



For Immediate Release
May 31, 2007

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TERMINATION OF FORMER GOVERNOR RYAN'S PENSION UPHELD

Chicago – The Circuit Court of Cook County today upheld the termination of former Governor George H. Ryan's full pension.

Following Ryan's April, 2006 conviction on 18 counts of criminal activity, the General Assembly Retirement System of Illinois (GARS) requested an opinion from Attorney General Madigan regarding the impact of the conviction on the payment of the former Governor's pension. On September 12, 2006, Attorney General Madigan issued an opinion finding that because "Ryan's extensive and reprehensible criminal conduct was directly and inherently related to his official duties as Governor and Secretary of State," his criminal conviction requires the forfeiture of his pension benefits. Madigan also concluded that the Illinois law concerning the forfeiture of pension benefits requires a total forfeiture of all of Ryan's pension benefits, not merely those that accrued during his terms as Governor and Secretary of State.

Based on this opinion, on September 19, 2006, the GARS's Board voted to suspend the former Governor's pension. Ryan appealed the Board's decision to the Circuit Court of Cook County. In his appeal, Ryan argued that he should not have to forfeit the pension benefits derived from his years of government employment prior to his criminal conduct.

In today's ruling, Cook County Circuit Court Judge Martin Agran upheld the Board's decision and concluded that permitting Ryan to retain any pension benefits based on his government employment would allow future participants who engage in criminal conduct while serving in state government to protect their pension from forfeiture by simply changing positions within state government. Judge Agran found that such a result would diminish the deterrent effect of the pension forfeiture provisions in Illinois law.

"Former Governor Ryan breached the public trust, using his positions within state government to engage in widespread criminal conduct," Madigan said. "Ryan's actions were exactly the type of misconduct that our pension forfeiture law is designed to discourage. Today's decision confirms that public officials cannot be allowed to benefit from conduct that directly violates the public trust."

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