

MEMORANDUM

To: Distinguished members of the Impeachment Committee

Fr: Bob Arya, Former Senior Adviser to Governor Rod Blagojevich

Re: Governor Rod R. Blagojevich

Dear Distinguished Committee Members;

I served as Senior Adviser to Governor Rod Blagojevich from November of 2006 to February of this year. I left a stellar career in journalism to join the Governor in this capacity because I believed in and still believe in the priorities outlined. I strongly believe we need a system of healthcare for all. I believe in helping working families. I believe in a long overdue capital plan to invest in our people and infrastructure. As a father of two, I strongly back efforts to change our education funding formula. I also believe it is long past time to seriously deal with our out of control pension deficit which is not only embarrassing but financially debilitating.

As Senior Adviser, I reported directly to the Governor, Chief of Staff and Deputy Governor. During that period of time, I was witness to a host of matters and behaviors which were not only alarming but clearly convinced me that the Governor was incapable and/or unwilling to perform the duties of Governor required by the Constitution of this great state, by statute and by common sense. This conclusion came long before the Governor was arrested for the criminal offenses he must now answer to. I articulated these concerns to the Governor, Chief of Staff and Deputy Governor repeatedly over the course of more than a year both orally and in the form of confidential memorandums.

The situation became so bad in my mind that I asked for and was granted reassignment in February of 2008. I was moved to the Department of Central Management Services as Deputy Director of the Illinois Office of Communication and Information. I resigned from that position in October of this year.

I will outline for you a number of those matters which convinced me the Governor should resign or be removed from office and which caused me to lose faith in the administration's ability to function in a manner taxpayer's demand and deserve.

Showing up to work:

While it has been a running joke to the press and a great source of frustration for lawmakers, the Governor's failure to be in Springfield to work with the legislature on a regular basis makes it virtually impossible to do the job required in a manner that is professional and productive. In addition, the Governor visited his office at the JRTC maybe a dozen times while I was Senior Adviser. This also made it very difficult for the business of the people to be conducted in an appropriate fashion.

The Governor not only ran on an anti-corruption platform but ran on the work ethic of his parents; his father, a long-hours steel worker, his mother, a CTA worker. I would guess that both would be quite disappointed with Rod's lack of work ethic.

The Governor's chosen method of communicating with most senior staff on virtually all matters was via speakerphone from his home. The Governor's tone and tenor with respect to those interactions was violently unpredictable depending on time of day, his mood and the issue you were calling about. Many staffers cringed at the notion of calling him and we were under strict orders to never let the phone ring more than three times. The language cited in the Federal criminal complaint against the Governor may shock many but it was commonplace with respect to his dealings with senior staff members on a regular basis. In short, if his day was good, you might have a civilized conversation. If it was not, you could count on a peppering of the "F" word and a host of other terms generally reserved for street thug use.

Most senior staff became numb to his words and accepting of his absence from the office. The running joke was that we should send him on a trade mission so he could be gone for a few months and things might actually get done. That never happened for reasons I will articulate later in this note.

Use of the state airplane was also a concern to me and many others. Press aside, the costs are very real to take a "pit stop" in Springfield and pretend business we being done. The fact that the Governor was talking about being responsible with every taxpayer dollar at the time flew in the face (so to speak) of the logic he was using when abusing use of the plane. The state travel rules are clear and yes, there are exceptions, but we are to find the most inexpensive way to travel on state business. The state plane is the most expensive of all of the options. When reminded of that fact by me on one occasion, he said "Fuck it, fuck them (the press) it comes with the job." On this point, it was clear to me that the failure to show up to work and interact where and with those with whom interaction IS required to fulfill the duties of job of Governor showed a lack of respect, understanding of the requirements of the office and unmitigated arrogance.

