

January 11, 2017

Politicians Bearing GIFs

Yesterday, we discovered that the biggest term limits opponent in Arkansas — former state senator Jon Woods — also allegedly led an elaborate legislative fraud scheme, whereby he and a state representative traded tax dollars for cash bribes.

For now, Woods is an unindicted co-conspirator. But last week, the representative involved pled guilty to a felony carrying a possible 20-year prison term and directly implicated Sen. Woods.



Woods's alleged criminality involves the GIF program — General Improvement Funds. Legislators can personally direct GIF dollars to pet projects and favored cronies, taking political credit. The process is similar to congressional earmarks. And just as corrupting.

In an article entitled, “How a 1997 Power Grab is costing Arkansas taxpayers millions on pet projects,” the grassroots group Conduit for Action explains that the GIF rules changed just before our new millennium, when term limits first cleaned out the state House (1998). The old batch of legislators gave themselves unchecked control over this vote-buying slush fund.

And that is when even bigger corruption surfaced. “A Federal grand jury shook the Arkansas political establishment today with a long list of political corruption indictments that reaches to the apex of the state Legislature,” the New York Times reported in 1999.

Back then, Sen. Nick Wilson was Arkansas's loudest term limits critic . . . until his three-decade-long career ended with a guilty plea to 133 counts of racketeering and other public corruption.

Interesting that top legislative enemies of term limits, both past and present, wear the Scarlet Letter “C” for corruption. Coincidence?

Term limits are no friend to corruption. And vice-versa.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

On the web at: thisIsCommonSense.com

Think Freely Media, 180 West Adams Street, 6th floor, Chicago, IL 60603 | FAX: 703-910-7728