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Blagojevich hires holding on

Clout counts, despite Quinn vow to 'fumigate' state government

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November 23, 2009

BY [DAVE MCKINNEY](#), [TIM NOVAK](#) AND [CHRIS FUSCO](#) Staff Reporters

Gov. Quinn took office nearly 10 months ago saying he'd "fumigate state government" in the wake of his predecessor, Rod Blagojevich, being booted from office.

To legislators, part of that scrub-down seemed obvious: Quinn would clean house of state appointees and other workers whose clout had won them top posts in the Blagojevich administration.

The new governor's actions backed that up; Quinn fired several high-level Blagojevich aides in his first few weeks on the job and followed up by replacing most of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees amid the school's clout-admissions scandal.

Since then, the purge appears to have slowed.

Today, despite a failed effort by House Speaker Michael Madigan to force Quinn "to accelerate the pace" of the housecleaning, dozens of high-ranking, top-paid hires from the Blagojevich era are managing to hold onto their state jobs.

At least 70 have done so despite coming under scrutiny in a federal investigation of what U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald termed in 2006 were "very serious allegations of endemic hiring fraud" under Blagojevich, who is awaiting trial on federal charges that he used his job as governor to improperly benefit himself and those close to him.

The names of every person in that group turned up in a database of clout hires and their political sponsors that was kept by Blagojevich's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. Federal prosecutors also sought information about the 70 people in subpoenas sent to the governor's office and state agencies, records obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times show.

Among them: George Rada, a \$78,192-a-year administrator in the Illinois Department of Employment Security. His political patron, according to the Blagojevich administration records, was state Sen. James DeLeo (D-Chicago), a onetime Blagojevich confidant.

Rada was among six Blagojevich hires whose firings were urged in 2004 by Zaldwaynaka "Z" Scott, then the state's executive inspector general, for "unethical and fraudulent activity," largely having to do with how they got jobs or promotions by leapfrogging over military veterans who, by law in Illinois, should have gotten preferential treatment in hiring.

Scott's report became a prosecution exhibit in Blagojevich's impeachment trial. The report said the Blagojevich administration got around the veterans-preference law by hiring Rada for a job in Downstate Stephenson County, where no veterans were on state waiting lists for

jobs. But Rada never worked there. Instead, he remained in a position in Cook County, where 17 veterans should have been ahead of him in line for his job, according to Scott's report.

Rada said he and DeLeo are friends, and they likely discussed Rada getting a state job. But Rada said DeLeo had nothing to do with him getting hired.

"I've known him for 30 years," Rada said. "I talked to him all the time. I'm sure we talked about the job. I've known the governor, too."

DeLeo declined an interview request but said, through his secretary, that he knew Rada but didn't help get him his state job.

Another current state employee mentioned in Scott's report and whose hiring records were also subpoenaed by Fitzgerald's office was Surami Garcia. Her political sponsor was Ald. Richard Mell (33rd), Blagojevich's now-estranged father-in-law, according to the Blagojevich hiring database.

Garcia, 35, got a public service administrator's post in the Department of Employment Security even though 17 veterans were in line ahead of her for the job, according to Scott's report.

How? By first being hired as an intern. Had Garcia applied directly for the post instead of coming in as an intern, she wouldn't have gotten the job, Scott said.

Scott also alleged that Garcia committed "serious misconduct" by advising two Department of Employment Services employees to falsify job applications to reflect they were students.

Garcia, who now makes \$66,672 a year, wound up being fired in summer 2005 but won back her job the next year thanks to a unanimous decision by the bipartisan Civil Service Commission, whose members were appointed by Blagojevich.

"The state utterly failed to prove its case, and we won," Garcia's lawyer, Carl Draper, said, adding that his client has since cooperated with the FBI in the Blagojevich hiring probe.

Efforts to force Quinn to fire hundreds of holdover hires and appointees from the administrations of Blagojevich and Gov. George Ryan passed the Illinois House last spring but died in the Senate, where Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) pulled the plug on the initiative.

"Anybody who's got any questions about their past, the governor can fire them immediately," Cullerton said. Asked about the people mentioned in Scott's report who are still on the state payroll, Cullerton put the ball in Quinn's court, saying the governor is "in the middle of a primary now. You think he'd respond to your story."

Quinn, who has long championed the cause of veterans, would not respond to questions about Rada and Garcia. His spokesman would not directly answer questions about how many Blagojevich administration workers have been let go as a result of Quinn's fumigation pledge.

"Since coming into office, the governor has repeatedly stated that every state worker is being evaluated on an ongoing basis that's based on their abilities, conduct and on-the-job performance," Quinn spokesman Bob Reed said. "He has made it very clear that all employees are required to do their jobs well and give their best effort every day. Those that fail to do so will be dealt with in a proper, fair and equitable manner."

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[Help Veterans Transition to Civilian Life](#)

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The views expressed in these blog posts are those of the author and not of the Chicago Sun-Times.

officer cupcake wrote:

Stop picking on Pat Quinn! Look at all he;s going to do for us: He promised he would fumigate state government of political appointments. Oops, hate to upset the politicians whose behind he has to kiss to maintain any semblance of power. Never mind.He promised he would cut spending. Oops, he remembered that Democrats only fiscal philosophy is tax more, spend more. Never mind.He promised he would enact pension reform. Oops, along came the unions the politicians are perpetually beholden to at our obscene expense at all levels of government. Never mind.He promised our safety was a primary concern. Oops, along came terrorists to our back yard and, of greater concern, the radical fundamentalists, suicide bombers and terrorists that will follow, easily blending into our large metropolitan area rather than, say, Montana. But the state will get a one-time bribe of \$200M. Never mind.And...never mind.

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revolutionary wrote:

What is Patrick Fitzgerald waiting for? Blago is a punk. Squeeze him till he rats out ALL his pal's on the clout lists and their sponsors. They could fill the Thompson Correctional facility with local (terrorists) pols. Treason on the State of Illinois.

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philopublius wrote:

This is a new Quinn, gone is the people power, now he is bellying up to the bar with Daley and Madigan. How can any one say he not about Pay to Play when his campaign aid told a union official to open up the union check book for a meeting. Oh how far he has fallen!

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pjwi wrote:

FOLLOW THE MONEY.Look at the full employment history of the referenced employees in this article. Where'd they work before IDES? Who got them those jobs? They've been on "clout databases" before. Just keep looking. (start looking in the office of someone who is currently running for Bd Prez)

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bdd wrote:

Quinn is all talk and NO action. He is just another bum to kick out off office.

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phil smith jr wrote:

QUINN IS VERY DIFFERENT THAN THE BLAGO ADMINISTRATION GUYS, YOU SEE HE HAS NOT BEEN INDICTED, THAT IS CHANGE RIGHT THERE, QUINN ISN'T PLAYING PLAY FOR PAYPOLITICS!

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phil smith jr wrote:

maybe they are really good employees!

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martydidier wrote:

Look for more tidal waves of Indictments..... There's a lot more cleaning yet that needs to be done...Marty DidierNorthbrook, IL

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travisbickle wrote:

The pathetic thing is, Quinn or that other connected legacy appointee Dan Hynes will be elected next year. The people in this state cry about corruption, but when push comes to shove they will vote "democrat" because that's how there grandparents and parents voted.

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