

February 15, 2009 Sunday

Final Edition

**Blago hit up Burris for cash; In his third sworn version of events, senator confirms pitch for donations**

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Staff reporters

Former Gov. Rod Blagojevich's brother solicited U.S. Sen. Roland Burris for up to $10,000 in campaign cash before Blagojevich named Burris to the coveted post -- something Burris initially failed to disclose under oath before an Illinois House impeachment panel, a Sun-Times investigation has found.

Burris acknowledges being hit up for the money in a new affidavit he has sent to the head of the Illinois House committee that recommended Blagojevich be removed from office.

The affidavit is dated Feb. 5 -- three weeks after Burris was sworn in to replace President Obama in the Senate.

Burris -- who did not give money to the Blagojevich campaign fund in response to the previously undisclosed solicitation -- provided a copy of the sworn statement to the Chicago Sun-Times on Friday in response to questions about his contacts with the Blagojevich camp about fund-raising.

Burris acknowledged having three conversations with Robert Blagojevich, who headed the Friends of Blagojevich campaign fund -- and one of those was likely recorded by the FBI.

Burris' statement offers the third version of events he has given about his discussions concerning the Senate seat, to which Blagojevich appointed him in late December, after Blagojevich was hit with federal corruption charges that included an allegation he tried to sell the Senate appointment.

Burris said he sent the new statement to House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago) after he read the transcript of his testimony before the impeachment committee she headed and realized it was incomplete.

"There were several facts that I was not given the opportunity to make during my testimony," Burris said. "I voluntarily submitted an affidavit so everything was transparent."

In October and again in November, Burris spoke with Robert Blagojevich, who initially asked him to host a fund-raiser. Burris said he'd get back to him after the election, sources with knowledge of the conversations said. The two later talked again, and Burris again was asked for campaign cash.

Burris said he refused to contribute and "made it unequivocally clear . . . that it would be inappropriate and pose a major conflict because I was interested in the Senate vacancy."

A source with knowledge of the exchange said there was some discussion about Burris possibly getting others to give or raise money on his behalf.

Not so, according to Burris: "I did not donate or help raise a single dollar for the governor from those conversations and would never consider making a donation through a third party."

In all, Burris expressed interest in the Senate seat to five people in Blagojevich's camp, documents obtained by the Sun-Times show. He disclosed just one of those contacts when asked Jan. 8 by state Rep. James Durkin (R-Western Springs) during the impeachment hearings to name any contact he had with Blagojevich's people about the seat.

"I'm very surprised he didn't make these disclosures," Durkin said. "I don't know if Mr. Burris was purposely being evasive during the committee or had selected memory issues."

In a sworn statement filed with the House panel Jan. 5, before he testified, Burris said he had no contact with Blagojevich's camp about the Senate seat aside from his appointment in late December.

In testimony before the committee, he added that he spoke with Lon Monk, Blagojevich's former chief of staff. In his new affidavit, Burris confirms he also spoke of his interest in the Senate appointment with Blagojevich insiders John Harris, Doug Scofield and John Wyma.

The discussions with Robert Blagojevich about money came after Burris spoke with those people. Burris had told the House committee he was unaware of any quid pro quo dangled by Blagojevich's camp.

State Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno (R-Lemont) said Burris' new statement regarding his contact with Blagojevich's emissaries represents a "fatal wound" to a potential 2010 Burris re-election bid.

His new account contains "extraordinary detail" Burris should have disclosed to the impeachment panel when he testified and to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) before being seated, Radogno said.

"If it turns out this was some sort of attempt to avoid this coming out as part of the appointment process, then he doesn't deserve to be senator," Radogno said. "I think the whole thing stinks to high heaven."

Currie acknowledged receiving Burris' letter but said she was unfamiliar with its contents.

After being read Burris' account of his dealings with Robert Blagojevich, Currie said: "Very odd. I don't know there is anything actionable here, but I would like to check the record."