Clemency Petitions:

At one point, there were nearly two thousand clemency petitions before the Governor for his consideration. This is a very important area with respect to the duties of the Governor. Having said that, the statistics will show that Governor Blagojevich had no interest in reviewing cases let alone signing off on those that even legal counsel within the office deemed appropriate. The Governor told me that, as a former prosecutor, he did not want to appear soft on crime by “letting people off the hook.” The trouble is Rod never took the time to understand the system of the people he was talking about. That would require work and detail both of which are outside of his area of interest. Former Deputy Governor Bradley Tusk said it best when he pointed out, on the record, that Rod “is not a policy guy.”: Understatement of the century.

I think one of the most disturbing things I witnessed in this arena was the day I brought a letter written to Rod to then Chief of Staff John Harris. The letter was from Senator John O Jones seeking to have the record of a constituent expunged so she could advance her nursing career. Like most waiting for help from the Governor’s office, this individual made a mistake as a youngster but could not advance her career because of changes in the reporting of crimes (background checks) etc. She had changed her life, went to school and never had another brush with the law. I handed the letter to John Harris who began reading it when Rod walked into the office. He took the letter from John and looked it over. After realizing it was written by a lawmaker that did not see eye to eye with the Governor on some administration priorities, Rod took the letter and said “Fuck him.” – Then cast the letter aside toward the garbage can. That was it. Her life would remain on hold and would not even receive fair consideration simply because Rod had an issue with the Senator. I think you need to understand this is the rule when it comes to how Rod does business, not the exception. If you are in favor and good standing with him, you will get what you want (perhaps funding for half of a bridge) – if you are on his bad side, or the wrong side of the vote, you will not (the other half of funding for the same bridge.)

I am still convinced and very concerned that there are a number of people who may be wrongfully imprisoned who will never have the benefit of having their cases moved because of the Governor’s actions. I reviewed several case files myself along with Governor’s office counsel and know that, at a minimum, these matters need to be investigated further. Also, it seems pointless to have a Prisoner Review Board when all of their recommendations are ignored. I talked to a couple of members of that board who are more than frustrated – I would invite you to do the same. To play politics with the lives of people for political gain or maneuvering is, in my mind, criminal itself and further proof that the man entrusted with making life altering decisions is not willing or able to do his job.

Cabinet Meetings:

It is the duty of the Governor to hold cabinet meetings. Period. You can argue how many and where but the bottom line is that they are important. During my tenure and based on the recall of many directors, Rod convened only one cabinet meeting in recent memory. That meeting was

held in preparation for a state shutdown. That meeting was directed by the Chief of Staff, John Harris. The Governor made a grand entry at the end to “rally the troops” behind his agenda. Cabinet meetings serve a number of purposes. The main purpose is to discuss issues of concern with the cabinet and articulate the administration’s priorities. It is a way to keep in touch with and, to a degree, control of the agencies the Governor is ultimately responsible for. The danger in not holding such meetings is that agency directors become too autonomous with respect to the everyday workings of the agency and don’t feel accountable to anyone for their actions or inaction. I think you will find that to be the case in this administration. There is too little control in the hands of a lot of people who need direction. There are some wonderful agency directors who understand what they need to do but many others who simply do and delegate to people even less qualified to handle the tasks.

It is the Governor’s job to be captain of his own ship. That requires crew meetings on at least a semi-annual basis. Virtually every other business in the world requires staff meetings. This is a much different world and I would argue more vigilance on the part of the Governor with respect to the cabinet and daily operations of the state is required. Again, inability or unwillingness to recognize and act on this point is another argument to be made when it comes to assessing whether or not someone is capable of fulfilling the duties of Governor. Keep in mind; we are the fifth largest state in the Union with a population of some 13 million people, a near 60 billion dollar budget and one of the largest economies in the free world.

Diplomacy:

This is one area the Governor has clearly failed the people of this state from day one of his first term. Rod Blagojevich has no interest in meeting with any diplomat from any country unless it serves one of his political goals. The Governor has been invited to hundreds of events involving the diplomatic corps and has attended only a handful – by choice. I would invite anyone on this Committee to reach out to the diplomatic corps, talk with the Consular representatives from nearly 80 nations based in Chicago. Ask them yourselves about the frustration they have with the administration.

