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Final Edition

**Rezko sent governor a wish list: 10 of 19 people he recommended were appointed or got spouse named**

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Staff reporters

One nondescript page -- containing 19 names and a note to Gov. Blagojevichfrom his chief of staff -- shows the clout Antoin "Tony" Rezko once wielded in state government.

"Rod, Here is a list of candidates that Tony Rezko wants to be put on non-paying boards. What are your thoughts?" Blagojevich's former top aide, Lon Monk, wrote in a note faxed to the governor along with the Jan. 20, 2003, list.

Of the 19 people named on the document, obtained exclusively by the Chicago Sun-Times, 10 wound up being appointed by the governor to a state board or commission -- or got a spouse named. Others wound up with contracts underwritten by taxpayers, or their children got state jobs amid a Blagojevich hiring freeze.

The governor, meanwhile, got more than $830,000 in campaign contributions dating back to 2001 from 15 people on the list, or from their businesses, state records show. The Blagojevich campaign called that figure an "inaccurate representation of the facts."

There is nothing illegal about Rezko, a recently indicted former top fund-raiser for Blagojevich, making recommendations about who should serve on state panels, or with panel members giving political cash to the governor. The state boards oversee activities ranging from investing pension funds to building affordable housing.

But the wish list comes to light at a time when federal prosecutors are alleging Rezko, in a case involving one state panel, schemed to trade a public pension deal for $1.5 million in contributions to Blagojevich.

**‘Incredibly troubling’**

Separately, state Attorney General Lisa Madigan had been probing if board and commission seats were exchanged for political cash -- allegations first leveled, and later recanted, by Chicago Ald. Richard Mell (33rd), Blagojevich's estranged father-in-law. Madigan backed off so the feds could take sole responsibility for investigating the governor.

"This is all just so incredibly troubling," said Cindi Canary, director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, a nonpartisan government watchdog group. "This [list] comes immediately on the heels of a campaign about transforming the political culture in Illinois.

"The other part of it really plays into the [Rezko] indictment we've all seen in the last couple of weeks and raises the questions Ald. Mell was raising. . . . Was there a cost of admission for getting appointed to a board or commission, and just how much influence did Tony Rezko have in getting his colleagues placed?"

Fifteen days after the governor's office faxed the list to Blagojevich's home, Blagojevich met with Rezko at Rezko's real estate office at 853 N. Elston for an hour and 45 minutes, according to the governor's schedule.

The governor named two people on Rezko's list -- real estate developer Allison Davis and lawyer Terry Newman, a confidant of Mayor Daley's -- to panels nine days after that meeting on Feb. 4, 2003.

Blagojevich has said he had no knowledge about any of the "pay to play" schemes the government alleges Rezko engineered with indicted former state Teachers' Retirement System Board member Stuart Levine. Rezko helped get Levine reappointed to the TRS board, the feds allege.

The governor's office did not dispute the authenticity of the document and acknowledged Rezko made personnel recommendations to the administration. But a top Blagojevich aide said it is improper to suggest Rezko's nominees are somehow tainted and pointed to the indicted former chairman of the Sun-Times' parent company as proof.

"Your basic question is: Did Tony Rezko make recommendations? As we've said many times before, he is one of many people who recommended individuals to us. Some of those recommendations were taken. . . . Others were not,"

Blagojevich spokeswoman Abby Ottenhoff said. "But implying everyone recommended by Tony Rezko is corrupt is as unfair as saying everyone who worked for the Sun-Times while Conrad Black was in charge was corrupt."

**Pleaded not guilty**

The Blagojevich campaign said it could attribute only about $80,000 in political contributions to those identified on the Rezko list. The larger Sun-Times tally includes individual contributions, donations from companies those individuals owned and, in one instance, dollars from a labor organization that operates under a top union official appointed by the governor.

The campaign didn't respond to a request to interview Monk, who is helping run Blagojevich's re-election bid.

What motivated Rezko to put people on the list is unknown. Rezko returned to Chicago on Thursday to plead not guilty to public corruption charges. His attorney, Joseph Duffy, declined to comment about the document.

The Sun-Times attempted to reach everyone named on the list, but most did not return messages. Those who did said they had no knowledge of the list.