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**State unloads power broker's hotel boondoggle for $6.5 million**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD-A downstate developer secured the winning $6.5 million bid Monday for a state-owned hotel built more than two decades ago by now-indicted political fund-raiser William Cellini.

State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias put up the Abraham Lincoln Hotel and Conference Center after a Cellini-led consortium defaulted on a $15.5 million state-backed construction loan in 1982 that has left taxpayers today on the hook for $30 million. Giannoulias, who signaled a willingness to sign off on developer Steve Horve's bid, said proceeds from Monday's sale will contribute to the $13 million recovered by the state from the bad deal with the Cellini consortium.

"The good news is we're putting this behind us. The terrible news is for a quarter century, this has been just a black eye in Illinois," said Giannoulias, a Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate.