

State attorney general to back off license suit

Associated Press
Federal prosecutors have asked Illinois Attorney General Jim Ryan to refrain from filing a lawsuit to recover any money that might have been lost to the state in the bribes-for-licenses scandal.

U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said in an April 30 letter to Ryan's office that such a lawsuit "would interfere with the pending federal prosecution and ongoing investigation." Fitzgerald's letter was a

U.S. prosecutor says plan to recover money would interfere with federal investigation

response to a query from the attorney general's office, which was considering a lawsuit to recover losses. Attorney general spokesman Dan Curry said the office would honor Fitzgerald's request.

"We don't want to interfere with a federal investigation," Curry said.

Gov. George Ryan's campaign is under indictment on charges of

using public funds to do political work, and as the Republican candidate for governor Jim Ryan has sought to distance himself from the scandal.

Jim Ryan was stung earlier by claims from U.S. Rep. Rod Blagojevich, the Democratic candidate for governor, that he has done "too little and too late" to combat corruption

uncovered in the case.

The 4-year-old investigation began by focusing on payoffs in exchange for driver's licenses when George Ryan was secretary of state and more recently has been centered on campaign misconduct.

Fitzgerald said federal prosecutors "are sensitive to the concerns you expressed about ensuring the maxi-

mum possible recovery of the state of Illinois' losses from the conduct alleged in the indictment."

Fitzgerald said government officials "wish to assure you that we will vigorously seek to protect the state's interests in this regard."

He said that under the Mandatory Victim Restitution Act, any defendants convicted must be ordered to

pay full restitution to victims.

The state of Illinois is named as the victim in the indictment charging George Ryan's campaign and his former campaign manager, Scott Fawell. Forfeited assets also can serve as restitution, Fitzgerald said.

"This office will recommend that the (U.S.) attorney general remit to the state of Illinois assets forfeited in this case to the extent necessary to restore the state's losses from the scheme," he said.

Legislators angry at being left out of budget talks

Associated Press
SPRINGFIELD — Rep. Bill Black stood at his post on the House floor, red-faced and visibly frustrated.

His voice cracking as he shouted, Black protested the decision to send most lawmakers home while key officials studied the budget.

"I'm willing to stay here Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, so I can be a part of the process. I get tired of you sending us home and then bringing us back and feeding us like a bunch of mushrooms!" Black said. "I'm tired of it. That's not the way the public's business should be conducted."



Rep. Bill Black, a Danville Republican, has protested the decision to send rank-and-file lawmakers home while key officials study the budget.

make an informed, intelligent vote," said Sen. Denny Jacobs, a Democrat from East Moline.

It didn't always work that way. Before the 1990s, appropriations committees voted on separate state agency budgets — a plan that afforded individual lawmakers more influence, said Kent Redfield, a political science professor at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

But rule changes shifted more power to legislative leaders, who at the same time were amassing huge campaign funds to help secure coveted legislative seats. Lawmakers who hope to benefit from those funds tend to vote in line with their leaders.

While some decry the current policy, Sen. Steve Rauschenberger, a Republican from Elgin, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said the old system gave the governor too much power and frequently led to overspending.

Despite last week's outburst by Black, a Republican from Danville, he and other rank-and-file lawmakers will return to the Capitol this week to finish minor legislative business while waiting for top legislative leaders and the governor to make the big decisions on spending the state's approximately \$52 billion budget.

If all goes as usual, the so-called Four Tops — House Speaker Michael Madigan, a Democrat from Chicago; Senate President James "Pate" Philip, a Republican from Wood Dale; House Republican Leader Lee Daniels, a Republican from Elmhurst; and Senate Democratic Leader Emil Jones Jr., a Democrat from Chicago — will huddle behind closed doors with Gov. George Ryan to hash out a final plan.

They may not finish this week. But when the leaders have reached agreement, they'll start the roughly 72-hour task of printing copies of the budget proposal.

Lawmakers will be given the highlights of the final deal in meetings with their leaders. But they may have only a matter of hours to look at the actual printed budget, which is several inches thick, before voting.

"It makes it really very difficult to

meetings held by Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate.

"Every member is afforded the opportunity to have input into the process," said Granberg, a Democrat from Carlyle. "It's just a question of whether he or she wants to avail themselves of that opportunity."

If all 177 legislators were in on final talks, lawmakers would never agree on a final budget, said Rep. Bob Biggins, a Republican from Elmhurst.

