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Final Edition

**Ex-aide: gov needs his head examined; Cites Blagojevich's 'violently unpredictable' moods**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD-When former Chicago television broadcaster Bob Arya joined Gov. Blagojevich's staff as a senior adviser in November 2006, the governor described him as "a real asset to my administration."

But when that run with Blagojevich came to an acrimonious end, Arya had a story to tell -- one of intense jealousies by the governor toward President-elect Barack Obama, state House Speaker Michael Madigan and others; a terrorized staff, and emotional instabilities that Arya said show his former boss needs a psychological evaluation.

Not long after Arya assumed his $114,000-a-year position, Blagojevich confided his White House ambitions. But when corruption allegations torpedoed those dreams, the governor's disdain for Obama seemed to grow. "Rod dislikes Barack Obama because Barack is living the life Rod envisioned for himself," Arya wrote in a nine-page memo he shared with the House impeachment panel.

The former CLTV reporter's memo outlines how top aides blanched at the profanity-laced outbursts by the mostly stay-at-home governor. "The governor's chosen method of communicating with most senior staff on virtually all matters was via speakerphone from his home," Arya wrote.

"The governor's tone and tenor with respect to those interactions was violently unpredictable depending on time of day, his mood and the issue you were calling about," he wrote. "Many staffers cringed at the notion of calling him, and we were under strict orders to never let the phone ring more than three times."

Arya said he raised concerns about Blagojevich's frequent and expensive use of a state plane to travel to and from Springfield. When Arya reminded Blagojevich that maybe he ought to opt for cheaper travel methods that would bring more positive press coverage, the governor profanely defended his perk: " 'F - - - it, f - - - them [the press]. It comes with the job,' " Arya quoted him as saying.

In a statement Thursday, Blagojevich's office ridiculed Arya's claims as the rants of "a disgruntled former employee who met with the governor less than five times but parlayed those limited meetings into a nine-page diatribe. Any testimony from a former employee who was asked to resign in lieu of being fired should be viewed with some skepticism."

Arya said one of the "most disturbing" on-the-job actions he witnessed involving the governor stemmed from a letter Blagojevich received from a Kentucky nurse with Downstate roots who was seeking an expungement so she could obtain an Illinois nursing license. The woman had improperly dispensed medication to a patient in Kentucky but was allowed to retain her license there and couldn't get a license in Illinois, where she wanted to move to care for her dying father.

In her package to the governor was a letter from Sen. John Jones (R-Mount Vernon), who had months earlier condemned the Blagojevich administration over an economic development dispute.

Arya described how Blagojevich saw his now-indicted former chief of staff John Harris reading Jones' letter on behalf of the woman and took it. "After realizing it was written by a lawmaker that did not see eye to eye with the governor on some administration priorities, Rod took the letter and said, 'F - - - him.' Then [he] cast the letter aside toward the garbage can.

"That was it. Her life would remain on hold and would not even receive fair consideration simply because Rod had an issue with the senator," Arya said.

Blagojevich also had a big "issue" with Madigan.

Arya said Blagojevich had told him before the start of his second term that he intended to set himself up for a White House run and bring down Madigan, taking his chairmanship of the state Democratic Party. "Rod let me and others know that the goal was to 'damage the Madigan brand.' This meant doing all we could to make the speaker look bad," Arya wrote.

Looking back on his 23 months on the state payroll, which ended last October, Arya described Blagojevich as "a good father and a great guy to go to a ballgame with" but an ineffective, emotionally unstable chief executive.

"I would respectfully suggest this committee seek an independent psychological evaluation of the governor as part of this process," Arya wrote to the impeachment panel. "I believe Rod, the committee and the people of this great state would benefit from such a move."