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Final Edition

**'Ryan was the minor leagues compared to this stuff'; Blagojevich charged with running 'criminal enterprise' as governor**

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If true, it's a chilling tale of public corruption -- even by Illinois standards.

Entering office on the heels of a major scandal by his predecessor, the now-ousted Gov. Rod Blagojevich is accused of committing crooked acts in office before a jury was even seated in the federal corruption trial of former Gov. George Ryan.

According to a 75-page, wide-ranging federal indictment returned Thursday, Blagojevich, who won office by preaching reform and renewal, presided over a "criminal enterprise" during his six years as governor -- with the help of his older brother and others.

Robert Blagojevich, 53, a successful businessman from Nashville, was secretly recorded talking with his brother about how to land campaign cash in an alleged scheme to sell President Obama's then-vacant Senate seat. Now Robert Blagojevich could stand trial with his brother, who was arrested Dec. 9 but not indicted until Thursday.

The former governor is alleged to have used his office to try to make cash off of state appointments and state business in exchange for passing legislation and other official government actions.

"I'm saddened and hurt, but I am not surprised by the indictment," said Rod Blagojevich, who was vacationing in Disney World. "I am innocent. I now will fight in the courts to clear my name."

Blagojevich's indictment comes as George Ryan serves the second year of a 6?-year prison sentence for corruption.

"Ryan was the minor leagues compared to this stuff," said Patrick Collins, the former top prosecutor in the Ryan case. "That the trial was going on at the time makes it that much more brazen and egregious."

Blagojevich, 52, who faces significant prison time if convicted, is also accused of allowing those closest to him to have access and influence over his administration -- as long as they funneled campaign contributions or cash his way.

And after the feds asked about the allegations, he's accused of lying to them.

**'We expect he'll be cleared'**

The tentacles of corruption even allegedly reached Blagojevich's household. His wife, Patti, pulled in tens of thousands of dollars in questionable real estate commissions, according to the indictment, but she wasn't charged.

Blagojevich's brother wasn't as lucky. After growing up on the Northwest Side shooting hoops with his brother and playing with him in a Serbian band to please their immigrant father, Robert Blagojevich went on to a respectable career in the military and financial industry. In August, he joined Friends of Blagojevich as campaign chairman.

Now he's accused of wire fraud and could face prison time.

His lawyer, Michael Ettinger, predicted Robert Blagojevich will reclaim his good name. "We expect he'll be cleared at trial," Ettinger said.

Four others were charged as co-defendants: Lon Monk, 50, of Park Ridge, Rod Blagojevich's former chief of staff; John Harris, 47, of Chicago, his most recent chief of staff, who is expected to be a witness for the prosecution; chief Blagojevich fund-raiser Christopher G. Kelly, 50, of Burr Ridge, and Springfield powerbroker William F. Cellini, 74.

Harris was arrested along with the ex-governor in December. The indictment Thursday reiterated the Senate seat accusations, including that Rod Blagojevich believed he could glean $1.5 million for his campaign fund in exchange for naming U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. to Obama's seat. Jackson Jr. has denied any wrongdoing.

Among the new allegations in the indictment:

--That Blagojevich, Monk, Kelly and convicted businessman Tony Rezko "agreed to direct lucrative state business" regarding a $10 billion pension bond deal in 2003 "to a company whose lobbyist agreed to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars to Rezko out of the fee the lobbyist would collect, and Rezko in turn agreed to split the money" with Blagojevich, Monk and Kelly.

--That Blagojevich allegedly lied to FBI agents in a March 16, 2005, interview when he told them, among other things, he didn't know and doesn't track how much donors are contributing.

--That Rezko paid significant real estate commissions to the ex-governor's wife, Patti Blagojevich, in exchange for the ability to hold power in the governor's administration.

--That Rezko paid Monk between $70,000 and $90,000 for home improvements and a car in exchange for giving Rezko "substantial influence" within the administration.

--That the ex-governor delayed a $2 million state grant to a school to try to get former U.S. Rep. Rahm Emanuel or Emanuel's Hollywood agent brother Ari to hold a fund-raiser for him.

**'Pay-to-play schemes' denied**

Since Blagojevich's arrest, investigators interviewed dozens of potential witnesses -- from Tribune Co. Chairman Sam Zell to Obama.

Obama, who was not accused of wrongdoing, was questioned in December about contacts between himself, his staff and Blagojevich's office about the Senate seat appointment.

The indictment reiterated allegations that Blagojevich wanted key Chicago Tribune editorial board members fired in exchange for helping Tribune Co. on a deal to unload Wrigley Field. It also re-outlined a scheme in which Kelly, Rezko and Cellini allegedly shook down an investment firm owner, Thomas Rosenberg, for contributions to the Friends of Blagojevich campaign fund.

Lawyers for Kelly and Cellini defended their clients. Monk's attorney could not be reached.

"Mr. Kelly did not participate in any pay-to-play schemes," Kelly's lawyer, Michael Monico, said. "He did not extort anyone or attempt to extort anyone."

Said Cellini's lawyer, Dan Webb: "The varied allegations against former Governor Blagojevich have nothing to do with Bill."

Blagojevich was impeached by the House on Jan. 14 by a 117-1 vote, with Blagojevich's sister-in-law, Rep. Deborah Mell, casting the lone "no" vote. The Senate voted 59-0 on Jan. 29 to convict Blagojevich and oust him from office.

Prosecutors indicated they want to seize money in his campaign fund, his Ravenswood Manor home and a condo he owns in Washington, D.C.

At Disney World on Thursday, a TV reporter surprised the vacationing Blagojeviches, who were poolside. An angry Patti Blagojevich confronted the reporter.

"I don't think so. Please leave," she said. "I'm going to call security."

A smiling Rod Blagojevich kept his cool.

"I'm enjoying Disney World with my kids," he said. "And I don't think you're supposed to be here."