

Special Report

The Real Earl Ray Tomblin



Peoples' Bureau of Investigation
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For nearly 40 years, Earl Ray Tomblin has dominated West Virginia politics. Rising from the Logan County political machine, Tomblin built a political empire, enriching himself, his family and his friends along the way – all at the taxpayers' expense.

During his many years in the legislature, Earl Ray has compiled a shameful record. He has voted himself multiple pay raises; used taxpayer money to finance trips to luxury vacation destinations; and used his office to reward himself and his family with \$6 million. He has voted for tax increase after tax increase, while allowing West Virginia to sink into poverty and joblessness.

Now he's running for governor, promising to provide "More Jobs, Lower Taxes." But his record speaks for itself. For nearly 40 years, he's offered West Virginians the opposite: fewer jobs and higher taxes -- unless your last name is Tomblin.

Gubernatorial candidate Tomblin doesn't want you to know The Real Earl Ray. However, we believe it is important to set the record straight. Within this file, we report the facts about Earl Ray Tomblin, as they have appeared in newspapers and public records through the years.

The people of West Virginia will make their choice for governor on October 4. Before they do, they deserve to learn the truth about Earl Ray Tomblin.

We are simply reporting the facts. You can judge for yourself.

Notable Quotes

“I think what amazed me most about West Virginia corruption, though, was how casual and open it was. Actions that should have been scandalous weren't, because they were so widely accepted.

Take, for instance, Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin. He has been a political force in West Virginia for nearly 30 years. As Senate president, he presided over the incredible expansion of a fund set up to assist greyhound breeders -- never mind that his mother was a top recipient of the fund. Thanks in large part to Tomblin's actions, his mother went from receiving \$10,262 from the fund in 1994 to \$329,000 in 2004.

In 1999, his wife got a \$95,000 job as president of the Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College, despite her lack of doctoral degree or any significant experience in collegiate administration. Such pervasive conflicts of interest would have stunted Tomblin's political career in most states. Not in West Virginia, where he is as powerful as ever.”

--Journalist Dan Radmacher, Aug. 30, 2009

“In political matters in Logan County, many people think it is all right because that's the way it's always been done. That's not correct,” [U.S. District Judge Charles] Haden said.”

-- Charleston Daily Mail, Aug. 5, 1999

Voters can ask questions, “beginning with how an ethically challenged guy like this got to be a heartbeat from being governor.”

--- Charleston Daily Mail, Oct. 30, 1999

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The Family Business: “And You Wonder Why Illicit Video Poker Machines Ran Wide Open for So Long?”

Earl Ray and his family owned Southern Amusement Co. and its predecessors from 1951 to 1995. The company was one of W.Va.'s largest distributors of 'gray' video poker machines before limited video lottery was legalized statewide. Here are the facts about Earl Ray and Southern Amusement:

“Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin is big in the gambling business.”
(Charleston Gazette, March 25, 1995)

“Tomblin's family formerly distributed 'gray' video poker machines to bars and shops - collecting millions of dollars, we assume, in illegal gambling revenue from the devices.” (Charleston Gazette, Sept. 10, 1999)

Tomblin “worked for Southern Amusement for eight years before becoming Senate president.” According to ethics commission reports his “main source of income came as business manager for Southern Amusement Co. of Chapmanville,” where he “kept the company books.” (Associated Press, Dec. 14, 1998; Charleston Daily Mail, March 17, 1995; Charleston Gazette, May 28, 1995)

“Why are lawmakers allowing this illegal enterprise to run wide open in hundreds of clubs and shops - unsupervised, unpoliced and untaxed?...Is it because the family of Senate President Earl Ray

Tomblin, D-Logan, operated a video poker machine business for years?...Great sums of money are involved - in secret, unreported, off the books.” (Charleston Gazette, Feb. 26, 1998)

“West Virginia's ‘gray’ video poker machines may rake in between \$400 million and \$1.3 billion in illegal cash each year. It is whispered that some of the cash makes its way into the pockets of people who are supposed to enforce the law.” (Charleston Gazette, Jan. 27, 1999)

Tomblin’s father Earl is a former Logan County sheriff. He was “convicted of bribing and threatening precinct officials to cast illegal votes” in 1974, and was convicted of “offering a \$10,000 bribe in 1988 to then-sheriff candidate Oval Adams.” (Charleston Daily Mail, Aug. 5, 1999; Associated Press, Dec. 14, 1998)

