

# Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

The facts Big Labor bosses would rather you didn't hear about.

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*Compulsory unionism breeds corruption. In each issue of "Exposed," the National Right to Work Committee will highlight yet another example of union-boss abuse spawned and perpetuated by Big Labor's government-granted privilege to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired.*

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## **How Does a Chicago Teamster Boss Elude the Union's 'Anti-Corruption' Squad? Get Hired by the Illinois Governor!**

An April 25 Chicago *Sun-Times* article with the colorful headline "Mob Issues Raised About Gov's Pal" broke the latest story regarding Big Labor-backed Illinois chief executive Rod Blagojevich's worrisome habit of putting thuggish union bosses in influential state government positions.

Authors Robert Herguth and Steve Warmbir cite allegations regarding former Chicago Teamster official Daniel Stefanski, who landed a top job with the Illinois Department of Transportation in April 2003, in a report submitted last year by a team of investigators hired by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

Investigators led by former federal prosecutor Ed Stier found that Stefanski had once worked in an illegal bookmaking operation with fellow Teamster and reputed mobster Robert Abbinanti. They also found that, while wielding monopoly-bargaining power over hundreds of city truck drivers as president of Teamster Local 726, Stefanski had multiple lunch dates with the late mob bookie Nick "The Stick" LoCoco.

The investigators' most serious charge is that Stefanski, who headed Local 726 from the mid-nineties until he accepted his position with the Blagojevich administration, once publicly offered a \$20,000 reward to anyone who could provide the address of a mob informant whom Organized Crime kingpins reportedly wanted dead.

Stefanski does not deny keeping the company of alleged mobsters (however, he says he has no idea what people do "after 4 PM"). And his denial of putting out a contract on a mob informant isn't exactly ringing ("I might have said, 'Somebody would offer a lot of money to find that a-----'").

Furthermore, even international Teamster czar Jim Hoffa, who has tried hard to discredit Stier and his team since they resigned en masse last spring to protest top union officers' obstruction of their investigations, apparently concurs with the report's charges regarding Stefanski.

According to the *Sun-Times* article, Teamster insiders now say the union could have pursued internal charges against Stefanski based on Stier's findings, but chose not to. A new report by Hoffa—"friendly" lawyer Ed McDonald offers a fascinating explanation why no action has been taken:

"The leadership also discussed the bald political reality that Stefanski was now a member of the administration of the Governor of Illinois and that the state was a large [Teamster] employer. There was a concern that [union] interests . . . would not be advanced by pursuing charges against a former principal officer and running the risk of creating ill-will with the Governor's office."

Stefanski now collects a \$105,000-a-year, taxpayer-funded salary for managing grants to Illinois mass transit agencies. After the controversy about his alleged mob ties went public last month, it was also reported that he had been arrested April 15 for driving under the influence, improper lane use, having no proof of insurance, resisting arrest, and felony aggravated assault of a corrections officer.

When Herguth and Warmbir repeated to a Blagojevich spokeswoman the allegation that Stefanski's position in the Blagojevich administration has protected him from facing union corruption charges, she blandly stated: "We weren't aware of the things you raised. If there's any truth to those things, we'll look into them." At the same time, she praised Stefanski for his "knowledge of labor issues."

Two years ago, when Blagojevich picked local International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) union boss Michael Fenger to be director of Illinois' Department of Labor, the governor and his aides couldn't even plead ignorance about his choice's criminal record.

In 1997, Fenger was caught on a police videotape plunging an awl into a tire on a pick-up truck to prevent a nonunion worker from escaping a union mob assembled at a construction site in Sterling, Ill. In 1998, Fenger pleaded guilty to criminal damage of property and reckless conduct, paid a \$1500 fine, and was given a year of court supervision.

Despite his criminal record, Fenger's nomination was approved by the Big Labor-dominated Illinois state Senate, and he went on to lobby aggressively for union bosses' political agenda during his rather brief tenure as labor secretary.

Why would Gov. Blagojevich choose a convicted criminal like Michael Fenger and a shady character like Daniel Stefanski for powerful positions in his administration? Clearly, the massive political support Big Labor is able to offer the governor as a result of its federally-granted privilege to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired, supercedes, in his opinion, any considerations of ethics or appearances.

With its culture of union political corruption and its chronically slow economic growth, Big Labor-dominated Illinois is a case study in the need for both federal and state Right to Work legislation barring the collection of forced union dues as a job condition.

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