

Illinois Agriculture Legislative Day Scheduled

The 34th Annual Illinois Ag Legislative Day (IALD) is scheduled for March 24, 2004. This event provides an opportunity for representatives from over 60 farm and agricultural commodity or organizations and other diverse agriculture interest groups to meet with the respective state senators and representatives as well as the other sponsoring organizations. In addition to creating an Ag Day at the Capitol, participants have an opportunity to become better acquainted and to establish networking relationships to impact issues that affect Illinois agriculture.

If you know of any groups that would be interested in participating in this event, please have them contact Delayne Reeves at the Illinois Department of Agriculture – (217) 524-9129.

Former Illinois Governor Indicted

Associated Press

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Former Illinois Gov. George Ryan was charged in a federal racketeering indictment today with taking payoffs, gifts and vacations in return for government contracts and leases while he was secretary of state.

Ryan, 69, a Republican known worldwide as a leading critic of the death penalty, gradually became the focus of a corruption investigation that began even before his 1998 election as governor. The growing scandal was a factor in Ryan's 2001 decision not to seek a second term.

The indictment alleges Ryan received illegal cash payments and gifts, vacations and personal services. It says members of his family got cash loans and gifts totaling \$167,000.

The 22-count indictment charges that Ryan himself directed payments totaling more than \$300,000 to prominent lobbyist Donald Udstuen, who earlier pleaded guilty to corruption charges.

The indictment alleges Ryan and his associates engaged in a pattern of corruption that included performing official acts, awarding lucrative government contracts and leases, and using state resources to benefit himself, members of his family and his political organization.

"The charged conduct by former Gov. Ryan reflects a disturbing violation of trust," U.S. Attorney Patrick J. Fitzgerald said in a statement. "Ryan is charged with betraying the citizens of Illinois for over a decade on state business, both large and small."

Fitzgerald scheduled a 2:30 p.m. CST news conference to discuss the charges.

The investigation, dubbed Operation Safe Road, initially focused on bribes exchanged for licenses for unqualified truck drivers when Ryan was secretary of state. It expanded into a broader investigation of political corruption that snared several of his top aides and associates.

Ryan became the 66th person charged in the investigation; 59 people and his campaign committee have been convicted so far.

Sponsors Needed for ISVMA Conference

An exciting and informative program is scheduled for the ISVMA 122nd Annual Convention! The prospectus and

registration materials will be on their way in a matter of days. Encourage your colleagues to attend this meeting. It is important for them to support their state association and the ISVMA Convention is one of the country's best sources for non-branded, high-quality continuing education.

We are still searching for a few important sponsors. If you have any contacts with large vendors that may be willing to sponsor lunches, refreshment breaks or receptions, please notify Peter Weber at the ISVMA offices.