

# Comptroller's new Web site highlights contracts, contributions

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SPRINGFIELD — Comptroller Dan Hynes wants a law to cut the connections between political donations and government contracts, but for now he'll make do with a Web site meant to draw attention to "pay to play" politics.

Hynes launched a site Tuesday that makes it simple for the public to search campaign donors and find out whether they ended up with a state contract.

The Chicago Democrat hopes the site sheds light on "pay to play" politics — the practice of giving donations in order to get a slice of state business.

"Track a state contract back far enough and there's a good chance that a campaign contribution was made to the right person at the right time," Hynes said at a news conference. "What we're unveiling is a user-friendly Web site that gives everyone ... the ability to follow the money."

Hynes said he hopes the move pressures Gov. Rod Blagojevich and state Senate President Emil Jones to support legislation restricting political donations by contractors. If not, perhaps it will at least make officials reluctant to award contracts that might

embarrass them.

"There is a shame element here," he said.

The "Open Book" Web site, [www.openbook.ioc.state.il.us](http://www.openbook.ioc.state.il.us), works by linking the state's database of contract information to the Board of Elections' list of campaign donations. Visitors can type in a word or two and see any related contracts or donations, along with donations by company employees.

For instance, someone interested in the surveying industry could search the Open Book site and find a long list of surveying companies that

have won state contracts or have made campaign donations.

Further searching would show that one survey company often shows up on both lists, making contributions to politicians of both parties and landing plenty of contracts.

Government watchdog groups applauded the new site.

"It's a really terrific system that I think has the potential of unleashing thousands of ants all over the state to crawl over the problem of pay-to-play contracting," said David Morrison, assistant director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform.

Reform advocates are pushing for a law barring campaign donations from people with large state contracts. The House approved the measure unanimously, and it has dozens of Senate supporters, but Jones refuse to call it for a vote.

He and Blagojevich say they want a broader new ethics law, but neither one is taking action to make that happen.