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**Spokesman: Rauner 'obviously renounces' Cellini**

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SPRINGFIELD - Bruce Rauner's campaign Wednesday quickly distanced him from what sounded like an endorsement from convicted felon William Cellini, saying the GOP candidate for governor "obviously renounces" the Springfield power broker who praised Rauner as "very impressive."

The statement released Wednesday morning came after [Gov. Pat Quinn's](http://www.nexis.com/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T21632818354&returnToId=20_T21632849846&csi=11064&A=0.02230520987977891&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000A4UW%23&searchTerm=Gov.%20Pat%20Quinn's%20&indexType=P) campaign slammed Rauner for declining comment Tuesday night at a Springfield campaign event when asked if he welcomed what sounded like a clear endorsement from Cellini.

"Bruce is running against the corrupt, insider ways of doing things in Springfield and obviously renounces Cellini," Rauner spokesman Mike Schrimpf said. "While you can't control who endorses you, you can control who you endorse - and that's why [Pat Quinn](http://www.nexis.com/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T21632818354&returnToId=20_T21632849846&csi=11064&A=0.02230520987977891&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000A4UW%23&searchTerm=Pat%20Quinn%20&indexType=P) is making another ridiculous attack.

"Pat knew about [Rod Blagojevich's](http://www.nexis.com/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T21632818354&returnToId=20_T21632849846&csi=11064&A=0.02230520987977891&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE0009ULK%23&searchTerm=Rod%20Blagojevich's%20&indexType=P) corrupt dealings and vouched for him anyway, calling Blago 'honest' and 'ethical' and someone who 'always does the right thing.' This is the biggest lie yet from Quinnocchio," Schrimpf said. "Quinn should have resigned and helped expose Blagojevich. Instead, Quinn stood by him."

Cellini, who was convicted for his role with influence peddler Stuart Levine in a shakedown of a Hollywood producer for a $1.5 million contribution to Blagojevich, was one of several dozen attendees at a Rauner event Tuesday night in Springfield.

Asked by reporters if he was supporting Rauner, Cellini said, "I've been a Republican all of my life, and he's the Republican candidate."

Cellini, who said he supported state Sen. Kirk Dillard, R-Hinsdale, in the gubernatorial primary, went on to describe Rauner as "very impressive."

Rauner later was asked if he welcomed an endorsement from Cellini, and the candidate declined to answer, saying, "I don't know. I didn't even know he was here. I don't really know him. I can't comment on that."

On Wednesday, Quinn's campaign seized on Rauner for failing to renounce Cellini immediately.

"Clearly, billionaire Bruce Rauner is afraid to alienate the 'King of Clout,'" Quinn campaign spokeswoman Izabela Miltko said. "Mr. Rauner claims to want to root out corruption and 'shake up Springfield,' yet when faced with an endorsement from the 'King of Shakedowns,' mum's the word."

Later in the day Wednesday, the governor himself weighed in on the matter during a news briefing at his Statehouse office.

"I think he's now a convicted felon, and I certainly don't want to have anything to do with him personally," the governor said of Cellini. "And I think anybody who aspires to this office should stay clear of him and should make that crystal clear to the people of Illinois.

"He's someone who conspired with another convicted felon to cheat the Teachers Retirement System, and that's a very important pension board we have in our state. It's the biggest one we have. To allow that system to be taken advantage of by Cellini and his conspiring partner, Stuart Levine, is very, very wrong indeed," Quinn said.

Asked about the Rauner campaign's slam of Quinn's praise for Blagojevich, the governor said, "I'm not going to get into any politics. I served as state treasurer. I think the record is very clear [regarding] my dealings with Mr. Cellini. I fought for the taxpayers every step of the way."