

Box: Schools takeover possible

■ **Chicago-style:** The mayor says he might have the answer to Rockford's troublesome desegregation crisis.

By **SCOTT WILLIAMS**
The Register Star

ROCKFORD — Frustrated by a crisis he has no authority to confront head-on, Mayor Charles Box is studying Chicago's public schools takeover as a model for how he might step into Rockford's school desegregation battle.

The mayor says a takeover of Rockford schools is unlikely now,

but calls it a long-term possibility. And he sees other lessons to be learned from Chicago's two-year-old experiment with a city-run school system.

In an hour-long interview last week at City Hall, Box talked about Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's success in restoring credibility to a once-troubled school district.

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Charles
Box

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Rockford Mayor Charles Box
on a city takeover of the school district

which was considered the worst school district in the country, we can do it out here,” he said. “Everybody’s intrigued by what’s going on in Chicago.”

Since winning election April 1 to a third four-year term, Box has met with Daley associates to learn

more about the system that empowers Daley to appoint Chicago’s school board. He also has huddled with local lawmakers to explore whether the arrangement could be duplicated in Rockford.

State Rep. Doug Scott, D-Rockford, a longtime Box ally, said the

necessary legislation — based on the 1995 measure that gave Daley control in Chicago — could be drafted for consideration in Springfield as soon as next year.

Scott, however, said Box has expressed reservations about seeking a takeover of the schools unless he feels a strong grass-roots push in that direction.

“If it’s something that the community wanted,” Scott said, “it’s certainly something worth exploring.”

Before state lawmakers abolished Chicago’s previous school board and assigned Daley to pick up the pieces, Chicago was widely

regarded as having the nation’s most troubled public school system.

Cozette Buckney, a top staffer in Daley’s new organization, said city control of public schools makes sense because so many other issues are intertwined, such as crime, neighborhoods and the economy.

Buckney, who met with Box in late May, said the biggest success in Chicago so far has been restoring confidence in the schools and halting suburban flight among families seeking better ones. She

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