



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on March 7, 2022

Former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan Indicted

Michael Madigan, the longest-serving leader of any state legislature in history (50 years) is facing another possible 20 years — in prison. [Last week he was indicted on 22 counts](#) of conspiracy, racketeering, bribery, wire fraud, and attempted extortion. Following an investigation dating back to 2014, and ramped up over the last two years, U.S. Attorney John Lausch stated:

The indictment accuses Madigan of engaging in multiple schemes to reap the benefits of private legal work unlawfully steered to his law firm.... [he is charged with] racketeering conspiracy and individual counts of using interstate facilities in aid of bribery, wire fraud, and attempted extortion....

The indictment alleges a long-term, multi-faceted scheme to use public positions for unlawful private gain.



AP Images
Michael Madigan

After reviewing the 109-page grand jury indictment, Crain's Chicago Business journalist A.D. Quig called the scheme the "Madigan Enterprise," which included co-conspirator and long-time political aide Mike McClain, along with the 13th Ward Democratic Organization and Madigan's law firm, Madigan & Getzendanner. Madigan, claimed Lausch, used his considerable power accrued over five decades as House Speaker to reward his friends, ensure the cooperation of his allies, and generate income for various associates through these illegal activities. He "used threats, intimidation and extortion" to obtain the cooperation of his enemies.

There were so many enemies Madigan collected over the years that, according to Rich Miller, editor of the Illinois political newsletter the *Capitol Fax*, "The pile of political corpses outside Madigan's statehouse door of those who tried to beat him one way or another is a mile high and a mile wide."

Madigan is the latest in a long line of corrupt Illinois politicians that includes three governors (Rod Blagojevich, Otto Kerner, and George Ryan) and other state pols charged with corruption over the years.

Madigan is best known for his dictatorial control over members of the Illinois House, selecting which bills would receive a favorable hearing and which ones would disappear into the political woodwork. Those loyal received choice legislative assignments and campaign funds.

His former chief of staff, Timothy Mapes, was indicted last May for lying under oath to a federal grand jury that was investigating Consolidated Edison (ConEd) for seeking and receiving favorable benefits



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from Madigan. Although Madigan wasn't indicted in that fraud, he was implicated in it, and ConEd ended up paying a \$200 million fine.

In 2014, the *Chicago Tribune* found more than 400 current and retired state and local government employees who had "campaign ties" to Madigan's machine. His daughter, Lisa, served as Illinois' state attorney general for more than 15 years.

In 2016, the Illinois Policy Institute published a documentary about Madigan that almost didn't get completed, thanks to pressure from the House Speaker. Titled "Madigan: Power, Privilege, Politics" and [available for viewing here](#), the Institute said it was under pressure not to proceed from the beginning:

Making a documentary about the most powerful politician in Illinois is not for the faint of heart. Interviewees feared for their livelihoods. Three in-state production companies wouldn't take the job, saying they couldn't risk reprisal. The crew that decided to make the film received death threats.

This is Illinois' political culture under House Speaker Mike Madigan's reign.

Madigan is denying all charges: "It's no secret that I have been the target of vicious attacks by people who sought to diminish my many achievements.... I [have] always act[ed] in the interest of the people of Illinois."

Madigan's longtime Republican counterpart in the House, Jim Durkin, responded to Madigan's indictment: "This is another chapter in the sad story of corruption that has pervaded every corner of the state that was touched by Mike Madigan and his Democrat enablers, and has dismantled true democracy in Illinois."

Illinois' Democrat Governor J.B. Pritzker tried to distance himself from Madigan, saying that his indictment "is a condemnation of a system infected with promises of pay-to-play.... The era of corruption and self-dealing among Illinois politicians must end," adding,

The conduct alleged in this indictment is deplorable and a stark violation of the public's trust. Michael Madigan must be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law.

Madigan resigned his position as House Speaker in February 2021 as he began to lose control of his reelection campaign for a 19th term. Rather than suffer the indignity of being relegated to that of a mere House member, he left the chamber that he had ruled with an iron fist for five decades.

The odor of corruption remains, and it will take more than just this indictment to rid Illinois politics of the vast array of dishonest, venal, and unprincipled politicians who owe their very political lives to the former speaker.



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