“[A]nd you wonder why illicit video poker machines ran wide open in the state for so long?” (Charleston Gazette, Aug. 30, 2001)

Selling Out to Joe C. Ferrell: “Protect the Family Business”

Earl Ray came under fire for his conflicts of interest with Southern Amusement, so the family cashed out the business and sold out to Earl Ray’s friend, criminal politician Joe C. Ferrell. Here are the facts on Earl Ray and Ferrell:

“[Tomblin] scuttled a bill to allow riverboat gambling -- which might have posed competition for his operations. Charleston had been promised a \$100 million hotel and boat complex, plus 1,000 new jobs. Huntington had a similar lucrative prospect. Both went down the

drain when Tomblin blocked the boats.” (Charleston Gazette, March 25, 1995)

“The sale of Southern Amusement apparently gets Tomblin, D-Logan, away from criticism that he opposed casino gambling to protect the family business, which had its own gray (poker) machines.” (Charleston Gazette, May 28, 1995)

“Tomblin sold the business to Joe C. Ferrell, who had resigned his seat in the state House of Delegates after pleading guilty to making \$58,000 in illegal campaign expenditures in the late 1980s and early '90s.” (Charleston Gazette, Sept. 10, 1999)

Tomblin sold the business to Ferrell, despite the disgraced lawmaker “having declared bankruptcy, owing over \$31 million in debts.” (West Virginia Watchdog, September 20, 2009)

After purchasing the Tomblin business, Ferrell was later indicted and accused of racketeering, gambling, obstruction, vote buying and bribery for running illegal gambling rings. Federal investigators raided Southern Amusement’s headquarters, seizing records related to both gambling and election fraud. Ferrell pled guilty to racketeering and tax fraud. (Charleston Gazette, Oct. 8, 2010)

**Greyhounds & Nepotism:
“More State Money to the Tomblins”**

Earl Ray has a long history of using his influence to benefit members of his family. He helped steer millions to the family greyhound business. He obtained jobs for his wife and brother. Here are the facts on Earl Ray, greyhounds and nepotism:

“If only Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, did as well by the people of West Virginia as he does for members of his family.”
(Charleston Gazette, Oct. 28, 1999)

“Racing Commission records show \$2.5 million has been paid since 2000 to Tomblin Kennel Inc., which is owned by Freda Tomblin, or specifically to Carl Tomblin. That includes nearly \$900,000 in payouts that have apparently not been previously made public.”
(Charleston Daily Mail, May 5, 2011)

“Now it has come to light that a last-minute bill change will divert more state money to the Tomblins.” (Charleston Gazette, March 25, 1995)

Tomblin voted for a bill to give greyhound breeders, including his family, a share of video lottery revenue. (W.Va. Senate Journal, 2005)

“Why is it OK for senators to vote for bills that enrich their families?...Once again, some West Virginians have used the political process to fleece the many so as to enrich a few.” (Charleston Daily Mail, April 14, 2005)

“The bill [\$2 million for greyhound training tracks] passed the Legislature without debate in either house, purportedly at the insistence of...Tomblin.” (Charleston Gazette, Oct. 5, 2008)

“Likewise, eyebrows were raised in 1999, when the state college governing board of the time selected Tomblin's wife, Joanne, as president of Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College, even though she was one of only two applicants out of a field of 39 without a doctoral degree.” (Charleston Gazette, Nov. 14, 2010)

“Once again the politics of self-interest are alive and well and thwarting progress in Southern West Virginia. Nepotism overshadows the selection of Joanne Tomblin...” (Charleston Daily Mail, Oct. 30, 1999)

“The college and its students deserve better. The people of West Virginia deserve better, too. This kind of blatant political patronage hurts the state's reputation, confirming that the good ol' boy network is alive and well.” (Charleston Gazette, Oct. 28, 1999)

“Filling state jobs with the relatives of top elected officials is a ‘cultural thing’ in West Virginia, said an aide to Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin,” after it was revealed that Agriculture Commissioner Gus Douglass hired Tomblin's brother, Carl, to manage the Logan Farmers Market. (Charleston Daily Mail, June 19, 1997)

Pay Raises for Himself:

“We’ve Got to Eat Too”

Earl Ray also likes to vote for pay raises for himself and the career politicians. In fact, he makes more money than any other legislator. He voted to double and then quadruple the salaries of career politicians. Here are the facts on Earl Ray and pay raises:

“Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, made the most...”

“Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin had the highest gross legislative income...”

“State Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, had the highest legislative pay last year.”

“State Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin was the highest-paid legislator...”

“Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, had the highest compensation...” (Charleston Gazette, April 19, 1998; Jan. 11, 1999; March 14, 2000; Jan. 30, 2001; March 11, 2002)

“Back in 1994, West Virginia legislators unlawfully voted themselves a gigantic pay raise, boosting their pay to \$15,000 for two months of work. Public outrage erupted.” (Charleston Gazette, Jan. 13, 2007)

“Tomblin voted for the pay raise,” and made sure the pay raise passed the Senate, “[a]fter less than 15 minutes of debate...” (Charleston Daily Mail, Jan. 6, 1995; March 12, 1994)

Tomblin then voted for another pay raise that “would quadruple legislator salaries” to \$20,000. The raise provide a 33-percent pay raise for legislators, but only a 3.5-percent raise for teachers, service

personnel and most state employees. (Charleston Gazette, Jan. 13, 2007; March 9, 2007)

“Sadly, Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin and other top senators...supported this selfish increase...Shame on them.” (Charleston Gazette, March 9, 2007)

Perhaps, not coincidentally, “The House speaker and Senate president [Tomblin] stand to benefit the most from the [pay raise] legislation.” (Charleston Gazette, March 1, 2008)

Tomblin said it was “important that legislators get rewarded...‘We’ve got to eat, too,’ he said.” (The Register Herald, Feb. 27, 2008)

Perks for Himself: “Spending Other People’s Money”

Earl Ray likes to spend other people’s tax dollars on himself. He decorated an office fit for a king. He purchased items to promote himself to the public. He went on numerous luxury vacations. Here are the facts on Earl Ray and his perks:

“Few temptations in the universe are as powerful as that of spending other people's money. Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin apparently is a man unburdened by much willpower.” (Charleston Daily Mail, Feb. 4, 1998)

“Fit for Royalty”

Tomblin spent \$74,000 of taxpayers' money to redecorate his office. The design was meant to make the office "look regal and dignified" and "fit for royalty." Some of the areas are "off-limits to taxpayers who might want to inspect the couches and drapery they purchased." (Charleston Gazette, Jan. 25, 1998; Charleston Daily Mail, Feb. 3, 1998)

"Earl Ray Tomblin was elected president of the Senate, not king." (Charleston Daily Mail, February 4, 1998)

"The Senate also paid...\$1,478 to redo [Tomblin's] chair in the chambers - ironic since the president stands throughout floor sessions." (Charleston Gazette, April 4, 2010)

"Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, ordered 1,500 sheets of engraved stationery. With the cost of engraving, his order totaled \$672. The engraving alone was \$552. Without engraving, 1,000 sheets of letterhead and envelopes cost \$160, plus an additional amount for gold lettering at \$ 55 per thousand." (Charleston Gazette, March 17, 1998)

Tomblin was featured in taxpayer-funded radio ads just weeks before a primary election, which a critic called "shameless self-promotion and pandering with the taxpayer's money." (Charleston Daily Mail, April 14, 2004)

Tomblin spent \$64,000 on signs, stationary, pens and travel after becoming acting governor. That included \$800 to take Joe Manchin's

name off the door and \$2,700 on pens and pencils with Tomblin's name on them. (Charleston Daily Mail, April 19, 2011)

“Expensive Junkets”

“[Tomblin] sacrificed a recent weekend to attend a legislative conference in Honolulu. Such slavish devotion to public service is inspirational. (Charleston Daily Mail, Dec. 19, 1997)

“As usual, legislators let West Virginia taxpayers treat them to expensive junkets...On the South Carolina trip, Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, took along his administrative aide (\$1,254), his secretary (\$1,222) and his receptionist (\$1,188). What - no tennis coach or golf pro? This consumed the entire state taxes paid by many West Virginia families.” (Charleston Gazette, Jan. 11, 1999)

“Tomblin attended a Senate presidents forum in Spain...” (Charleston Gazette, July 20, 1999)

“Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, is to visit England and Scotland...” (Charleston Gazette, Oct. 3, 1999)

“Then there's Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, the recipient of at least 42 expense checks, mostly for travel, in the past 18 months.” (Charleston Daily Mail, Sept. 26, 2003)

“No. 49 in income, but No. 1 in politicians sent to Puerto Rico...State taxpayers sent 29 public officials to Puerto Rico [including Tomblin] - far more than any other state...Make no mistake: This was a tax-

paid vacation at a seaside resort that features a spa, golf course, tennis, water park, private island, fine dining and a casino. (Charleston Daily Mail, July 3, 2007)