The Governor’s office has a Director of Protocol. She goes out to cocktail parties and mingles. That is the beginning and end of our diplomatic outreach under Rod Blagojevich – even at a time where we are trying to bring the Olympic Games to Illinois, to Chicago. Rod refuses to attend trade summits, reverse trade summits and refuses to venture outside of Illinois to help our state culturally, socially and economically. Look at the efforts of Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels on the diplomatic front. His extra effort brought millions in business to Indiana.

I reached out to all of the Consular Generals based in Illinois when I first took over the job as Senior Adviser. All laughed at the notion that somehow the administration was going to turn over a new leaf with respect to relationships and understandings. They were right. When I pushed the matter with the Governor and the Chief of Staff, Rod said “Who cares?” and John Harris told me that Rod simply does not recognize the value of building these bridges. We all suffer greatly by virtue of that attitude.

Making matters worse, Rod would rather go out in a crowd to upstage another speaker and call Chicago’s violence out of control and virtually tell Mayor Richard Daley that the State Police

and National Guard need to be brought in to take control of the city. What a picture that paints for the rest of the world. Make no mistake that was an international story that caught the attention of a lot of nations and the IOCI. This was an irresponsible statement on so many levels – not the least of which is the factual/statistical one. I covered crime as a journalist when it was much worse in Chicago.

Again, don't take my word for it, make the calls yourself. Call the Consular General of Germany, of England, etc. Rod won't even visit with incoming CG's to acknowledge their importance. I was a surrogate at many trade missions Rod refused to attend; one involving China, one delegation from Israel. We all had to make excuses as to why the Governor could not attend when the truth was that he was sitting at home and had no desire to go to begin with. Again, from an economic, cultural, social and common sense standpoint, furthering diplomatic relations is a basic MUST DO for someone who holds the title of Governor.

Tactics:

As I mentioned from the outset, I have always supported the administration's objectives. Having said that, the tactics of this administration in many cases were beyond unacceptable – some were abusive, others arguably unconstitutional.

The Governor made it clear to me and others prior to the beginning of his second term that his goals were to set himself up for a run for the White House (thus the healthcare push) and take control of the Democratic Party in this state from his nemesis; House Speaker Michael Madigan. Rod Blagojevich is all about the fight. Yes, you must fight for what you believe in but when the fight takes precedent over what it is you are fighting for, you ultimately lose focus and lose the battle. We saw this with GRT, with the lottery lease, etc.

Rod let me and others know that the goal was to "Damage the Madigan brand." This meant doing all we could to make the Speaker look bad and make him look like the bad guy. Gamesmanship and fighting is part of the process but this went way too far. The Governor asked senior staff to write letters to editors bashing the speaker, write letters to members of the legislature blaming the speaker for everything in the state. I was actually told by the Chief of Staff to research the Speaker's background for a Governor's proclamation recognizing the speaker's work over the years. The goal of that Proclamation was going to be to try and tie him directly to the massive growth in the pension deficit by virtue of pointing out when our obligation began, how it grew, the sweeteners Speaker Madigan supported, etc. I did the research but did not draft a proclamation.

At the end of November, 2007, I sent a memo called "Reality Check" to the Chief of Staff, the Deputy Governor and eventually to the Governor. A few quotes from that memo with respect to tactics:

"The year-long attempt to damage the Madigan brand may have in fact had the opposite effect. Most people (statewide) don't know or care too much about Madigan – they see the Governor as

the head of state government and therefore responsible for the fiscal and legislative priorities. He is the one held accountable when anything - and in this case everything - goes amuck. The personal attack approach with respect to the speaker long ago crossed over "gone too far" and has officially passed into "just plain stupid" territory. People are tired of it. Even the stupidest person in this state by now knows the two men can't stand each other."

