



Jil's Statehouse Report

News from Springfield from State Rep. Jil Tracy
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New Session Newsletter and Newsbreaking Events Concerning Feb. 4, 2009 Affidavit of Sen. Rolland Burris

The 96th General Assembly Spring 2009 session was supposed to start off as a new era of reform. Our State needs to move forward from the impeachment of the past Governor and start putting its financial house in order. However, there were many lessons to learn from the impeachment phase. The sudden appearance of a third affidavit of new U.S. Senator Rolland Burris seems to have taken us back a step.

This latest affidavit, dated February 4, 2009, was apparently sent to Illinois House majority leader and Impeachment Investigation Committee Barbara Flynn Curry shortly after this date. The existence of this affidavit was just revealed in a February 14th Chicago Sun Times story. As one of the nine Republican members of this Investigation Committee, I was stunned to first hear about this affidavit in the newspaper.

Rolland Burris appeared to give sworn testimony to the Investigation Committee on January 8, 2009. The committee clearly asked if he had discussed giving any sort of a quid pro quo with anyone closely associated with ex Governor Blagovich. The committee also clearly inquired of Senator Burris with whom he had discussions about his desire to become a U. S. Senator. Now, this new affidavit provides further information that he had multiple discussions with Robert Blagovich (chairman of Rod Blagovich Campaign Committee), John Harris, the ex-Governor's Chief of Staff, which he should have disclosed to the Committee on January 8th. Two questions come to mind. First, why was this information withheld by Senator Burris. Secondly, why didn't Majority Leader and Committee chairman Barbara Flynn Currie provide this affidavit to the Investigative Committee.

I plan to work to get answers to these troubling questions. Our State citizens deserve these answers. Our state citizens deserve honest and open government and until we insist on it, it's clear it just won't happen.

Excerpts of the January 8th, 2009 transcript of Senator Burris' testimony and an excerpt of the Burris affidavit can be found on below.

Burris February 4, 2009 Revised Affidavit EXCERPT

Burris states in the revised affidavit that when asked if he talked to anyone closely related to the Governor about his desire to seek the appointment prior to the Blagojevich arrest: "I mentioned a conversation with Lon Monk but was then asked another question and I not mention anyone else. I wish to supplement my answer with other events that I have been able to recall to make certain the record is complete."

House Investigation Committee January 8, 2009 Rolland Burris Sworn Testimony excerpts:

(Tr.941-942)

DURKIN: "Prior to the Governor's arrest, did you have any conversations, with the Governor about your desire to be appointed to the seat?"

BURRIS: "No"

DURKIN: "Did you talk to any members of the Governor's staff or anyone closely related to the governor, including family members or lobbyists connected with him, including let me throw out some names, John Harris, Rob Blagojevich, Doug Scofield, Bob Greenlee, Lon Monk, John Wyma, did you talk to anybody who was associated with the Governor about your desire to seek the appointment prior to the Governor's arrest"

BURRIS: (after conferring with his counsel) "I talked to some friends about my desire to be appointed, yes".

DURKIN: "I guess the point is I was trying to ask, did you speak to anybody who was on the Governor's staff prior to the Governor's arrest or anybody, any of those individuals or anybody who is closely related to the Governor"

BURRIS: "I recall having a meeting with Lon Monk about my partner and I trying to get continued business and I did bring it up, it must have been in September or maybe July of '08 that, you know, you're close to the Governor, let him know that I am certainly interested in the seat."

Contacts after arrest (Tr. 944-945)

DURKIN: Now I want to talk to you about after the Governor's arrest. What contact did you have, what contact did you have with anyone regarding the appointment, I'm talking after December 9th?

BURRIS: "None whatsoever"

Tracy examination (Tr. 998-1000)

TRACY: But I think I earlier heard you today testify that in September '08 or perhaps as early as July'08 you had visited with some friends about your desire to perhaps seek the seat.

BURRIS: No, I think I testified that's when I began to express an interest in it.

TRACY: And I just was wondering who those friends were.

BURRIS: One of them was my law partner.

CURRIE: Is that when you talked about your interest with Lon Monk.

TRACY: Was that the extent of it, Lon Monk?

