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IL Law Tied to Gov. Blagojevich's Culture of Corruption *Approval of Legislation Contingent upon Campaign Contributions*

WASHINGTON D.C. – Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) was arrested yesterday on criminal charges. Federal authorities have charged Gov. Blagojevich with numerous acts of corruption ranging from extortion of the Tribune Company to attempts to sell the U.S. Senate seat vacated by President-elect Barack Obama. Blagojevich is also charged with accepting campaign contributions in exchange for official actions.

One instance of Blagojevich's "pay-to-play" dealings, according to the criminal complaint, involves legislation that effectively funnels money directly from instate riverboat casinos to the politically connected horse racing industry. House Bill 4758 was passed by the Illinois legislature last month. HB 4758 would levy a 3 percent tax on four Illinois gaming boat operations. Money derived from this tax is given directly to the state's horse racing industry. According to court documents, Gov. Blagojevich was arranging campaign contributions in exchange for approval of the bill.

"Criminal charges aside, '4758' was an extremely bad bill in its own right. It's right on par with eminent domain abuse. It's never good when the government steals from someone. It's even worse when the government steals from someone and gives it directly to another private entity." said Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform. **"Policy proposals like '4758' create a breeding ground for corruption. Furthermore, this just goes to show that tax increases and corruption go hand in hand."**

This past year, the four casinos brought the predecessor to this bill, enacted in 2006 but scheduled to sunset in 2008, to the Illinois Supreme Court challenging its constitutionality under the state's uniformity clause. While the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the legislation, the four casinos have the opportunity to challenge the legislation under federal constitutional questions at the U.S. Supreme Court, and Americans for Tax Reform encourages them to do so.

"For far too long Illinois residents have had to deal with elected officials that view public office as a vehicle for personal enrichment rather than public service," added Norquist. **"Unfortunately for everyone else in the country, the top players in the political machine that fostered such corruption are following President-elect Obama to Washington, D.C."**

Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact John Kartch at (202) 785-0266 or by email at jkartch@atr.org

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