“Tomblin has been traveling the state at taxpayer expense, and the pace has accelerated as the election approaches, according to a review of a schedule released by the Governor's Office.” (Charleston Daily Mail, April 19, 2011)

Monuments to Himself: “A Taxpayer-Financed Empire”

Earl Ray builds monuments to himself in his Senate district, including the Earl Ray Tomblin Conference Center. Unfortunately, he does so with money from taxpayers, whether they like it or not. Here are the facts on Earl Ray and his out-of-control spending:

“For nearly 20 years, Sen. Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, has quietly built a taxpayer-financed empire called Chief Logan State Park,” including \$5 million for a conference center named after Tomblin and \$6.5 million for a lodge. “No matter how successful a state park may be, it will never pay a dime in...taxes.” (Charleston Daily Mail, July 28, 2006)

Tomblin demanded \$10 million for a new jail in his district, even though the Regional Jail Authority didn't request it and the population was too small to make the jail cost-effective. (Charleston Gazette, June 18, 1995)

“The largest single number of requests may have been submitted by Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin” -- who demanded \$50,000 in state money to pay for a new water slide at a water park. (Charleston Gazette, Aug. 9, 2009)

“For years, Logan Democrat Earl Ray Tomblin has used his influence as Senate president to funnel money into [Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College]. The money has gone for nontraditional purchases. One year the college bought a failing nursing home. Another year, it bought a bankrupt radio station. Educating the masses seems to take a back seat to bailing out business at the Logan institution.” (Charleston Daily Mail, Oct. 30, 1999)

“A review of projects that won money from the Economic Development Grant Committee found that nearly a third didn't meet the committee's own job creation and financial commitment criteria...” “The state promised almost \$ 13 million that it doesn't have to projects that aren't businesses at all and have attracted zero capital from the private sector – including...a \$1.5 million project at a community college run by the wife of state Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan and an \$8.5 million lodge in Chief Logan State Park...” (Charleston Gazette, March 20, 2003; Charleston Daily Mail, July 7, 2003)

“Logan County, home of Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, received \$10 million for a new lodge at Chief Logan State Park, and \$1 million to help Man Area Healthcare.” (Charleston Gazette, Aug. 24, 2003)

Taxes to Pay for It All:

“Largest Tax Increase in History”

To pay for the money, perks and projects for himself, his family and his friends, Earl Ray consistently raises taxes and blocks attempts to lower taxes. Despite what he may say in his television ads, here are the facts on Earl Ray and taxes:

Tomblin, as Senate Finance chairman, voted for “the largest tax increase in state history.” (W.Va. Senate Journal, 1989; Charleston Gazette, Feb. 12, 1989)

“Along with the food tax, the package burdens businesses with higher taxes, including a raise in the franchise tax. Other taxes hit the industries that sell West Virginia’s natural resources, particularly coal and natural gas.” (Charleston Daily Mail, Jan. 30, 1989)

“The hikes are avalanching: Sales tax was permanently expanded to 6 percent (\$65 million); it was applied to food (\$144 million); 5 cents was added to gasoline tax (\$50 million); the coal severance tax was enlarged (\$35 million); the tax on power generation was upped (\$50 million); sales tax exemptions for contractors were eliminated (\$18 million); business franchise taxes were increased (\$20 million); underground gas storage was taxed (\$12 million); credit for severance tax was disallowed on franchise taxes (\$10 million)...That's \$404 million in new taxes.” (Charleston Gazette, March 12, 1989)

“[T]he sales tax was put back on food because the state did not have enough money to pay its bills, Tomblin recalled.” (Charleston Gazette, April 2, 1999)

Tomblin voted to raise taxes on boats in order to build a \$ 400 million airport that would benefit his district and burden taxpayers with “enormous debt.” (Charleston Gazette, April 9, 2001)

Tomblin said, “I think most people right now feel that we are about at the max that we can collect in West Virginia.” Yet, he continued to vote for higher taxes. (Charleston Daily Mail, Nov. 26, 2002)

Tomblin said taxes on payroll, cigarettes and natural resources “are all on the table.” (Associated Press, Feb. 12, 2003)

Tomblin called a bill to raise taxes, “probably the most important piece of legislation we’ll pass this session.” (Associated Press, Feb. 21, 2003)

“Taxing water is an idea being promoted by Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin.” (Associated Press, March 4, 2003)

Tomblin voted to “to increase sales tax collections by \$25 million and \$70 million a year by taxing purchases made over the Internet.” (Associated Press, March 5, 2003)

Tomblin voted to more than triple the tax on cigarettes, creating more than \$12.5 million in new taxes, and tried to raises taxes on cigarettes again the next year. (W.Va. Senate Journal, 2003; Associated Press, Jan. 26, 2004)

“Whether it’s [raising] that tax or another tax, we’re going to have to make a policy decision down the road. We may look into another area.

