



Fundraiser A: My Fight for Freedom and Justice

Robert Blagojevich

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Most people will recognize the name Robert Blagojevich as the brother of ill-fated Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich. But many don't know why Robert came to work for his brother or how he came to be named as a defendant in the criminal trial accusing Rod of attempting to sell Barack Obama's former Senate seat to the highest bidder after the presidential election of 2008. Now, Robert offers a brutally honest inside look at what it is like to face the full force and power of the federal government and maintain innocence in a high-profile criminal case.

By the time *United States of America vs. Rod Blagojevich and Robert Blagojevich* was over, one of the most renowned prosecutors in America, Patrick Fitzgerald, had brought down a governor of Illinois for the second time in five years. An investigation that would unseat one of the unindicted "co-conspirators" in the case, Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr., had begun. And the integrity of President Obama, US Senator Roland Burris, and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel had been called into question.

For the last four months of 2008, Robert was, at his brother's request, the head of Rod's fundraising operation, Friends of Blagojevich. Rod and Robert had taken very different career paths and had drifted apart by middle age. But when Rod asked Robert to help him fundraise—because he couldn't trust anyone else in the role—Robert agreed, honoring his parents' wish that the brothers help one another when needed. In the rough-and-tumble world of Chicago-style politics, operating on an ethical level was not easy, as this telling memoir demonstrates. Robert often had to tell potential donors that there was no *quid pro quo* for a contribution: giving money did not result in state contracts and certainly didn't result in an appointment to fill a vacant Senate seat.

Fundraiser A is a criminal defendant's gripping account of how he rose to the biggest challenge of his life and beat the odds of a 96 percent Department of Justice conviction rate to walk away with his freedom. It offers not only a previously untold story of a fascinating trial with well-known, colorful characters that captured the attention of the nation, but also a look at a universal relationship—brothers—as well as the theme of a David ordinary citizen facing the Goliath federal government. Those who enjoy legal thrillers, political dramas, family sagas, and all things Chicago will be especially interested in this memoir.

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Gabriel Reyes:

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