The response was cold and made no difference. An ambitious and arguably good agenda had now been reduced to an ego battle for Democratic Party supremacy in the eyes of the Governor. I tried to bring the fight back to the issues we were fighting for in the same memo:

"No question Rod likes to fight – but winning at this point should be more important. As a former boxer, John, I know you understand how to fight and to win. You know that there is a time and a place to fight – not every time and every place. You need to know your opponents strengths and weaknesses. You need to know what punches to throw and when. You also need to know when to expose yourself and when to protect yourself. That is the approach Rod needs to take to the fight this time around. When you come off a barstool, drunk and swinging wildly, you are going to get your ass kicked. That is, in part, what happened this year."

That went over like a lead balloon. When he read the memo, Rod cursed me out. In addition, I talked with John Harris about the contents/concept. John agreed with me on every point but said: "Rod is the CEO, what he says goes, got that?" – To which I replied: "He may be the CEO but we are the board of the directors and have a fiduciary responsibility to the shareholders, in this case the taxpayers, to do the right thing when the CEO has gone adrift mentally or otherwise." John smiled and ended the meeting.

Needless to say, all of the tactics backfired – nothing was accomplished except for more hard feelings and a greater divide with lawmakers and the public. Tactics are what they are – and change from leader to leader. Having said that, when you are knowingly fighting with people, giving favor where it helps and holding back from those who do not agree, you are abusing your power, your office. That is what happened in 2007 and beyond.

Lt. Governor Pat Quinn:

When I joined the administration, everyone knew I had a good relationship with Pat Quinn. The problem is, Rod never did, never will and could care less about him. We all know the system in this state is not a "ticket" proposition, which is to say the chosen ones don't run as teammates as they do in other states or on the Presidential level. The ticket is what it is by virtue of the math in terms of votes. Rod never liked Pat and said as much a number of times.

You can ask the Lt. Governor about the last time he actually spoke to the Governor which was probably a year or so ago at an event the Lt. Governor was invited to unbeknownst to Rod. It was a forced conversation at best. In terms of senior staff, I was one of the few who actually had contact with the Lt. Governor. Early on, Pat opposed some of the components of the GRT plan we floated. I reached out to him at first to explain what it was the Governor was proposing. Pat

wanted to talk to Rod about it but Rod said “forget him, you want to talk to him, fine. I have nothing to say to him.”

The Chief of Staff and Deputy Governor felt a bit different and I did open a dialogue about the budget plan. When the Lt. Governor publically disagreed with some elements of the plan, Rod went ballistic. “Fuck him” was the response. I suggested we keep a dialogue open with him and work to try and smooth over the differences. The Chief of Staff agreed and I did that. It became clear, though, that things were not going to move in that direction. I was then instructed by the Chief of Staff to let the Lt. Governor know in no uncertain terms that continued public outbursts against the Governor’s plans would not be without consequences. Consequences in that context meant that anything Pat supported would automatically be opposed by the Governor and the administration. I relayed the message to the Lt. Governor who held true to his stand on the matters and was cut off from anything administration related for doing so.

Pat Quinn did all he could to reach out to the Governor and work with him as the back-up quarterback should. Once you cross Rod, in his mind, forget it. You are dead to him. Rod makes that clear to anyone. Consider the case of your previous Deputy Governor Bradley Tusk. Love or hate him, Mr. Tusk WAS your Governor in the first term. He made everything happen and those of you on this Committee who knew him know that to be true. Once Mr. Tusk decided to move on for family reasons, Rod forgot the previous four years and did not speak with him. Again, in terms of what it means to be Governor is working with the second in command. Yes, this process not only calls for but benefits from argument, disagreement and some level of fighting. Having said that, when you take everything personally – as Rod does – you can get little done for the people. Another failing in a significant way that works against the Office of Governor and the people of the state.

