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# Niles auction to feature political memorabilia, personal items belonging to late Congressman Dan Rostenkowski

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By JENNIFER JOHNSON  
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More than 300 items from the estate of the late Illinois congressman Dan Rostenkowski will be auctioned July 19 in Niles. (Ian Kasper)

More than 300 items once belonging to the late congressman Dan Rostenkowski — from signed photographs and awards to a pair of golf pants — are going up for auction this week.

**Lot 14 Auctions** in Niles is hosting the July 19 live auction, which is expected to feature a variety of political memorabilia collected during Rostenkowski's 36-year congressional career representing Chicago's Northwest Side, as well as personal items from his estate.



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“This might be the last chance for what are essentially relics of old style Chicago politics being publicly available,” said Ian Kasper, Lot 14 Auctions owner and auctioneer.

Marty Cook, spokesman for the Rostenkowski family, called the auction “a political collector’s dream.”

“He accumulated tons of really great and interesting things, not just from his Chicago political life, but his Washington political life as well,” Cook said.

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The majority of the items are objects that did not sell during estate [sales](#) held by Rostenkowski family members earlier this year, Kasper said. Some of the more noteworthy pieces, he said, include a signed note from Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill; a 1969 gavel signed by Speaker of the House John McCormack; sets of congressional license plates; autographed photos of Arnold Palmer, Dinah Shore,

Hubert Humphrey and others; a flag that was flown outside Rostenkowski's Chicago office; three steamer trunks stamped "U.S. House of Representatives;" and an empty gift box from disgraced Enron chairman Kenneth Lay.

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The collection also features more ordinary objects, like luggage tags, pen sets, figurines, golf balls, sweaters and ash trays.

"There's plenty of old political stickers and buttons too," Kasper said.

But the "key item" of the auction, according to Kasper, is a Hitchcock Co. armchair bearing Rostenkowski's name and a painting of the U.S. Capitol building.

When Rostenkowski was indicted on federal corruption charges in 1994, he was alleged to have used taxpayer dollars to buy "approximately 60 wooden armchairs hand-painted with the Capitol of the front and the Illinois congressman's name on the back," the Washington Post reported at the time. The indictment against Rostenkowski stated that the chairs, among other items, were kept for personal use by Rostenkowski and his family, or given as gifts to friends and associates, the paper reported.



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Kasper acknowledged that there is no documentation that the chair to be auctioned was evidence in the federal government's investigation of Rostenkowski.

The son of a Chicago alderman and the longtime Democratic committeeman of the city's 32nd Ward, Rostenkowski represented Chicago's Northwest Side in the U.S. House from 1959 to 1995, serving as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee from 1981 until 1994.

Considered one of Washington's most powerful figures during his tenure, Rostenkowski's time in Congress came to an abrupt end in 1995 after he was indicted on federal charges of accepting kickbacks and using taxpayer dollars for personal use.

Rostenkowski long maintained his innocence, but ultimately pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of mail fraud, resulting in a 17-month prison sentence, according to the FBI. He was later **[pardoned](#)** by President Bill Clinton.

Rostenkowski **[died](#)** in 2010 at the age of 82.

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"His complaint was that he would only be remembered as a felon, which is unfair to his legacy," Kasper said. "He was in the U.S. Congress for 30-plus years. There

were so many things he was responsible for — and some things he was vilified for and praised for.”

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Rostenkowski’s power and prominence in Congress are reasons why this week’s auction is noteworthy, Kasper indicated.

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Cook said hosting the auction in Niles has significance as Rostenkowski often held political fundraisers at the White Eagle banquet hall, a longtime gathering spot for the area's Polish community. Rostenkowski is buried at St. Adalbert's Cemetery in Niles, Cook said.

The auction is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. July 19 at Lot 14 Auctions in the Oak Mill Mall, 7900 N Milwaukee Ave., in Niles. Items can be viewed at the auction house from noon to 5 p.m. on July 18 and 19, Kasper said.

Photographs of the items can also be found online at [www.estatesales.net](http://www.estatesales.net).

Most items will be auctioned as individual pieces, though there will be groupings of some objects, Kasper said.

A chair from the estate of the late congressman Dan Rostenkowski is one of more than 300 items up for auction July 19 at Lot 14 Auctions in Niles. (Ian Kasper)

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