**Major Error in *Tribune*’s “Madigan Rules” Article**

If it were not bad enough that the *Chicago* *Tribune*’s article on Speaker Madigan was fraught with innuendo and suggestion and short on actual facts, we have now found at least one blatant error in its reporting. In trying to disprove a contention made by the Speaker, the *Tribune* contacted the wrong source, thereby getting the wrong information and reaching the wrong conclusion. It took the Speaker’s staff less than a day to catch a mistake that the *Tribune* reporters, in their 11-month investigation, apparently could not.

In its coverage of roadwork done at the Ford City Mall on 76th Street, the *Tribune* suggested that the Speaker supported this road project at the behest of the Tootsie Roll Company, who was later (not then) a client of his law firm. The Speaker, in a written submission, denied that charge and explained that the request for the roadwork had not come from Tootsie Roll but, rather, from a condominium association in Ford City.

The *Tribune* made it appear as if they checked out this claim and found it to be false:

Madigan's written statement said he sponsored the road improvement at the request of a nearby condominium building, which he described as the principal beneficiary of the project.  
  
"That's just not true," said Daphne Brownlee, president of the Ford City Condominium Association. "We became aware of it for the first time when it was being done and we were very surprised."

The problem for the *Tribune*, however, is that they talked to the **wrong condo association**. The *Tribune* reporters spoke to the Ford City Condominium Association. But the condo association that requested the roadwork was the “Courtyard in Ford City Condominium Association,” a nearby complex located on 76th Street—the street that was the beneficiary of the roadwork. Thus, the *Tribune* did not prove the Speaker’s assertion false; it missed the boat altogether while leading its readers to believe that it had caught the Speaker in a contradiction.

What is most pathetic about the *Tribune*’s reporting is that **Ms. Brownlee told the *Tribune* reporters that they had the wrong condo association, but they did nothing to correct the error.** She explained that her condo complex was not even located on 76th Street and would not benefit from that roadwork. One might expect a reporter to take these statements as evidence that he was not talking to the correct source. Instead, he took the statements as evidence that his thesis was *correct*, and the *Speaker* was wrong:

Brownlee … also challenged Madigan's statement that her complex was the primary beneficiary, because its main entrance is on another road.

Did it ever occur to the *Tribune* reporters, upon learning that Ms. Brownlee’s condo complex was not even located near the roadwork, that maybe they were speaking with the wrong association? Why did they ignore Ms. Brownlee’s warning to them on this point? And why didn’t they simply return to the Speaker, with whom they had an open dialogue, and provide him the opportunity to clarify matters? One phone call, and the issue could have been cleared up.

Instead, the *Tribune* published a piece on this Ford City road project that might have made for nice “gotcha” journalism but which, unfortunately, was completely false and misleading. This leaves only one question:

Will the *Tribune* admit its mistake and issue a retraction?