

January 25, 2009 Sunday

Final Edition

**No Mercy From Feds; Newly released subpoenas show the government is delving deeper into gov's dealings**

By Dave McKinney and Chris Fusco

Staff reporters

SPRINGFIELD-Newly released subpoenas that Gov. Blagojevich fought to keep secret show federal prosecutors are looking at potential criminal wrongdoing that would go beyond charges he already faces -- involving everything from state road contracts awarded to campaign donors to his wife Patti's real estate dealings.

The subpoenas also seek information about any contacts the governor's administration had with two top advisers to President Obama, David Axelrod and Valerie Jarrett.

"It's clearly beyond matters in the criminal complaint, which was sweeping in its own right," said Jay Stewart, executive director of the Better Government Association, whose legal fight forced Blagojevich to make the subpoenas public late Friday. "It demonstrates the feds have been looking for a long time. And, up to a relatively recent time, they've been gathering more information."

Responding to open-records requests, the governor's office released more than 40 subpoenas it had been swamped with since 2005. Two have been issued since Blagojevich's Dec. 9 arrest.

The most recent subpoenas went to the state Capital Development Board and the Illinois Department of Transportation on Dec. 11. They sought records on "bid proposals submitted by and/or awarded to" 22 contractors, including several who have contributed large sums to the governor's campaign fund.

Two other subpoenas to the governor's office came on Dec. 8, the day before the governor was arrested on corruption charges that accused him of, among other things, trying to sell an appointment to replace Obama in the U.S. Senate.

Those subpoenas asked for records relating to Patti Blagojevich; her business, River Realty; the governor's brother, Robert Blagojevich; the governor's campaign fund, and 30 other people and companies, including Axelrod and Jarrett. Jarrett was alluded to in the Dec. 9 criminal complaint against the governor as a potential Senate candidate Blagojevich was considering. Axelrod did not surface in the complaint. Neither is charged with any wrongdoing.

In an earlier wave of subpoenas, federal investigators in April 2007 asked the administration for: the schedules and calendars of the governor and first lady; records dating back to January 2003 relating to the use of state aircraft by the governor and his campaign fund, and all travel vouchers for the governor, his staff and his security detail.

The most intense round of grand jury subpoenas came during October 2005, when the governor's office was hit 17 times for hiring records. At that time, as Blagojevich was preparing to embark on his 2006 re-election campaign, the administration acknowledged receiving only four subpoenas.

Blagojevich's spokesman, Lucio Guerrero, said Blagojevich isn't surprised by the feds' continued interest. "The governor has said that anyone in public office should expect to be scrutinized, so it isn't unexpected," Guerrero said.