Press Coverage:

From very early on, I had some grave concerns about the Governor’s focus on the press. We all know he has been accused of Governing by press conference or press release and there is nothing wrong with seeking good press. Having said that, there are clear and egregious violations related to Rod’s obsession with the press.

The Governor’s office on the 16th floor of the JRTC contains a room exclusively dedicated to press consumption. It is filled with state of the art televisions, tivos, etc. The room is manned by both press staff and Dunn Fellows. Dun Fellows are bright, paid interns (29K + per year). The Fellows are supposed to be involved with policy and other matters. For years, they have been used to record and bring over to the Governor’s house press reports on his activities.

You can argue that is not an abuse of the Fellows (I disagree) but there is a problem I discovered just before I left. When our agency Media Administrators wanted copies of “clips” – which are recordings of television news broadcasts of stories related to their agencies, they asked for a copy of “GOV TV Clips.” In short, the Dunn Fellows and/or press people copy these stories and newspaper articles every day which are then distributed to Governor’s senior staff for review and to the Governor himself.

As Deputy Director of the Illinois Office of Communication and information, I reached out to the person who was in charge of the clips operation, Grant Klinzman, a Governor's office employee. Grant told me that we could NOT distribute the clips to the agency press representatives because the service that provided the clips – known as Shadow TV – was paid for by the Governor's campaign fund.

I immediately became concerned. I called the Governor's fiscal office to see if they had ever paid Shadow TV on contract. The answer from fiscal director Marry Fanning was "No, Never." I then called Central Management Services fiscal to see if CMS picked up the cost. The answer was the same. So I was left with a dilemma.

If Shadow TV was being paid for by "Friends of Blagojevich." We then had a campaign funded tool being used on state time by state workers to track media. Also, those receiving the updates were using state time with a campaign funded vehicle to analyze matters related to the Governor and press. There is nothing wrong with tracking press in this regard but when it is financed by the campaign, there are some obvious issues.

I brought my concerns to my ethics officer. She told me that based on the facts; this needed to be reported to the Office of the Executive Inspector General. I did, the matter is currently part of an open and ongoing investigation along with some other concerns that had been reported. The Governor was aware of the arrangement. This may or may not be illegal or unethical. It sure stinks from my end. I ordered a new service hired for agency tracking and advised everyone I knew to steer clear of GOV TV/Shadow clips.

Conclusion:

I could continue but I see that I am approaching nine pages and nearly five thousand words. In closing I want to stress a few points.

My criticisms (outlined here and others not articulated) are professional, not personal in nature. I think Rod Blagojevich is a good father and a great guy to go to a ballgame with. I believe his love of people in general is sincere and that he does have a good heart. Having said that, those are not the only traits you need to be Governor. He has failed the people of Illinois and needs to be removed from office by indictment, impeachment or resignation. Period.

It is and has been clear to me for a long time that Rod simply is not interested in governing as much as he is fighting. If the fight were the right one for the right reason and worked in the context of the system, I could accept that. In this case, the fight is about the fight and winning at all costs regardless of what that means to the average person who is hurting especially now in the context of a brutal economic picture. Rod dislikes Barack Obama because Barack is living the life Rod envisioned for himself. I would respectfully suggest this committee seek an independent psychological evaluation of the Governor as part of this process. I believe Rod, the committee and people of this great state would benefit from such a move. It is clear to anyone who has been around him that there is ample cause for such an extraordinary request.

Finally, I want you to know that there are a lot of very talented and hard working people still left in the Governor's office. Many of them are friends of mine. I hope the Committee takes time to recognize that many of us gave up years of our lives and time with our families to help the people of the state of Illinois. We care. We feel the pain. This really is hard on everyone. None of us who joined Rod would have ever believed that we would be in this position. Our hearts were with the program and the people. I only wish his had been to the degree it needed to be to fulfill the duties of Governor of the proud state of Illinois.

Respectfully Submitted.

Bob Arya
Former Senior Adviser to the Governor