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## 'Pay to play' is still Gov. Do-Wrong's motto

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[CAROL MARIN](#) [cmarin@suntimes.com](mailto:cmarin@suntimes.com)

Remember Dudley Do-Right? The jut-jawed Canadian Mountie cartoon character on "Rocky and His Friends" and later, the subject of a 1999 Sarah Jessica Parker movie?

Dudley Do-Right had lots of hair and always got his man despite the cunning Snidely Whiplash's efforts to do him in.

Gov. Blagojevich, as a Monday press conference proved, is now close to becoming that cartoon.

Asked by WTTW "Chicago Tonight" reporter Rich Samuels if he was going to sign the ethics bill that's languishing on his desk, the governor declared he might take his amendatory veto pen to the legislation. With the slash of his mighty amendatory sword and the help of a goofy new slogan, Blago boldly declared he will, "Rewrite to Do Right."

As state Rep. John Fritchey (D-Chicago) acidly told Samuels, when the General Assembly unanimously passed the measure out of both houses, lawmakers viewed the governor's desk as a "final destination, not a suggestion box."

The bill in question prohibits what we in this beleaguered state call "pay to play," that is, contractors giving campaign contributions to state officeholders while simultaneously holding contracts that official oversees.

Every other state officeholder -- Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn, Secretary of State Jesse White, Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Comptroller Dan Hynes and Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias -- voluntarily put such prohibitions in place long ago.

Not Blago.

"Rock the System" Rod in 2005 promised to pass sweeping ethics legislation that would be nothing short of a reform earthquake. But while he talked the ethics game, he kept raising cash the old-fashioned Illinois way and still does. It's instructive to look at an NBC5/Unit 5 examination of just one Blagojevich fund-raising day this summer to see what that really means.

On June 17, Blagojevich held one of his many unpublicized money-raising events. That night he picked up \$167,000, more than half of which, \$102,000, came from 23 companies doing business with the state. In the last five years, those 23 companies have put a million bucks into Blagojevich's campaign coffers but it's a drop in the bucket compared to the rewards they reaped.

State records show those companies have gotten half a billion dollars -- repeat, half a BILLION -- in state contracts.

Think of it. Businesses put a million in and get half a billion of our tax money out.

We are assured by everyone concerned that there's ABSOLUTELY no connection between contributions and contracts.

The very same year -- 2005 -- that Rod was going to rock on ethics, U.S. Senators Dick Durbin and Barack Obama announced that a new federal bill they had lobbied for would deliver an additional \$4 billion in new transportation funds for Illinois over five years. New bridges, bypasses, roads and mass transit. Jobs. All the state had to do was match it with its own capital funds.

Hasn't happened.

Sen. Durbin has communicated his fury, he said again Tuesday, "both publicly and privately."

Blago would have you believe that the only reason we have not gotten that desperately needed federal matching cash is that he's been sabotaged by his own Snidely Whiplash, House Speaker Mike Madigan, nemesis extraordinare. That the failure to pass a capital plan is everyone's fault but his own.

Let's stipulate there's plenty of blame to go around and that Madigan deserves a load of it.

But the governor needs to give up the games, abandon the "Rewrite to Do Right" nonsense, and

sign the ethics bill before he walks into the special session he's called for next week.

Say what you will about Dudley Do-Right being just a cartoon. At the end of the day, he got the job done.

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