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Better Government Association / Chicago Sun-Times Investigation

## Daley's Chum Chico Lobbies for Firm Feds Call a Fraud

March 22, 2010 -----

--- The Better Government Association in collaboration with Chicago Sun-Times Investigative Reporter Tim Novak reveals a close friend of Mayor Daley lobbies on behalf of a firm federal prosecutors call a front company that fraudulently won minority status to get millions in city contracts.



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The BGA and Chicago Sun-Times present the 3rd in a series of stories about lobbying and lobbyists. This joint investigation documents how the man the mayor recently appointed to run City Colleges, Gary Chico, a former Daley chief of staff, lobbied on behalf of a company called Azteca Supply. Azteca obtained \$30 million in city contracts in just the last 3 years--- claiming to be a minority and woman-owned business. State officials and federal prosecutors say Azteca is nothing more than a sham--a front company set up to skim profits based on bogus minority business status. Novak and the BGA report that Chico helped Azteca renew their minority certification that is now at the heart of a federal indictment of the company and its owners.

### **MINORITY CONTRACTING FRAUD PREVENTS REAL MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES FROM GETTING A FAIR SHOT AT CITY CONTRACTS!**

Azteca Supply has received government contracts to provide everything from chemicals to treat drinking water to concrete pipes for O'Hare's new runways. The firm has been paid for work done on the CTA, Stroger Hospital and the Dan Ryan. But according to public records, IDOT officials discovered in 2008 that Azteca was nothing more than a front--an unnecessary middleman driving up the cost of materials--a cost paid by TAXPAYERS.

Novak and the BGA found that Chico's law firm has been paid \$10,000 since 2004 by Azteca to lobby on the company's behalf. Chico's firm, Chico & Nunes says they never advised clients to perform improper activities and they are surprised by the charges brought by federal prosecutors. Gary Chico declined to answer specific questions about his work for Azteca.

**BGA Executive Director Andy Shaw asked, "Is the city still blind to minority contracting fraud when politically-connected insiders are doing the lobbying? Didn't the**

**administration learn its lesson after John Duff and others went to prison for the same thing? Why does it take federal prosecutors and IDOT officials to uncover an allegedly bogus minority certification for a company with millions in government contracts? It's time for Mayor Daley to order a clean-up of the minority contracting certification program and make it clear that fraud and contracts awarded by clout will no longer be tolerated."**

#### ABOUT THE BETTER GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Formed in 1923 by a small group of courageous Chicagoans intent on wresting control of their beloved city back from the political thugs and cronies of Al Capone, the BGA fights for open and honest government. We are an independent non-partisan citizens group working to shed light on corrupt, inefficient or malfeasant government.

Website: <http://www.bettergov.org>

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