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Final Edition

**‘Sorry for what’; Senate makes it unanimous: Quinn in, 'The ordeal is over'**

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SPRINGFIELD-Rod R. Blagojevich at 4:51 p.m. Thursday became the first governor in Illinois' 190-year history to be driven from office by impeachment.

Senators voted 59-0 to dump Blagojevich, who was arrested Dec. 9 on federal corruption charges. And minutes later, they voted 59-0 to bar him from ever holding elected office in Illinois again. Later, outside his Northwest Side home, Blagojevich said, "I predicted it. The fix was in from the very beginning."

At 5:40 p.m., Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn placed his hand on a family Bible held by 25-year-old son Patrick, took the oath of office from Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke and broke into a broad grin as spectators in the House rose to their feet and cheered the arrival of a new era.

"I want to say to the people of Illinois, the ordeal is over," said Quinn, who became the state's 41st governor.

Quinn wouldn't say whom he would retain from Blagojevich's Cabinet or how he plans to fill a budget hole that could reach $5 billion.

"We want to make this year a year of reform in Illinois," he proclaimed.

Unlike Blagojevich -- who was widely criticized for not spending enough time in Springfield -- Quinn plans to move from Chicago to the Executive Mansion. He said one of his first missions is to reopen shuttered state parks and historic sites.

The landmark Senate votes came hours after a sometimes somber but mostly defiant Blagojevich finally showed up at his impeachment trial to make his case to avoid being removed from office.

"I want to apologize to you for what happened, but I can't," he said. "If I felt I did something wrong . . . I wouldn't put my family through this, I wouldn't put you through this, and most importantly, I wouldn't put the people of Illinois through this.

"But I didn't resign then, and I'm not resigning now because I have done nothing wrong."

Before their vote, senators offered little sympathy for Blagojevich, who is accused, among other things, of trying to sell President Obama's former U.S. Senate seat.

"I say we have this thing: impeachment. It's bleepin' golden, and we've used it the right way," said Sen. James Meeks (D-Chicago), reworking a line from Blagojevich's criminal complaint and drawing one of the day's few laughs.

But after the vote, Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) said "we find no pleasure" in the votes.

"We did not do this for political expediency. We're not settling old scores," he said. "We acted in the best interest of the people of this state."

During his 47-minute speech, Blagojevich reiterated a theme of his national media blitz this week -- that the trial is unconstitutional because it precluded calling witnesses who might impact his criminal case.

"I wanted to be able to bring in witnesses, from Rahm Emanuel, the president's chief of staff, to Sen. Dick Durbin to Sen. Harry Reid and Bob Menendez, to every single person connected with any conversation I may have had in relation to picking a United States senator," he said.

Blagojevich said those witnesses would exonerate him. "Sure, there's political embarrassment to members of my party in faraway Washington, D.C. Sure, there's some inconvenience, but all the witnesses I'd like to call will testify honestly, and they did nothing wrong, either."

In his rebuttal, House prosecutor David Ellis lambasted the governor.

"When the camera's on, the governor is for the little guy, the little people," Ellis said. "When the camera's off, what are his priorities?

"Being governor is not a right. It's a privilege, and he's forfeited that privilege. I think the people of this state have had enough."

Earlier, Ellis disputed Blagojevich's claim that witness rules for the trial were unfair. "We were just as hampered as he was," Ellis said.

When Blagojevich ended his speech, he played cat and mouse with reporters in his escape route from the Capitol, taking a rarely used steam tunnel to a nearby building, where a black Suburban was outside waiting.

As Blagojevich emerged from that building, the Sun-Times asked him why he didn't tell Illinoisans he was sorry for subjecting the state's 13 million residents to his choking legal and political problems, which have virtually shut down state government.

Blagojevich -- in his final moments as governor -- answered in three words:

"Sorry for what?"