

January 08, 2009

Stop the love train! Burriss tied to Blago's wife's sudden \$80K job; where's the scrutiny?



Carol Felsenthal has done it again. The Chicago investigative journalist -- and author of the most damning exposé of Bill Clinton's post-presidential career, [Clinton in Exile](#) -- is back with disturbing evidence that that very nice man, Roland Burriss, may have had something to do with the wife of Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich getting a very nice \$80,000-a-year job in August.

Here's what we know: **Patti Blagojevich** (pictured) was hired as development director for the Chicago Christian Industrial League. One of the board members is a partner in Burriss' lobbying firm. Carol first blogged about it on the [Chicago Huffington Post](#) on Monday. No one bit at first, but [CNN jumped on it on Wednesday](#).

Of course, as you could infer just from reading [a news story](#) at the time, Patti Blagojevich had any number of people in Chicago she could call on who would be willing to help the daughter of longtime alderman Dick Mell out of an ethical pickle. The CCIL position allowed Patti to exit a career in real estate that was coming under increasing federal scrutiny. Burriss's partner's role may have been nonexistent, the link coincidental.

Nonetheless, this story deserves wider media attention than it's getting.

As you may recall from [my account of attending the impeachment hearings](#) in Springfield, the governor's chief antagonist was State Rep. Jack Franks. He asked the most questions, he asked the smartest questions, he waved papers in the air. Asked about the possibility that the governor's wife had not gotten her job fair and square, Franks this week was surprisingly noncommittal. I don't know if this is because he was being ambushed by the information on a radio show (he was being interviewed by the longtime WLS morning team of Don Wade and Roma), or if Franks had decided he'd rather not be the man who lies down on the tracks in front of the Roland Burriss Express.

The impeachment panel [will talk to the senator-designate today](#). And the Republicans, at least, [plan to bring this matter up](#).

I want to say word about Carol Felsenthal. Ever since her profile of Roger Ebert appeared in Chicago Magazine a few years back, I have admired her probity and her passion for a good yarn, regardless of whose toes she has to step on to get it. Her Clinton book [is excellent](#), and unlike other journalists, she was able to get a number of key sources to talk on the record about the ex-president.

I also want to say a word about Mr. Burriss. I remember that amazing 1984 Democratic primary for the US Senate, in which he ran against Tom Hynes and the eventual winner, Paul Simon. He was a good

candidate then, and he's a good candidate now. But this just does not look good at first blush. He is to be testifying in Springfield today, and hopefully he can clear this up.

If I were Jack Franks and I read that Carol Felsenthal had seen smoke, I would be picking up the phone to dial 911. I'm not saying that Burris is definitely guilty of acquiring his office through pay-to-play. I'm saying that Bill Richardson just gave up a cabinet position based on not much more information (at least what has been made public). And that maybe the Coors Light Love Train should be slowed down a little bit. It won't really be the U.S. Senate until the honorable members from Minnesota and New York show up -- so what's the rush?

Posted on January 08, 2009 at 11:54 AM | [Permalink](#)

[Digg This](#) | [Save to del.icio.us](#)

Comments