Rauner seemed to say he favored cutting the state's $8.25-an-hour minimum wage. Then, he retreated from those "flippant" remarks made in December and said this week he favors increasing pay for Illinois' poorest workers to as much as $10 an hour.

On Thursday came yet another twist in the Republican gubernatorial candidate's confusing and evolving stance on a vital issue affecting 1.1 million Illinois workers: a September video in which Rauner said he "adamantly, adamantly" opposes raising the minimum wage.

Got all that?

Rauner's initial flip-flop arguably became a flip-flop-flip Thursday after a Democratic-funded SuperPAC circulated the new video of the candidate at a late-summer political event Downstate in which Rauner unequivocally ruled out an increase in the state's minimum wage, contradicting what he had said as recently as Wednesday in a round of media interviews.

The self-inflicted wounds by the wealthy private equity investor unleashed even wider fallout Thursday and threatened his early frontrunner status in the four-way GOP race for governor in the March 18 primary.

Reacting to the latest disclosure, Gov. **Pat Quinn** compared Rauner, who made $53 million in 2012 and owns stakes in three professional sports franchises, to the money-grubbing Mr. Burns on "The Simpsons."

A top Illinois business leader acknowledged he couldn't decipher Rauner's stance on the minimum-wage issue after hearing so many versions come from the candidate's own mouth and campaign.

And another political action committee - this one run by an ex top aide to U.S. Rep. Aaron Schock, R-Ill. - accused the Winnetka Republican of engaging in a "big lie" on the minimum wage that could "drag down other Republicans to epic defeat in Illinois" later this year.

The newest video of Rauner was shot by Bluesroomstream.com, a subscription-only video service based in the Capitol pressroom, and distributed without the organization's approval or knowledge by the Democratic-funded SuperPAC, American Bridge 21st Century, which posted the September recording of Rauner on YouTube.

"I am adamantly, adamantly against raising the minimum wage. My view is we already have the second-highest unemployment in America. We already have an outrageously high unemployment rate among low-income, poor minority kids in Chicago, in Rockford, in Peoria and East St. Louis. And raising the minimum wage is just going to blow them out and take away their jobs. We cannot do this," Rauner said in the video shot Sept. 7 at a forum hosted by the Ford County Republicans and attended by all four Republican gubernatorial hopefuls.

"Let's be clear: The right answer to raised wages is a booming economy with employers competing to hire people and having our young people well educated and well trained," Rauner continued, drawing applause from the crowd at a Gibson City golf course clubhouse.

That video comes on top of another film clip of Rauner shot at a Dec. 11 candidates forum in the Quad Cities by public-television station WQPT. In that video, obtained Wednesday by the Chicago Sun-Times, Rauner said he would "advocate moving the Illinois minimum wage back to the national minimum. I think we need to be competitive here in Illinois."

The national minimum wage is $7.25 an hour, $1 less than Illinois' minimum.

Rauner did a political about-face Wednesday and said he had misspoken and been "flippant" at the event in the Quad Cities, and that he actually favors increasing the minimum wage to as much as $10 an hour - if such an increase were done nationally, or enacted at the state level and tied to business-friendly workers compensation and tort reforms and changes in Illinois' corporate tax structure.

Raising the minimum wage, Rauner insisted in an interview with the Sun-Times Wednesday, "won't crush small-business owners, and it can help struggling families."

The Democratic group that Thursday posted the video from Gibson City said its contents demonstrate Rauner isn't dealing honestly with voters on his attitudes toward how much Illinois' working poor should be paid.

"This isn't an instance of a gaffe, but an instance of a millionaire candidate caught telling the truth that he opposes raising the minimum wage," American Bridge 21st Century spokesman Eddie Vale told the Sun-Times.

American Bridge 21st Century is a liberal Super PAC funded by labor unions and major Democratic donors. The group's largest financial backer is billionaire hedge fund manager George Soros, a well-known supporter of liberal causes who donated $1 million, campaign records with the Federal Election Commission show.

Rauner reported donating an additional $1 million to his campaign on Jan. 2, bringing his personal contributions to $2.24 million.

The Rauner campaign insisted his language at the September political event against raising the minimum wage is consistent with what he said Wednesday, when he offered his qualified support for hiking the minimum wage under certain conditions.

"Bruce has learned his lesson about the need to give well-thought-out responses to the issue of raising the minimum wage," Rauner spokesman Mike Schrimpf told the Sun-Times.

"He supports raising the minimum wage if it is done federally to ensure that all states are on the same level, or if it's done locally together with a comprehensive program to make Illinois more economically competitive," Schrimpf said. "Without those features, he's opposed to it."

Even Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who is a friend of Rauner's, a former business associate, and school-reform ally, joined in the pile-on Thursday.

While the mayor wouldn't say how much political damage Rauner had caused himself with his changing narrative on the minimum wage, Emanuel declared Rauner's now-reversed proposal to roll back Illinois' rate as wrong-headed, to say the least.

"His idea is all backwards . . . That paycheck ensures that they're part of a middle-class lifestyle and dream. The idea that anybody would even cross the line thinking about reducing it when the idea should be about how to expand it" is wrong-headed, the mayor said.