

Obama: Rezko friendship not campaign issue

by UPI

CHICAGO -- Sen. Barack Obama says he doesn't expect the corruption conviction of a former fundraiser to be an issue during the U.S. presidential campaign. "I mean I was not ever considered to be part of that particular culture," Obama told the Chicago Sun Times of his friend and one-time fundraiser Tony Rezko, a former adviser to Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich. "I knew folks; I worked with them. But you know, I think my reputation has always been somebody who took the integrity of my office very seriously," Obama told the Sun-Times and other Chicago-area media while campaigning in Virginia. A federal jury in Chicago convicted Rezko Wednesday on 16 of 24 corruption counts. Rezko was convicted of conspiring with Stuart Levine, a longtime GOP activist, to extort millions from firms seeking state contracts or regulator approval. "(People) will judge me ultimately on what I do and not on what other people do," Obama said. Obama has not been accused of wrongdoing, but Republicans already are berating him for his friendship with Rezko, who has known Obama since at least 1990 and financially supported his state Senate and U.S. Senate campaigns.

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