

# Secret Tape Recordings Show 'Liquorgate' Case Job Offers

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Secret tape recordings of four telephone conversations show that aides to Montgomery County Executive Charles W. Gilchrist offered a job to a political friend last February in violation of county law, according to informed sources.

Gilchrist and two of his aides deny the offers were made to Leonard I. Colodny, but the recordings and a sworn deposition by Colodny tell a different story.

In two of the recorded conversations Gilchrist aide Gerry Evans offered Colodny two jobs: assistant director of civil defense and assistant manager of a liquor store. In another conversation, Chief Administrative Officer Robert Wilson offered Colodny the assistant managership of a liquor store. And in a fourth conversation, Evans indicated that Gilchrist himself had offered Colodny a merit job.

Gilchrist and his two aides acknowledge they talked to Colodny about him working for the county, but have denied offering him any merit jobs.

The existence of the tapes is the latest twist in a long-simmering controversy over the operation of the Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control. A county grand jury is looking into charges the department, sole retailer and wholesaler of liquor in the county, showed favoritism in its purchasing practices. Colodny, a former liquor distributor who was hired by Gilchrist to investigate the department and then fired by him a few months later, has been a central figure in what the county press has dubbed "liquorgate."

Under county law, all of the jobs Colodny was offered are merit jobs. They therefore must be advertised and the county personnel office must choose persons eligible for the jobs from applications submitted to the office. The basis for selection must be qualifications, not friendship.

Colodny claims he was offered the jobs because Gilchrist did not want him to have a high position in the liquor department. Colodny had originally applied for the job

of deputy director and was turned down for the position in November.

According to Colodny, Evans told him the reason he was not getting the liquor department job was because State Comptroller Louis Goldstein said Colodny would cause trouble if he were given the position. When Colodny threatened Gilchrist with making that public, he says, he began receiving the job offers.

Both Evans and Gilchrist said earlier this week that Goldstein had nothing to do with Colodny not getting the deputy's job.

Colodny, whose mother Ethel is a Democratic precinct chairman and supporter of Gilchrist, had not applied for the jobs and turned them down when they were offered. Three months later, however, Gilchrist awarded him a contract as a consultant on liquor department operations, only to fire him after he charged the department had engaged in questionable purchasing practices.

The job offers were made several weeks after a meeting Jan. 23 in which Colodny charges Gilchrist, with Evans present, offered Colodny a job as assistant chief of the stores division of the liquor department.

According to sources, a tape of a phone call from Evans to Colodny indicates that Evans understood Gilchrist had offered Colodny a job. Two subsequent phone calls from Evans to Colodny indicate that Evans offered Colodny two jobs. The fourth recording is of a phone call by Wilson to Colodny at his home offering him a job as the assistant manager of a liquor store.

In the first conversation on Feb. 13, Evans told Colodny he could not have the job of assistant chief of the stores

division — the job Gilchrist had allegedly offered Colodny — because the job had been frozen by budget cuts, and also because Wilson did not want him to get the job. According to sources, this exchange took place:

Evans: "He [Wilson] just says what do you owe him? Why does he have to go through this? Why can't he get a job in Prince George's County and all this other crap? But Charlie [Gilchrist], he's just sticking his neck out."

Colodny: "Well, he works for Charlie. What is your feeling? It's not going to be this time?"

Evans: "No, we're going to get Mitchell [William Mitchell, chief of the employment division] to sit down and put out a special bulletin as soon as we can. But at this point... I hoped it wouldn't get to this and no one would recognize what it was and make a big stew about it."

Later in the conversation, Colodny said, "I really appreciate all you've done."

Evans: "Our commitment is still... we're people of our word. We'll work it out, but these people, some of them, Lenny, they just don't understand, they just don't want to play ball. It's tough."

Colodny: "Well the only thing that surprises me about that is that when he [Wilson] was in Prince George's they were playing ball all the time."

Two weeks later, on Feb. 27, Evans phoned Colodny at home and told him something was "holding up" the job they had previously discussed — assistant chief of the liquor stores. Evans then suggested that Colodny take another job.

Evans: "Charlie [Gilchrist] said 'talk to Lenny and see if we can get him

in the department somehow, get him on, you know, as a liquor store manager and then see if we can work something out once he gets on board to move him up.'"

Colodny: "Well, you know, I don't know how that could work."

Evans: "The thing is, it's not a bad paying job. You know we could get you almost \$20,000 and we'd have plenty of justification for moving you up once you're in there. I don't know how long a period it would take. At least we'd have you in there. You know, we're going to have a new deputy coming on who'll be loyal to us and things are going to start to change."

Evans then told Colodny the new deputy of the Department of Liquor Control would be Frank Orifici, the nephew by marriage of Charles Buscher, Gilchrist's adviser on the department. The deputy director's job is a merit job.

Later in the conversation, Evans told Colodny: "The thing is to get you a job and to get you on board somehow... There's been so many eyebrows raised about other jobs that have been caught up in the budget that they want to know why all of a sudden we want to advertise it [a job]."

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Colodny: "Well, exactly what job are you talking about?"

Evans: "Well, we gotta get you on board with this assistant manager job."

Colodny: "And how long would it be from there before I could move up?"

Evans: "I don't know how long it would be, Lenny. I mean, you know, six months or so. The thing is, we're sure about your abilities and everything. We're sure that as soon as people in the department see how you perform that we can, uh, you know, you'll have a home."

Colodny told Evans he would prefer

to wait for the job Gilchrist promised him, rather than taking the assistant liquor store manager job.

Colodny: "As long as I have the commitment [on the job Gilchrist allegedly promised him in January] I'll accept your and Charlie's word as gold."

Evans: "Yeah."

Hours later, Evans phoned Colodny again with another job offer.

Evans: "There's another vacancy that's going to come up very soon that someone of your talent and background will probably find a little more challenging than working in liquor. It's in, uh, civil defense, assistant director of civil defense for the county. You ever think about anything like that?"

Colodny: "I'd really like to stick to something I know something about."

Evans: "Well, I mean, it's nothing that you don't have in your background, and it's kind of a neat little office. They do all kinds of things with fuel

and uh, emergency planning, you know. It's a lot of relations with the Chamber of Commerce and getting out, you know, and it's a better paying job, too."

Colodny said he was not interested in the job.

Hours later, Wilson phoned Colodny. Colodny told Wilson he had a commitment from Gilchrist to become assistant chief of the liquor stores.

Wilson: "But you were telling me, you're absolutely not at all interested in the other job?"

Colodny, who apparently thought Wilson was referring to the civil defense job, responded, "Well, I've been in government and I hate to see people in a slot that they don't know anything about."

Wilson: "Well, no, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the assistant's job."

Colodny: "No, it doesn't make any sense to me."

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