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IN ORWELLIAN SCENARIO, BIG SPENDER MADIGAN BECOMES "FISCAL CONSERVATIVE"

By Dennis Constant

In one of the strangest cases of political duplicity in recent memory, Ill. House Speaker and Chicago machine boss Michael Madigan (D-22, Chicago) has morphed himself into a "fiscal conservative" as he attempts to cast Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich, also a Democrat, in the role of the state's big-spending villain.

Madigan trumpeted his new role with a taxpayer-funded "flyaround" to news conferences in three downstate cities, and an op-ed piece sent to the Illinois press. In his article, Madigan claims that a "bipartisan coalition came together to rein in the Blagojevich administration's risky, fiscally irresponsible spending plan," and that the new budget is \$437 million less than what the administration introduced.

For years state politicians have duped taxpayers and the press by using nebulous state *budget* figures to prove that spending has been reduced. The truth is that *real spending* has increased year after year.

A study by this foundation found that for the 12 months of FY 2004 ending June 30, total state spending increased 9 percent - almost 4 times the rate of inflation -- or about \$6.4 billion, even while the state budget remained at \$52.6 billion. At the same time, total state revenues for FY 2004 are up 10.5 percent -- versus the 2.3 percent rate of inflation -- or about \$5.2 billion. There is no revenue crisis. There *is* rampant overspending. (Details at www.ntui.org/html/itef.html)

After the November election, Madigan will add \$11 billion in pork barrel spending to the current \$45.5 billion FY 2005 budget. That's a \$4 billion increase in the FY 2005 budget over FY 2004, not including increases in "off budget" spending. So much for Madigan's breathtaking claim of fiscal restraint.

The nonpartisan National Taxpayers United of Illinois (NTU), tracking every significant tax-related vote in the state government, has awarded Madigan the worst score possible every year he has been in office. In its latest Tax Survey of the 92nd Illinois General Assembly, 2001-2002, Madigan voted against Illinois taxpayers 100 percent of the time and earned a score of zero (Details at www.ntui.org/html/reports.html)

In the past, Madigan has never even tried to appear "fiscally conservative," but he has been known to play dirty in Illinois politics. It is common knowledge that in 2002 Michael Madigan used his influence as Speaker of the House to help his daughter become state Attorney General. This election year, Madigan is deeply involved in the attempt to keep the Democrats' competitor Ralph Nader off the Illinois ballot. Nader for President's current Illinois petition-defense coordinator, Christina Tobin, has acquired proof that several petition challengers are state employees from Madigan's taxpayer-funded legislative staff.

One could easily draw from Madigan's history of unscrupulous politics to speculate about what he is trying to do now. Should "big spender" Blagojevich be defeated, that would leave the door open for state Democrats to slate Attorney General Lisa Madigan for Illinois Governor.

The State of Illinois is in an overspending crisis. Pork barrel spending is totally out of control, and the vast majority of Illinois taxpayers receive only a few cents worth of benefit for each tax dollar extracted from their wallets. This situation will not change until *real* fiscal conservatives -- not "business-as-usual" con-men -- are elected as Governor and as members of the General Assembly.

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