

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CAMPAIGN REFORM GROUPS TO BLAGOJEVICH:
“It’s time to stop collecting campaign cash. Time to lead by example.”**

CHICAGO – A coalition of eight reform organizations challenged Gov. Rod Blagojevich on Wednesday to work as hard at passing sweeping campaign reforms as he did at winning reelection.

The coalition called on Blagojevich to dissolve his campaign committee as quickly as possible and to impose a moratorium on his own campaign fundraising until the General Assembly passes the campaign finance reform legislation proposed by Blagojevich 18 months ago.

“The election is over and Gov. Blagojevich should turn his attention immediately to bringing fairness to the state’s election system and honesty to government,” said Cynthia Canary, Director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform (ICPR). “Creating ethics commissions and inspectors generals was an important reform in his first term, but Gov. Blagojevich’s pledge to ‘rock the system’ with campaign finance reform proved to be nothing but empty rhetoric.”

In addition to ICPR, the coalition includes the Better Government Association, the League of Women Voters of Illinois, Protestants for the Common Good, Illinois Common Cause, Citizen Advocacy Center, Illinois PIRG and the Sunshine Project.

“During his first campaign, Gov. Blagojevich ran on a reform agenda,” said Terry Pastika, Director of the Citizen Advocacy Center. “During his second campaign, Gov. Blagojevich defiantly stated his ‘campaign practices are by the book.’ Unfortunately, playing by the book offers no reassurance to voters when the system is broken. By dissolving his campaign committee and imposing a political fundraising moratorium on himself, until he passes his proposed campaign finance reforms, Gov. Blagojevich can lead by example.”

“It is time for him to put the Blagojevich fundraising machine in storage and to put the full force of his persuasive powers behind convincing legislators to enact the campaign financing reforms he says he favors,” said Rev. Jennifer Kottler, Deputy Director of Protestants for the Common Good. “If trust in our system is to be restored, and it must, the Governor must lead by example. Our elected officials must be seen as moral public servants; the perception cannot be that they are bought and paid for by special interests.”

“For more than a year, the governor has told voters he backs legislation that would end ‘pay to play’ in state government by banning all campaign contributions by corporations and labor unions and setting limits on how much individuals can contribute to campaigns,” said Jay Stewart, Executive Director of the Better Government Association. “The Governor’s

proposal mirrored much of what the reform community has advocated for years. Unfortunately, he didn't do anything to try to pass it in the General Assembly."

"At the time, the Governor was sitting on a \$10 million campaign treasury, and legislators viewed his plan as disingenuous and a buffer against scandals that have become the focus of federal investigations," said Kent Redfield, Director of the Sunshine Project. "But by dissolving his campaign committee and imposing a moratorium on his own fundraising, the playing field will be leveled, and there can be a legitimate opportunity to change the rules of campaigning in Illinois."

"If he should decide to run for a third term in the 2010 election, he and all the candidates should do so under a new system," said Paula Lawson, President of the League of Women Voters of Illinois. "If Illinois enacts these sweeping reforms, he could end the moratorium and begin raising funds under the new rules, like all other candidates."

Here are some of the key elements of the Governor's 2005 proposal (SB1822):

- Prohibit campaign contributions by corporations and labor unions, a ban already in place at the federal level and in most states.
- Limit contributions by individuals to \$2,000 per candidate in each election and \$5,000 to political action committees and political parties.
- Place a ceiling of \$40,000 on the aggregate of contributions by an individual in any election cycle.
- Limit contributions by political action committees to \$5,000 per candidate in each election.
- Increase the detail of personal financial information to be made public by state officials.
- Increase public information about lobbyists' contracts and activities.
- Require a one-year wait before retiring legislators and former state employees could become lobbyists.
- Increase enforcement powers of the State Board of Elections, require audits of campaign finance reports filed by candidates and PACs, and require quarterly disclosure of campaign contributions by candidates.

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