Natural resources is something we could look at,” [Tomblin] said.
(The State Journal, Feb. 20, 2004)

Tomblin voted to create \$90 million in “new severance taxes on coal, natural gas and timber.” (Associated Press, Jan. 29, 2005)

But He Doesn't Vote Against Them

Tomblin was against providing tax relief to businesses, saying, “It would be very hard for me to forgive taxes.” (Charleston Gazette, Jan. 11, 1995)

“Tomblin said the tax couldn't be taken off food without something to replace it... ‘That would be a big chunk of tax for us to lose...,’ [Tomblin] said.” (Charleston Gazette, April 2, 1999)

Tomblin fought efforts to kill the \$14 million pop tax: “[A]ny attempt to remove the tax would fall as flat as an open Pepsi left in the fridge.” (Hoppy Kercheval, Feb. 21, 2007)

Tomblin failed to repeal a property tax on business inventory and equipment, even though W.Va. is one of the few states that still taxes inventory: “In March, the Legislature failed to act on then-Gov. Joe Manchin’s request to ease such taxes through a constitutional amendment.” (Charleston Daily Mail, Dec. 1, 2010)

The Inside Deal: “Quietly and Behind Closed Doors”

So how does Earl Ray do it? How has he gotten away with such terrible behavior for so long? Because he operates behind closed doors, surrounded by fellow members of the good ol' boy network. He scratches their backs, and they scratch his. Here are the facts on Earl Ray and his inside deals:

“No one ever accused state Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, of putting principle over politics.” (Charleston Daily Mail, Sept. 8, 2001)

“Tomblin wields his power quietly and behind closed doors. He spends every day during sessions and many in between holding back-to back private meetings with senators, lobbyists and constituents in his opulent office...” (Associated Press, Dec. 14, 1998)

His Network of Lobbyist Pals

“Becky Neal will be Tomblin's director of intergovernmental affairs. Neal is a lobbyist who previously worked in Tomblin's Senate office. (Charleston Gazette, Dec. 11, 2010)

“To raise money and seek support, Tomblin one day used the office of pharmaceutical and oil and natural gas lobbyist Phil Reale to make phone calls for his campaign...Tomblin has also had a couple meetings with other friends. Attendees of at least one of those meetings included lobbyists or former lobbyists Nelson Robinson, John Cavacini and Richard Stevens. (Charleston Daily Mail, Feb. 3, 2011)

Ethical Losers

“There had been rumors that Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, was not enthusiastic about the requirement in the [ethics reform] bill for public officials and candidates to disclose spousal income and assets.” (Charleston Gazette, Jan. 31, 2010)

“[A]fter two months of waiting for action, the state Senate did nothing. State Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, who controls the agenda, was less than apologetic about letting the bill die.” (Charleston Daily Mail, March 16, 2010)

W.Va. Under Earl Ray: 50th

While Earl Ray and his cronies have prospered over his long years in power, West Virginians have suffered. Our state has moved backwards, and now sits at the bottom of so many lists of health, wealth and happiness. Here are the facts of W.Va. under Earl Ray’s rule:

Since Earl Ray Was First Elected

Per capita income dropped from 38th to 49th place

Median household income dropped from 42nd to 49th place

59,000 manufacturing jobs were lost

Percentage of West Virginians below the poverty level rose by 18 percent

How W.Va. Compares to National Average

Per capita income is 23 percent lower

Median household income is 25 percent lower

Percentage of people below the poverty level is 24 percent higher

Average teacher salary: 47th in the U.S.

Percentage of adults over 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher: 50th in the U.S.

Top States for Business: 46th overall; 49th in business friendliness

Litigation fairness: 50th

Labor participation rate: 48.6 percent (lowest in U.S.)

(Sources: U.S. Census, CNBC, U.S. Chamber of Commerce)

Now that you have the facts and know the truth,
we'll leave you with this question:

Is Earl Ray the right choice for governor of West
Virginia?

Vote your



conscience on October 4.
The fate of our state is in your hands.

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