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**Top Pols Packing Tobacco Money;**

**Anti-Smoking Bills Stalled, State Leaders Get $ 360,000**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD-During an 18-month period when key pieces of anti-smoking legislation languished, prominent tobacco companies gave state politicians more than $ 360,000 in cash and gifts.

A Sun-Times survey of campaign finance and lobbyist disclosure records also found the tobacco industry flew top GOP lawmakers to out-of-state golf tournaments, drove legislators around in limousines and offered tickets to sporting events such as the Indianapolis 500.

But it is the industry's cash that makes it such a welcome lobby inside the state Capitol building, where large signs posted at all entrances tell visitors "No Smoking."

Philip Morris Inc., R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. and the pro-smoking Tobacco Institute were the largest tobacco-industry donors in 1995 and during the fall, 1994, election that brought total Republican control to the Legislature.

The biggest beneficiary of the wealth was House Speaker Lee A. Daniels (R-Elmhurst), whose two campaign funds raked in nearly $ 85,000 between July, 1994, and last December. Daniels said the money had no influence on legislation.

"Over the years, it's apparent we've done many things tobacco didn't like, like increasing tobacco taxes," said Daniels, a nonsmoker. "No contribution would stop us from performing our services to the people of Illinois."

But anti-smoking advocates tell a different story. They say tobacco lobby objections bottled up a string of bills that would have tightened smoking restrictions.

"When tobacco companies contribute to leadership, there definitely is a payoff," said Madeleine Solomon, director of public policy for the American Heart Association of Metropolitan Chicago.

Since Republicans assumed control of the Legislature in 1995, only one anti-smoking bill has become law: a ban on all smoking on public school property. But many school districts enacted similar restrictions years earlier.

GOP-drafted legislation that has withered during this session of the General Assembly included proposals to:

-Grant the Illinois Liquor Control Commission authority to conduct undercover inspections of stores to see if they sell tobacco products to minors. The same legislation would have upped fines to as much as $ 800 for stores that are caught.

-Ban cigarette giveaways.

-Give towns broader license to create tougher anti-smoking laws than the state's six-year-old Indoor Clean Air Act, which imposed smoking restrictions in most public places.

"They have quite a bit of power here," state Rep. Mary Lou Cowlishaw (R-Naperville) said of tobacco interests that have fought to keep her cigarette giveaway legislation from getting voted on in the House. The industry says cigarette freebies ought to be allowed in bars and private clubs.

State Rep. Carolyn Krause (R-Mount Prospect) sponsored the bill giving the Illinois Liquor Control Commission authority to make sure stores weren't selling cigarettes to minors. But it died when the tobacco industry attached a provision that would prohibit towns from enacting their own smoking laws.

"What an effort you have to go through for a cause that is so just," Krause said.

In 1995, three main tobacco contributors -- Philip Morris, R. J. Reynolds, and the industry's main lobbying group, the Tobacco Institute -- gave more than $ 133,000. Shortly before and after the November, 1994, elections, the industry gave candidates even more: $ 160,500.

Tom Lauria, a spokesman with the Washington, D.C.-based Tobacco Institute, said money did not buy votes from legislators, but he readily conceded that campaign cash is a powerful and perfectly legal tool to advance the industry's legislative agenda.

"When you make a contribution or go to a fund-raiser, you have a member's ear. But that doesn't mean you'll get anywhere," Lauria said.

"These members of the Legislature in Springfield get contributions from everybody. How can you say one contribution over another wins the day?"

State campaign records show Philip Morris wrote a $ 30,000 check to House Democratic Leader Michael J. Madigan weeks before the 1994 fall elections. After Democrats lost control of the House, the industry shifted its money to Republicans.

Last September, Daniels received $ 20,000 from Philip Morris. The same company also made a $ 15,000 contribution last August to the House Republican Campaign Committee, which Daniels controls.

And last April and July, Morris gave two $ 10,000 contributions to the Republican State Senate Campaign Committee, controlled by Senate President James "Pate" Philip (R-Wood Dale), whose love of cigars is well known.

Besides giving cash contributions, tobacco companies and industry-linked contributors offered state lawmakers more than $ 66,000 in gifts in 1995, including a $ 40,000 Halloween party for schoolchildren that Gov. Edgar arranged in the Executive Mansion. The Illinois Association of Tobacco and Candy Vendors underwrote that event.

R. J. Reynolds spent $ 2,200 to fly House Majority Leader Robert Churchill (R-Lake Villa) to a North Carolina golf junket last September, while Philip Morris got state Rep. Timothy Johnson (R-Champaign) tickets to the Indianapolis 500.

"The smoking lobby's claims that money doesn't influence policy is about as valid as their claims that cigarettes don't cause cancer," said Tracy Litsey, executive director of Illinois Common Cause, a government watchdog group.