"We give them (legislative leaders) the authority to represent us," Biggins said. "Decisions have to be made, and you have to rest some trust in people to represent your caucus."

However, efficiency in the budget process might not be best, said Charles Wheeler, director of the Public Affairs Reporting Program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

"Representative democracy is not designed to be more efficient," Wheeler said. "Representative democracy suggests that a lot of different voices get to speak, get to be listened to and those opinions all come together to help form the final product."

repopened the case, hired a forensics expert who found blood-spatter patterns that suggested Winger beat his wife, then shot Harrington.

And Schmidt told jurors a woman who was having an affair with Winger at the time of the killings will testify that Winger asked her to help him murder his wife. Schmidt said that after the shuttle ride from St. Louis, Winger told his mistress, "I have to get that van driver in my house."

Winger is facing six counts of first-degree murder. He could be sentenced to life without possibility of parole if convicted.

Prosecutors say man concocted story about stalker killing wife

Associated Press
SPRINGFIELD — The first witness had not even been called Monday in Mark Winger's murder trial before the jury heard his anguished cries for help as his wife and a man lay dying in his home.

"Please — God — my wife is bleeding... I killed him. He beat my wife. I put a bullet in his head," Winger said on the tape of the 911 call he made in 1995. He said he had shot an intruder after finding the man beating his wife to death with a hammer.

Prosecutors say Winger was acting. They have charged him with luring Roger Harrington, 27, to his home and shooting him after killing his wife, 31-year-old Donnah Winger.

Winger wanted to get out of his marriage and collect insurance money, prosecutors allege, so he concocted a story about Harrington stalking Donnah Winger after driving her on a shuttle bus from a St. Louis airport six days earlier.

"Everything the defendant told the police is a lie," Sangamon County State's Attorney John Schmidt said in his opening statement. "The defendant lied. The evidence will indicate that the defendant lured Roger Harrington to his house."

But defense attorney Thomas Breen, who said Winger "relives Aug.

29, 1995, again and again and again in his mind and heart," played the five-minute-long tape during his opening statement to rebut the notion Winger could have staged it.

"That was the state of Mark Winger on Aug. 29," Breen said at the end of the recording. "That is the reality of it. We're going to relive it again here, but we're going to relive it accurately."

Breen said he will present testimony that Harrington, who had a history of mental illness, told a psychiatrist that a spirit named "Dahm" — whom he mentioned to Donnah Winger on the van ride — "wanted him to cause pain to people. You will see pictures he drew of large people hurting little people."

Within three days of the killings, authorities cleared Winger, 39, a scientist with the Illinois Department of Nuclear Safety. They said he had justifiably killed Harrington after coming up from the basement of his west-side Springfield home and finding Harrington beating his wife with a hammer she had left on the table.

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Jewel thief with infamous last name gets 5 years

Associated Press
A jewel thief with a legendary name in the history of the Chicago mob was sentenced Monday to five years in prison for his part in a ring led by the city's former chief of detectives.

Sam DeStefano, 48, of Arlington Heights was also ordered to help pay for the \$5 million in jewelry, gems and fine watches stolen in eight heists nationwide that began in the mid-1980s and went on for a decade.

William Hanhardt, 73, the police department's former chief of detectives, is serving a 15½-year sentence as mastermind of what authorities call one of the most sophisticated jewel theft rings ever. DeStefano

pleaded guilty to conspiring with Hanhardt and four other defendants to steal the loot.

He is a nephew of "Mad Sam" DeStefano, a mob loan shark notorious for his cruel treatment of borrowers who failed to make their payments.

The elder DeStefano was gunned down in an alley two decades ago.

Jewelry and other items found in a safe deposit box maintained by DeStefano's former wife represented key evidence in the five-year investigation, according to private detective Ernie Rizzo, who worked for the former wife. Federal prosecutors have declined to comment on that report.

U.S. District Judge Charles R.

Norgle Sr. could have sentenced DeStefano to as much as 71 months in federal prison. But he imposed five years plus three years of supervised release afterward.

DeStefano's attorney told the judge that his client wakes up repeatedly during the night because he suffers from sleep apnea.

Prosecutors said the sleep apnea could prevent DeStefano from being assigned to the federal prison at Oxford, Wis., a minimum-security institution where a number of Chicago politicians convicted of corruption, mobsters and white-collar criminals have served sentences.

DeStefano, who recently was remarried in Hawaii, is due to start serving his sentence Aug. 1.

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