Illinois governor indicted on multiple counts, taken into custody by FBI

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Governor Rod Blagojevich and his chief of staff John Harris were arrested at their homes early Tuesday morning by FBI?agents and taken to FBI?headquarters in Chicago.

In the 76-page Criminal Complaint, the men are named jointly in Count One, which states: “From in or about 2002 to the present, in Cook County, in the Northern District of Illinois, defendants did, conspire with each other and with others to devise and participate in a scheme to defraud the State of Illinois and the people of the State of Illinois of honest services....”

In the Summary of Probable Cause, the men are accused of “using the office of Governor of the State of Illinois to obtain and attempt to obtain personal gain, including financial gain for Rod Blagojevich and third parties with whom he is associated...”

According to information from the Chicago Tribune, Blagojevich demanded the firing of editorial staff members who reported on Blagojevich’s actions and questioned his motives and connections. The governor’s office threatened to withhold financial assistance from the Tribune Company, in the sale of Wrigley Field, in a move to strong arm the corporation into granting his wishes.

There is an allegation of Blagojevich withholding funds from a children’s hospital because the administrator did not contribute a requested $50,000 to the governor’s campaign coffer.

The governor has also allegedly tried to secure kickbacks from businesses that sought to contract with the state. Federal prosecutors are also investigating possible hiring fraud by the Blagojevich administration.

Probably the most blatant abuse of power is Blagojevich's recent attempts to sell Barack Obama's senatorial seat to the highest bidder. Several State of Illinois officials are calling for Blagojevich to resign. According to the Illinois Constitution, even under indictment, he is still the governor until he resigns or is impeached.

Lt. Governor Pat Quinn would be the successor until the governor's term expires in January 2011.

The following is a brief biograhy of Blagojevich:

Blagojevich graduated from Northwestern and Pepperdine Law School .

– Practiced law and worked two years in State's Attorney Richard M. Daley's office.

– Got his start in politics through his father-in-law, 33d Ward Alerman and Democratic Ward Committeeman Richard Mell.

– In 1988, received a job on Mell's staff; in 1992 was elected to the Illinois House.

– Was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives, 1992-96; and again from 1996-2002.

– Practicing attorney, 1984-96; Assistant Cook County Attorney, 1986-88.

– Elected governor of Illinois in 2002, the first Democrat elected to the office since 1972.