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**King of clout; Cellini released from prison**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD - The King of Clout has done his time.

Power broker William Cellini, convicted for his role in a fundraising scheme linked to imprisoned former Gov. Rod Blagojevich, has been released from federal prison.

A spokesman for the U.S. Bureau of Prisons confirmed Wednesday that Cellini was discharged from the federal prison in Terre Haute last Thursday.

He was released to a halfway house and is on home confinement until Dec. 5, said Ed Ross, an agency spokesman.

Cellini, dubbed the "pope" during his criminal trial because of his expansive, decades-long, behind-the-scenes influence in state politics, went to the minimum-security prison last January to serve his sentence of a year and a day.

The longtime Springfield resident was convicted in 2011 by a federal jury in Chicago for trying to extort a Hollywood producer for a $1.5 million campaign contribution for Blagojevich.

Cellini, working at the behest of Blagojevich advisers Antoin "Tony" Rezko and Christopher Kelly, targeted Thomas Rosenberg because Rezko and Kelly believed Rosenberg should donate to Blagojevich in order for Rosenberg's investment firm to be permitted to handle state teacher pension funds.

Rosenberg blew the whistle on Cellini's scheme, which was carried out with corrupt former Teachers Retirement System board member Stuart Levine.

Cellini did not have to serve out the full one-year, one-day sentence in prison because of credit for good behavior there.