BURRIS: (repeats earlier testimony that the context of the conversation with Monk was when they were talking about Burris' lobbying business) " And it just came up and in fact I said, "Now

Lon, I don't know what's going to happen, but I think that I'm qualified to be appointed to the senate seat." And Lon said, "Well, Roland, I think you are, too." And that was the extent of it.

TRACY: So you don't recall that there was anybody else besides Lon Monk that you expressed that interest to at that point?

BURRIS: No, I can't recall. Because people were coming to me saying Rolland, you should pursue that appointment, you're qualified and this was...

TRACY: Is there anybody that comes to mind in that light you can-

BURRIS (then talks of the difficulty of answering the question because so many people were contacting him after Obama won the election) "I can start giving you names if you need names of people who you can follow up after November 4th, I can certainly give you a few names, but I can't give you the thousands of people who were involved in this.

Burris' thoughts on Governor's arrest (Tr. 938-939)

DURKIN: "Now, Mr. Burris upon the Governor's arrest on December 9th, what were your thoughts upon the arrest.

BURRIS: "Surprise"

FRITCHEY: Excuse me, if I may. While we obviously have a lot of leeway on this committee though as well we still need to be constrained by what our objective here is what this committee was convened for. As to what Mr. Burris's thoughts may or may not have been upon hearing that news, I don't know what impact that would have upon our investigation as to the actions of the Governor....Our role here is to investigate Rod Blagojevich and not Roland Burris."

DURKIN: Well, Mr. Burris was appointed not too long ago by Governor Blagojevich, and one of the major inquiries of this committee is investigating the circumstances of that appointment, so I think it's relevant. But if his thoughts-I'll leave it to the chair

CURRIE: "Well, I think I suggest that we leave it to Mr. Burris"

BURRIS: "I will stick with my original answer. I was surprised"

Burris' knowledge of any "quid pro quo" (Tr. 942-943)

DURKIN: Okay. At any time were you directly or indirectly aware of a quid pro quo with the Governor for the appointment of this vacant Senate seat?

BURRIS: No sir

DURKIN: If you were aware of a quid pro quo, what would you have done?
Burris counsel objects to the question as an inappropriate hypothetical

DURKIN: "It's important to know what his response would have been if he was aware of a quid pro quo with the Governor and also for the appointment"

FRITCHEY: "Mr. Burris already stated that he was not aware of any quid pro quo. What his response would have been had there been something, which he stated did not occur, is clearly irrelevant..."

DURKIN: It think it's germane; we've been given significant leeway to try to find response to individuals who are sworn in before this committee and I think it's reasonable to ask what would have been Mr. Burris's response if he was aware of a quid pro quo for the US Senate Seat.

FRITCHY: But the leeway has been with response to representatives on behalf the governor and his administration, not with respect to third parties who have clearly stated that they've had no involvement with those actions

BURRIS: Representative Durkin, knowing my ethics I would not participate in anybody's quid pro quo. I've been in government for 20 years and never participated in anybody's quid pro quo.

DURKIN: I guess the point is would you have gone to the federal authorities if you were aware of that?"

BURRIS: I have no response to that

Durkin line of questioning regarding Robert Stroud loan to Burris campaign (TR 946-965)

DURKIN: Could you explain when you first---how long have you known Robert Stroud, prior to 2002, how long have your known Mr. Stroud?

LANG: I think Mr. Durkin's entitled to his leeway, Madam Chairman. But I don't really understand the purpose of this question as it relates to the reason Mr. Burris was brought before this committee. Is the gentleman suggesting that way back before the 2002 election there was some conspiracy to help Rod Blagojevich in 2008? What is the purpose of the question? I don't understand the relevance.

DURKIN: I think that as I stated earlier, I believe that there's a few things and that Mr. Burris can explain the circumstances regarding the payment, and also the relationship that he has with the Governor. And I believe that the single largest contribution that was made to a campaign in Illinois history by a company, I'd like to know a little by why it wasn't forgive or what were the terms and why is still is an outstanding loan. And I find it ironic that the only other individual who's received a loan from Telephone USA Investments was the Governor

LANG: So it's ironic. You have a loop you want to close up, close it up. Otherwise why don't we move on. The fact that Mr. Burris still owes this man \$1.2 million dollars is not relevant to the appointment of Mr. Burris to be the next United States senator from Illinois. Your introduction sets the tone for your newsletter and encourages the recipient to read further. Your style may be warm and casual, or technical and no-nonsense depending on your audience.