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BLAGOJEVICH TRIAL TEAM RECOGNIZED BY ATTORNEY GENERAL HOLDER AT ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY

CHICAGO — The team of a dozen investigators, prosecutors and a paralegal whose outstanding work throughout *Operation Board Games* led to the successful prosecution of former Gov. Rod Blagojevich and others received the Attorney General's Award for Distinguished Service at a ceremony today in Washington. Attorney General Eric Holder recognized 282 Justice Department employees for their distinguished public service at the 60th Annual Attorney General's Awards Ceremony. Fifty-seven other individuals outside of the department were also honored for their work. Held at DAR Constitution Hall, the ceremony recognizes both department employees and others for their outstanding dedication to carrying out the Department of Justice's missions.

The recipients, from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois, are Assistant U.S. Attorneys **Debra R. Bonamici**, deputy chief of the appellate section, and **Carrie E. Hamilton**, deputy chief of public corruption; former Assistant U.S. Attorneys **Christopher S. Niewoehner** and **Reid J. Schar**; and Paralegal Specialist **Chrissy M. Stein**. Also receiving the award, from the Chicago Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Supervisory Special Agent **Patrick J. Murphy** and Special Agents **David D. Bray II**, **Daniel W. Cain** and **Jay G. Hagstrom**; from the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Internal Revenue Service, Supervisory

Special Agent **Vikas K. Arora**; U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of the Inspector General, Special Agent **Irene E. Lindow**; U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Postal Inspector **Silvia M. Carrier**.

“This year’s award recipients have made significant contributions across, and far beyond, the Department of Justice and helped to protect the rights, safety and best interests of the citizens we are privileged to serve,” Attorney General Holder said. “I am grateful for the dedication and passion that these extraordinary public servants bring to their work, and I am honored to count them as colleagues.”

Gary S. Shapiro, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, said: “The entire U. S. Attorney’s Office is honored by the Attorney General’s recognition of our colleagues, past and present. The nights and weekends they worked; the creativity and brilliance they displayed; the legal and investigative acumen they brought to an immensely complex investigation — all of it was with the ultimate purpose of ‘doing the right thing.’ This award recognizes the team, and those who stood behind them, for doing it better than most.”

Working together since 2004, the award recipients were primarily responsible for the convictions of at least 15 individuals involved in rampant corruption at the highest levels of Illinois government, including Blagojevich, two of his chiefs-of-staff, and various insiders who profited from their relationships with corrupt officials. The award was bestowed for the team’s outstanding work in convicting Blagojevich and others of fraud, extortion, and bribery relating to corrupt acts that occurred from 2002 through 2008. The team’s dedicated and exhaustive pursuit of evidence, as well as its compelling presentation of that evidence over multiple lengthy trials, resulted in the successful prosecution of Blagojevich and others for crimes related to the selling of a U.S. Senate seat, the extortion of a children’s hospital, the attempted bribery of a campaign contributor, as well as other criminal acts related to the corrupting of the state of Illinois.

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