



## **90% TOLL TAX HIKE PLAN WOULD FUND POLITICAL PAYOFFS**

CHICAGO— The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority has always been a notorious patronage machine. To listen to Tollway lackeys now, today's Authority is something out of a fairy tale—an upstanding group of public servants to whom we shouldn't hesitate to give \$12.1 billion in toll hikes. Actually, the Tollway is playing a big-money game for the benefit of its well-paid employees, Pat Quinn's Democrats, and DuPage County Republicans.

The Executive Director of the Toll Highway Authority claims that a \$12.1 billion increase for tollway users will provide \$21 billion in local and state economic stimulation and create 120,000 jobs. Originally, the purpose of the Authority was to raise enough money to pay for the roads and then turn them into freeways—not to transform into yet another government bureaucracy making clumsy and costly attempts at economic stimulus.

The high costs and necessity of these projects have been called into question by Jim Tobin, President of the Illinois Taxpayer Education Foundation, and Bill Morris, the lone dissenting tollway director.

“This is a boondoggle of immense proportions,” said Tobin. “While we suffer through the worst recession since the Great Depression, drivers will pay more to enrich the friends and politically-connected contractors of Democratic and Republican politicians in Cook and DuPage Counties.”

DuPage County Chair, Dan Cronin (R), enthusiastically supports the near-doubling of tolls throughout the 12-county Illinois tollway. For Cronin, the \$4.3 billion slated for the Elgin-O'Hare expansion and western bypass would be in part an enormous campaign contribution. He hopes for political smooth sailing when his constituents realize they have reaped more than one-third of the benefits while paying no more than anyone else in the 12-county area.

Everyone in the 12-county area will have to pay up to 90% more than before. For drivers who pay cash on the tollways, this is the second time tolls have been raised substantially in the past six years. Now they will pay as much as \$3.80 at a single toll booth. Over the course of a year, this potentially adds several hundred dollars more per year to each tollway commuter's costs.

The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority is expected to vote on the increase this month, after a whirlwind tour of 12 public hearings in three days. “They want to sneak this 90% toll increase through before drivers realize what's happening,” said Tobin. “I urge taxpayers to show up at the public hearings and voice their opinions on this proposed 90% toll increase.”