

PRESS CONFERENCE OF FITZ BLAGO LIVEBLOG

✖ Ah. Liveblogging Pat Fitz again. (Though it'll be weird to liveblog watching his face, rather than the bald spot on the back of his head, which is what we got to see in the Libby trial.)

The press conference will start 7 minutes late.

In the meantime, here's my question for Fitz (not like he'll answer it). Local Chicago press is reporting that Rahm Emanuel reported Blago after someone approached the Obama folks about who he wanted for the Senate seat. In other words, yes, Rahm may well be the good guy here, and Obama couldn't be cleaner. Is that true?

Fitz up, introducing the guys involved. He's not wearing his lucky blue tie.

Sad day for government. Blago taken us to a new low. Political corruption crime spree. Most appalling conduct is attempt to sell the Senate seat he had the sole right to appoint to replace Pres-Elect Obama.

Back 8 weeks ago we had the following environment. A known investigation, recent trial.

Blago working feverishly working with contractors. \$8 M project announced. Trying to get someone raise \$100,000 in contributions. After being aware that pay-to-play scheme, decision made to use more extraordinary means. Bug placed in campaign office and home telephone.

In addition to pay-to-play, we were surprised to learn of extortionist attempt against the Trib. Blago and COS schemed to send a message to the Tribune company that the price of doing so was to fire certain editors. "Get them the bleep out of there, get us some editorial support."

Most appalling behavior that Blago tried to sell the seat vacated by Pres-elect Obama. Lincoln would roll over in his grave. "It's a bleeping valuable thing. You just don't give it away for nothing." Tapes reveal that Blago wanted a number of things: HHS, Ambassadorship, higher paying job for his wife, union job. He thought union might get benes from Pres-elect.

Complaint makes no allegations about Pres-elect.

This lost when Pres-elect's candidate took herself out of the running.

In another event, somebody else approached the governor. In government's view, they were approached by intermediaries. Blago was worried that the contributions would actually be paid. He wanted the money "up front." "Some of this stuff's gotta start happening now, right now." "You gotta be careful how to express that, assume the whole world is listening." That's the governor of Illinois. Finally, the governor talked about appointing himself to the Senate seat. He wanted to do it to avoid impeachment.

We need to do the investigation now that it is overt.

[Basically going to try to figure out who was playing in the pay to play for the Senate. He's not done—not at all.]

In all seriousness, we have times when people decry corruption. Wide ranging schemes. If the people felt uncomfortable they ought to come forward. We're already quite heartened by the number of people who have come forward today. There's a lot we don't know and need to know. We ask that the press, in particular, recognize that we're not casting aspersion on the other people mentioned on this.

FBI guy: A new low for Illinois. I did not answer whether Illinois is the most corrupt state in the US. If it isn't the most corrupt state in the US, it is certainly one hell of a competitor. The FBI agents were thoroughly disgusted by what they heard.

Fitz: There were a lot of things imminent. There's a bill waiting to be signed, based on whether a hospital's CEO coughed up a campaign contribution. An editor waiting to get fired. When there were layoffs, conversations about whether that editor was fired. A governor, the only one looking for more layoffs. Add it to the fact that we have a Senate seat auctioned off to the highest bidder. Blago's own words talked about selling this like a sport's agent. We stepped in for a number of reasons. In the middle of a corruption crime spree, and stepped in to stop it.

Journalist: You said not to cast aspersions. Does that mean they're beyond blame?

Fitz: We never give clean bills of health. What I'm trying to do is explain caution about what's on the tapes. We're going to do an investigation about what was said about other people on the tapes. There may be people who had no idea what was going on. Some things will be black and white, some things will be shades of gray. What they understand when they're scheming. We'd like to see what schemes were carried out, who made contributions, we'd like people to take what we say with a grain of salt. If other people did wrong, we'll deal with that.

Journalist: Blago will walk out today, he will still have the power to appoint the Senate seat.

Fitz: We make no allegations about what the Pres-elect is aware of or not.

Journalist: You intervened bc of something that was going to happen. He still has the power to do it.

Fitz: If I were someone who wanted to pay to play, I think this would be about the worst time to engage in this kind of action. I was not going to wait until March or April and say, btw, all this bad stuff happened in December. We will expose criminal conduct to let people know we're on to it.

Journalist: Should the gov step aside?

Fitz: We're not entitled to any view. What happens in the legislation is not for us.

Fitz: If the charges are true, it's an appalling thing. We need people in the public to stand up and say "enough." We're not going to end corruption in Illinois by arrests and corruption alone. What's going to make a difference is when people are approached to pay to play, they come forward.

