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**Top lobbyist resigns so wife can keep job; Law says he had to go for her to stay in Lincoln library post**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD-One of the Statehouse's best-known power brokers decided to end his days as a lobbyist Monday so his wife can continue serving on the board overseeing the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

William F. Cellini, an adviser to four Republican governors dating back to Richard Ogilvie, terminated his lobbyist registration with the state Monday because of a looming Illinois law that bars lobbyists or their spouses from serving on state boards or commissions.

Cellini's wife, Julie, has been the volunteer chairman of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency board of directors since 1985 and a driving force behind the Lincoln complex that is taking shape in downtown Springfield.

"Bill took this action because he and Julie are both deeply involved in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum project, and they don't want to walk away from that," said David Blanchette, a Historic Preservation spokesman.

"A secondary reason was that he's at that stage in his life where he is thinking about slowing down anyway," said Blanchette, who said he was speaking on behalf of the couple.

A message left with the Cellinis was not returned Monday.

William Cellini, 69, was registered to lobby on behalf of 18 entities, including several of his own businesses, such as the group that owns the Renaissance Hotel in Springfield.

Other clients included the Illinois Asphalt Pavement Association, the Illinois Association of Wastewater Agencies and the Illinois Concrete Pipe Association. Cellini is the paid executive director for each of those groups.

Bob Clavel, president of the wastewater association, said he expected Cellini to remain as executive director but avoid direct contacts with legislators or administration officials. Clavel said his group has employed a full-time lobbyist other than Cellini for several years, and that person has primarily handled his group's legislative agenda.

The tighter lobbyist rules are contained in proposed ethics legislation on Gov. Blagojevich's desk. That provision led to last week's departure of the chairman of the Illinois Community College Board, lobbyist Ed Duffy. Blagojevich is expected to sign the bill.

That someone of Cellini's prominence would step down shows the true impact of the new ethics guidelines awaiting the governor's signature, said a government watchdog who helped push the package through the Legislature this fall.

"I think this just shows the significance of it when you see someone of such high stature and influence recognizing that there is a change in culture taking place in Springfield, and there isn't the same level of tolerance for business as usual as there once was," said Diane Brown, executive director of the Illinois Public Interest Research Group.

While never a candidate for state office, Cellini has helped run state offices, reviewed Cabinet directors' resumes for past governors, secured state jobs for scores of people and, at one point, controlled all federal appointments in Illinois.

He is an owner of riverboat casinos in Alton and Joliet, received state cash to build the money-losing Renaissance hotel in Springfield, where he has hosted gubernatorial fund-raisers, and obtained state funds to build more than 1,000 apartments in Chicago, the suburbs and Downstate.