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**Jobs safe for 103 remaining clout hires at IDOT**

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SPRINGFIELD - More than 100 clouted state transportation employees who were part of what the state's top ethics watchdog dubbed an improper hiring scheme will get to keep their jobs, Gov. Pat Quinn's administration announced late Friday.

The move to keep 103 employees on the Illinois Department of Transportation payroll drew immediate criticism from Republican Bruce Rauner's campaign, which said the decision smacked of cronyism and betrayal by a governor who has tried to craft himself as a reformer.

One of those whose jobs has been protected by the Quinn administration is the son of former IDOT administrator Carmen Iacullo, who once was dubbed the "kingmaker" within the agency and who had been involved in patronage hiring for Chicago's municipal government before getting his state job in 2004.

The group was among 245 clout-heavy individuals who over 10 years got IDOT jobs as staff assistants to do work for which political loyalties should not have been a factor. The jobs were not advertised to the public.

In mid-August, after the release of a stinging report by Executive Inspector General Ricardo Meza that called the hirings improper, Quinn's administration announced plans to lay off 58 employees at the agency.

But at least for now, that's where the purge will stop.

"There are currently 103 of these individuals that work in IDOT in non-staff assistant positions," IDOT spokesman Guy Tridgell said in a statement. "We have no plans to fire or lay off these employees nor would that be necessary.

"The issue was about poor management practices and not about the employees," he said.

IDOT faces a federal lawsuit from anti-patronage lawyer Michael Shakman, who has asked for the U.S. District Court to appoint a hiring monitor within the agency.

Rauner's campaign belittled the Quinn administration's announcement that no other heads would roll at IDOT as a result of the clout-hiring program that spanned the govenorships of Quinn and his imprisoned predecessor, Rod Blagojevich.

Since the spring, Rauner has used the IDOT hiring scandal along with the governor's botched $54.5 million Neighborhood Recovery Initiative anti-violence program in a withering, two-pronged assault on Quinn's ethics.

"This further confirms that Pat Quinn has betrayed the people's trust," Rauner spokesman Mike Schrimpf said. "He expanded Rod Blagojevich's illegal hiring scheme. And instead of cleaning up Springfield, he became the king of cronyism and corruption."

Quinn's campaign responded to the attack, denying there was any illegal hiring program at IDOT.

"The Rauner campaign is lying again - there was no illegal hiring scheme," Quinn spokeswoman Brooke Anderson said in a statement.

One of those remaining IDOT employees whose job appears safe in the wake of the announcement is Joseph C. Iacullo, an agency section chief and son of Carmen Iacullo.

Carmen Iacullo, a $106,000-a-year IDOT administrator in the Chicago region, left the agency in April just days after Shakman filed his federal lawsuit that alleged a massive clout-hiring scheme within the state transportation department.

A former colleague described Carmen Iacullo as "a kingmaker" at IDOT's Schaumburg district, having a big say in who was hired and how new employees were assigned, the Better Government Association reported in the Chicago Sun-Times in May.

In 2006, Carmen Iacullo testified about his time at the Chicago Department of Transportation during the trial of Robert Sorich, patronage chief for then-Mayor Richard M. Daley before being convicted of rigging the city's hiring system. During the trial, the BGA reported, Iacullo talked about attending meetings with Sorich, where "Iacullo would recommend candidates, including individuals from his [Democratic] political group, for promotions," according to court records.

Quinn's administration ousted former IDOT Secretary Ann Schneider and set up a board to oversee hiring in the agency. However, in response to Meza's investigation, Schneider told the executive inspector general's office that the majority of hires placed in staff assistant positions came with recommendations from the governor's office and that the agency felt powerless to turn those people away.