

Rauner administration seeks to rid state government of illegal hires made under previous administration

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SPRINGFIELD – The Rauner Administration this week filed a motion to deny employees hired illegally by the previous administration the protection of a collective bargaining agreement.

The motion continues the Rauner Administration's commitment to reforming the patronage mess it inherited. As the Special Master noted in her recent report:

“Over the past two years, the Rauner Administration and IDOT have taken significant steps toward eliminating some of the problematic employment practices identified above and in the 2014 OEIG Report... The illegal hiring of the Staff Assistants has a continuing impact on State government. Many individuals hired illegally into the Staff Assistant position remain employed in other positions.”

Currently, at least 36 employees who were improperly hired into the IDOT staff positions remain employed with the state. Due to collective bargaining protections, the Administration cannot terminate these employees. The Administration’s motion asks a judge to decide if collective bargaining rights covering improperly hired employees can actually protect them.

“Since the governor first took office, we have worked diligently to create a more ethical and responsive government,” Rauner spokeswoman Catherine Kelly said. “We are pleased the Special Master recognizes our commitment to both cleaning up the patronage mess we inherited and changing the system so the abuse of the past cannot reoccur. Under our changes, rank-and-file state workers will be hired based on what they know, not who they know.”

Last September, Governor Rauner announced that the Administration abolished the staff assistant position and terminated all remaining staff assistants, which were at the center of the IDOT patronage hiring scandal. A 2014 OEIG report found the previous administration illegally hired staff assistants at IDOT and then transferred them into protected government positions or allowed them to perform job duties with little or no relation to their actual job description.

In direct response to the IDOT hiring scandal, Governor Rauner began requiring the state to publish all Rutan-exempt employees on the Illinois Transparency and Accountability Portal website during his first month in office. Additionally, the Rauner Administration has removed a level of bureaucracy in hiring civil-service positions, which has further protected the hiring process from unlawful political influence.