



## MARK KIESLING: Methinks Philpot doth protest too much



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Lake County Coroner Tom Philpot is grasping at what might be the last straw.

His lawyers want his federal mail fraud and theft case transferred from its current jurisdiction in the Northern District of Indiana to the Northern District of Illinois.

Maybe they have never heard of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, convicted of federal corruption charges and sentenced

earlier this year to 14 years in prison.

And now Philpot wants to enter that arena? It's like early Christians asking to be moved from prison to the Coliseum to face some lions.

You'd think that Philpot, who himself is a lawyer, would have enough sense to put the kibosh on this. But if he had enough sense, he likely would not have been indicted in the first place.

Plus there is this: Public officials indicted or charged on federal or state charges have never, in my 30 years of covering this county, had their trials moved to another jurisdiction.

Philpot's mouthpieces claim he cannot get a fair trial because pretrial publicity has tainted the jury pool.

That's a lot of bull.

More pretrial publicity accompanied the indictments of other public officials, dating back to before I was born, and that's saying something.

In my tenure at The Times, I have watched the following people indicted: County Clerk Ed Lukawski. County Sheriff Rudy Bartolomei. County Judges Orval Anderson and Steve Bielak. Court bailiff John Marine. Gary City Clerk Katie Hall and her daughter Deputy Clerk Junifer Hall. County Assessor Mike Jankovich. County Auditor Peter Benjamin. County Commissioner Troy Montgomery. County Councilman Will Smith. County Commissioners Steve Corey, N. Atterson Spann and Frank A.J. Stodola. East Chicago Mayor George Pabey. East Chicago GOP Chairman-turned-Democrat Bob Cantrell.

I was doing the list off the top of my head, and I am sure there are some I missed. To those folks, I apologize for not publicizing your infamy.

But the fact is none of them got cut the slack Philpot is apparently asking for, but I am not sure if he appears in front of U.S. District Court Judge James (The Blago Hammer) Zagel he is going to be happy to be in Chicago rather than Hammond.

Philpot's lawyers claim the indictments sparked "community outrage." If anything, the criticism of the coroner has been remarkably muted.

He'd be better off if he just shut up.

The opinions are solely those of the writer. He can be reached at [mark.kiesling@nwi.com](mailto:mark.kiesling@nwi.com) or (219) 933-4170.

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