

Spotlight on corruption case; reform bills lost in shadows

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Gov. Rod Blagojevich can deny it no longer. He is "Public Official A" in the public corruption case involving one of his fundraisers, Antonin "Tony" Rezko.

U.S. District Judge Amy St. Eve referred to Blagojevich by name in a recent ruling.

It wasn't exactly a revelation. News media have reported previously that Blagojevich is "Public Official A."

But the judge's reference removes any remaining doubts.

Blagojevich has not been charged with a crime, but there are numerous references to "Public Official A" in court documents related to the corruption probe.

So with "Public Official A" back in the news, this is a good time to remind everyone that two ethics reform bills aimed at ending pay-to-play politics in Illinois are still languishing in the Senate Rules Committee.

Perhaps it slipped the mind of Senate President Emil Jones.

Just over a year ago, House Bill 3 passed unanimously in the House. It would give taxpayers easier access to information on state budget earmarks, grants and awards.

House Bill 1 passed unanimously in April. It would require disclosure of previous campaign contributions by anyone bidding on a state contract worth more than \$10,000.

The ethics measure also would bar anyone with more than \$25,000 in state contracts to contribute to the campaigns of an executive branch constitutional officer responsible for awarding the contracts.

Both bills should have passed quickly in the Senate. They have strong bipartisan support, with 45 Senate sponsors for HB1 and 27 Senate sponsors for HB 3 out of 59 senators.

All Pantagraph area lawmakers are co-sponsors of the reform measures. State Sen. Bill Brady, R-Bloomington, is among the chief co-sponsors of HB1.

But the measures don't have the support of the powerful Jones.

At one time, a spokesperson for Jones said the Senate president didn't think the reforms were strong enough.

He now has had about a year to come up with an alternative. We are tired of waiting.

Illinois voters are tired of waiting, too. And they are tired of their state being the poster child for political corruption and seeing their elected officials - including Blagojevich's predecessor - being carted off to jail.

It's time for the co-sponsors of these two bills to do more than lend their names to the cause. It is time for them to lend some muscle and push Jones to allow the bills to come up for a vote on the Senate floor.

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