

December 20, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

**'I will be vindicated'; Blagojevich vows he will have his day in court to prove his innocence, while forces for impeachment gather steam**

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SPRINGFIELD-For a change, Gov. Blagojevich showed up almost on schedule. He didn't quote Elvis. And he limited his remarks to three minutes flat.

But in that short time Friday afternoon, the embattled governor made clear that the drama sparked by his arrest last week will drag on.

"I will fight. I will fight. I will fight until I take my last breath," the governor said over the sound of cameras snapping like machine-gun fire. "I have done nothing wrong."

The governor's defiance didn't surprise anybody -- his lawyers have spent days trumpeting that the criminal case against Blagojevich is weak. But the governor's first statement about his legal troubles since his Dec. 9 arrest cemented lawmakers' drive to impeach him regardless of what happens in federal court.

House Minority Leader Tom Cross (R-Oswego) said it's important for lawmakers not to "lallygag" on impeachment but also to make sure that the process gets done in the "right way," giving Blagojevich an opportunity to respond to charges that lawmakers plan to level against him. If not, the governor's lawyers could throw up legal roadblocks, Cross said.

Two of those lawyers -- Sam Adam Jr. and Sheldon Sorosky -- took questions after Blagojevich's brief appearance. They said it's hard for the governor to defend himself when only "snippets" of the evidence against him have been seen.

Blagojevich is accused in a criminal complaint of trying to sell President-elect Barack Obama's vacant U.S. Senate seat and of trading official government actions for campaign contributions. A formal indictment of Blagojevich that could include more charges against him is expected soon.

Adam said the governor wouldn't rule out resigning should his legal troubles grind state business to a halt.

"If he cannot govern, he'll do that," Adam said.

However, Adam said the governor needs time to see if he can continue to effectively lead the state. "I can't tell you [what might happen] four, five days before Christmas," Adam said. "Three or four days before Easter, we may have a better idea."

Rep. Jack Franks (D-Woodstock) said Friday's events show just how incapable the governor is.

"Remember, this is the same guy who bragged about his testicular virility. Perhaps this press conference was sponsored by Viagra," said Franks, a member of the House impeachment committee. "It took him 10 days to speak to the people of this state and to explain how he came to get arrested. He didn't give any answers at all. He showed a total lack of leadership and hid behind his attorneys."

Blagojevich asked Illinoisans to "be patient, sit back and take a deep breath, and please reserve judgment." He also read part of the Rudyard Kipling poem "If."

Rep. Joe Lyons (D-Chicago) ridiculed the governor's performance and the way he invoked the English poet's work.

"I thought he looked extraordinarily nervous at first, but at least he could memorize Rudyard Kipling," Lyons said. "But I bet Kipling is probably rolling over in his grave today if Abraham Lincoln was rolling over in his grave last week."