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**Patronage scandal; Madigan crony was collecting city pension when he sought Metra raise**

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Staff reporters

Nearly $110,000 a year wasn't enough for Patrick Ward - the Mike Madigan campaign worker at the center of Metra's patronage scandal.

When Ward complained to the powerful state House speaker last year that he wanted a raise on top of his annual Metra salary of $57,000, Ward was already drawing at least $52,700 a year from a taxpayer-subsidized city pension, a Chicago Sun-Times investigation has found.

Pension and payroll records show Ward, now 57, began collecting retirement benefits in 2009 after 30 years of government service. He made $84,000 his final year of employment with the city and got an initial pension of $52,700. As he began collecting his pension, he also started working for Metra.

The Sun-Times has also learned that when Ward then took a state job last May after leaving Metra he earned a "special salary adjustment" guaranteeing him a double-digit pay hike to work in Gov. Pat Quinn's administration. The newspaper discovered the special salary adjustment despite the governor's assertion that "no special treatment" was used to get Ward on the state payroll.

The new revelations come as Madigan has faced increasing scrutiny over patronage requests at the rail agency. His daughter, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, pulled out of contention for the race for governor in the days after the Metra scandal blow-up. She cited her father's refusal to step down from his position as speaker.

When told of the Sun-Times' findings, Andy Shaw, who heads the Better Government Association, said the BGA pension database shows Ward is collecting two pensions, the other a county pension - both of which began in 2009 - for a total of $60,744 a year in retirement benefits.

"Patrick Ward . . . still has the audacity to enlist Mike Madigan's help to try to get even more. That's the definition of 'chutzpah,' and it's also why the pension system is broke, the state is broke and people have lost faith in government," Shaw said. "If Mike Madigan knew Mr. Ward was collecting two pensions on top of his Metra salary, his request that Ward get a raise is even more craven and more reflective of a system that serves the insiders instead of the public."

With his new adjusted state salary and the two taxpayer-subsidized pensions, Ward's yearly income is $130,740.

A Madigan spokesman did not respond to a request for comment on Thursday.

Ward has not responded to Sun-Times visits to his Far Southwest Side home or state government office or answered messages left at both work and home.

Ward became a focal point of the Metra scandal after Alex Clifford, the ex-Metra CEO who received a controversial $718,000 severance package, said in a now-notorious memo that he lost his job for refusing to give Ward a pay increase at Metra and for rebuffing a Madigan push to hire another Madigan friend at the transit agency.

"Mr. Ward said his family had supported Mr. Madigan for many years and worked on his political campaigns," Clifford wrote in that memo. "He said that he had discussed his Metra employment with Mr. Madigan at a Madigan political event, where he told Mr. Madigan that he felt underpaid."

A Madigan aide at the time denied any claims of pressure or impropriety, and Metra Chairman Brad O'Halloran dismissed Clifford's account as "hooey."

Madigan released a statement at the time the allegations in the memo were made public.

"Given the information presented to my office, we forwarded a recommendation to Metra senior staff that Mr. Ward be considered for a salary adjustment," Madigan's statement read. "My office's recommendation supplemented an endorsement, which I understand he received from his supervisor, who concluded Mr. Ward was underpaid and that his job performance and education warranted a salary adjustment. "

When Ward left Metra and moved to his state job, he got a 23 percent pay increase over his previous job at the rail agency. He was hired under Quinn last May to be the assistant deputy director of labor relations in the state Department of Central Management Services.

The governor last week was insistent that no rules were waived to get Ward the bump up in pay above the $57,000-a-year salary he had at the transit agency.

"Nobody gets special treatment, whether it's Mr. Ward or any other state employee," the governor said.

But a pay rule published on the CMS website says that new employees with "directly related education and experience" cannot receive pay increases beyond 5 percent over their previous job outside state government unless they receive what is called a "special salary adjustment" that must be approved by the CMS director, Malcolm Weems.

And only in cases "correcting a previous error, oversight or when the best interest of the agency and the State of Illinois will be served" can pay raises exceeding 5 percent over a previous salary be doled out to an incoming employee, the state's pay manual says.

Ward's annual state salary is $69,996 - and state officials tried to portray that as a bargain.

The position into which Ward was hired had been located in Winnebago County and held by an $88,000-a-year employee who retired, but the job was moved to Chicago and designated as a policy-making job under the governor by the state Civil Service Commission last spring.

CMS spokeswoman Anjali Julka justified Ward's salary, saying he met the criteria in the agency's eyes that are spelled out in state hiring rules.

"The salary for Mr. Ward was based on his level of responsibility, his previous work history at the Cook County sheriff's office and the city of Chicago's Department of Personnel and on a comparison with other labor relations administrators for the state," she said.

"The average for nine other employees doing similar work at state agencies was $76,300. Mr. Ward's salary was below the level of his peers," she said.

A House Republican who serves on the panel that has probed Clifford's claims at Metra said the Quinn administration's explanations regarding Ward are flimsy and warrant an investigation.

"It sounds to me that rules were bent if not outright broken to get this guy a soft landing somewhere," said Rep. Ed Sullivan (R-Mundelein), who sits on the House Mass Transit Committee.

"This whole scandal, and I think it's right to call it a scandal, is getting uglier and uglier. You're telling me a guy that's a political patronage guy, who gets the speaker of the House to reach out for a raise for him that's denied because the guy at Metra won't play pay to play, gets this job? This is how the Democrats keep their patronage army intact," he said.