

THE BLAGOJEVICH SHAKEDOWN

The IL Legislature has posted transcripts and tapes of the four conversations Fitz released to the Impeachment Committee. (Right now, the tape servers are overwhelmed, but the transcripts give a glimpse of the sweet guys these are. Update: The Trib has working audio.)

Tape 1 Transcript 1

Tape 2 Transcript 2

Tape 3 Transcript 3

Tape 4 Transcript 4

They consist of four conversations: one on November 13, two from December 3 surrounding a visit Lon Monk paid to John Johnston at his track, and one from December 4. All conversations pertain to \$100,000 that Monk, Blago, and his brother Rob seem to understand Johnston will pay, though they are concerned about the timing of the donation in relation to Blago's signing a bill funneling a chunk of profits from casinos to track owners.

The most damning part of this conversation actually comes from Monk, who relates telling Johnston,

And I said, "Look, there's a concern that there's gonna be some skittishness if your bill gets signed because of the timeliness of the commitment." He said, "Absolutely not. I mean do you want me to put some into the next quarter." I said. "No. That's not my point. My point is this has all gotta be in now."

Suggesting that Lon was demanding Johnston's contribution before Blago signed the bill (which he eventually did sign on December 15), because he otherwise might not get the money.

This is all very thuggish. But particularly since Johnston replied, "I've always been there," it's not at all clear that Blago wouldn't have signed the bill without getting the money; indeed, it's not clear whether he got his money or not. Even given the limited transcripts we saw in the complaint, this doesn't appear to be the most damning of the conversations included in the complaint.

The other thing that's interesting is the timing of this. The Monk visit to the track took place on December 3, just days before Fitzgerald arrested Blago (and just as Blago was apparently trying to orchestrate \$1.5 million out of Jesse Jackson Jr.'s backers for the Senate seat).

It's not clear that Blago ever got any of his money that first weekend in December. But dang! He had a demand out for it from just about everyone in Illinois.