Journalist: It's conceivable that Trib was considering—or forced to consider—what Blago had in mind?

Fitz: Not making claim about Trib. We're not describing about mindset of Zell's mind.

Journalist: What does this say about Durbin's request for commutation for Ryan?

Fitz: To extent office has a view in Ryan pardon, we'll express that privately. Power of pardon and commutation rests with president, don't make a practice of commenting.

Fitz: we cite a statute, sole discretion of governor of Illinois. Constitution leaves it to states to replace Senators. Illinois puts it in sole hands of governor.

Journalist: When pols get together and cut deals, where is the line between cutting a political deal and selling a US Senate seat?

Fitz: When you start having quid pro quo. If you tell someone, one conversation describes how gov wanted job at union, couldn't just be given to him, bc union already has that job. When you want to work for half million dollars, we're comfortable in the law that someone who schemes to do that is criminal. Doing it in way that is clearly criminal.

Fitz: No comment on whether we attempted to interview him.

Journalist; Describe arrest?

FBI Guy: 6AM morning, phone call to me and gov, advising we had warrant, 2 FBI agents outside

the door, asked him to open the door to do without media, waking children. Handcuffed. I woke him up. First question was, "was this a joke." Children not awake, beginning to stir.

Journalist: Why decision to make the arrest.

FBI Guy: we learned a lot from this wiretap. It wasn't about tying this in a bow. Letting things be done to damage Ill. It was about what was good for the iJounvestigation. Goes beyond governor to people involved in this scheme.

Journalist: Did the Tribune report interrupt the call?

Fitz: Trib called us to confirm story, we asked the Trib to hold on that story, "I have to take my hat off that the Tribune withheld that story for a substantial time." Later that story did run, and we were recording after that story. Days before Blago was intercepted telling his fundraiser to talk as if the whole world is listening. After the story ran, we got a different conversation that was "undo what you just did." We ought to credit the Chicago Trib. They didn't agree to all our request. I respect what they did.

Journalist: You're always careful to separate politics and law enforcement. Governor still has powers to appoint US Senator. Would people of IL be well-served for a quick session.

Fitz: Enough people here who can weigh in with their opinions.

Fitz: Investigation continues.

Journalist: Is it safe to say Obama has not been briefed? Any calls to Obama or Emanuel?

Fitz: Never going to speak in voice of President or President-elect. No reference to any conversations involving Pres-elect or involving any awareness of it.

Fitz: No anticipation of contentiousness on bond. Judge Nolan should hear what our opinion is through telling directly, not your

reporting.

Fitz: Very disturbing that these pay to play allegations picked up steam after a conviction and ethics legislation.

Journalist: Candidate took herself out of consideration: Was that Schakowsky?

Fitz: Not going to confirm.

Journo: Did you have conversation with AG or someone close to him on wiretap?

Fitz: Wiretaps and bugs, procedure we follow is well-known. FBI boss in Chicago, my office, Washington to OEO. They are the people who review applications for wiretaps and bugs. They know how to say yes and no. After approved goes up to high ranking officials in Crim, then to Chief judge in district. DAG, FBI Director are not going to drop their coffee finding out about this for the first time. We kept them in the loop.

Journo: Is discussing a quid pro quo different from carrying it out. How much is being a tough guy, and how much is carrying it out?

Fitz: Scheming versus carrying out crime. It is a crime to scheme to carry out a crime. Acting like a tough guy is a crime. We can sort through at a trial, but it is a crime to shake someone down.

Journo: Would Obama have gotten briefed on this?

Fitz: It was a very close hold.

Journo: How many calls today?

Fitz: We already got one in—it was heartening.

Fitz: Union he discussed was Change to Win, SEIU. That scheme never came to fruition. He later curses that it didn't come to fruition.

Journo: Search warrant? Friends of Blago campaign HQ and Deputy Governor's office.

Journo: If it's against the law to trade a job, is it also illegal to buy one?

Fitz: we charged Blago and Harris, and that's all we're saying.

Fitz: Discussion of Rezko's testimony in a footnote, that summarizes his status [footnote says Rezko's testimony doesn't always correlate with others']

[Randy cutting it short] Hey Randy!

Journo: How far did the Tribune plot go?

Fitz: Not going to say, that person was not fired. We don't go beyond that. Not going to opine what happened after the conversation left Blago and Harris.

Journo: Is it possible that anyone appointed by Blago without a cloud over their head?

Fitz: Not going to get into where things stand on senate seat. Public discourse will go forth without our guidance.