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**Dems call Edgar plan declaration of war; House OKs Meigs takeover plan**

By Dave McKinney and Fran Spielman

Staff reporters

SPRINGFIELD-Gov. Edgar flexed his political might Tuesday by launching a successful attack in the GOP-led Illinois House to take Meigs Field from the city.

The 63-51 vote was met with catcalls from angry Democrats, who said the move represented a "declaration of war" against the city and could give the state power to take nearby Loop office buildings and neighboring museums.

"This is the greatest heist we've had down here in years," screamed state Rep. Tom Dart (D-Chicago).

Only one Republican voted against it: Michael McAuliffe of Chicago. Four legislators did not vote.

With the GOP set to lose its majority in the Legislature on Jan. 8, Edgar ordered Tuesday's vote after Mayor Daley laughed off repeated calls for a compromise to reopen Meigs and scale back the city's conversion of the airport into a park.

"We don't want control. We'd like the city to keep the airport open," Edgar said. "We'd have liked the city to at least have talked to us, but they didn't. So we have responded."

When asked whether the move further strained city-state relations, Edgar said: "What I'm trying to do is re-establish that if we have a partnership with the city, it's a two-way street."

The legislation, which the Senate is expected to vote on as soon as today, would transfer control of the airport to the state at no cost next June. It also would prevent the city from closing the entrance road to Meigs, isolating the airport.

Daley, clearly expecting Tuesday night's vote, angrily portrayed the governor as a spoiled child prior to the House's action.

"The governor wants his Meigs. There aren't too many legislators saying, 'We want it.' . . . He wants to land that big state plane right there, get in that car and ride across the street" to the James R. Thompson Center, the mayor said.

Chicago Parks Supt. Forrest Claypool called the 88-page bill "a dangerous, arrogant abuse of state power that should be of concern to every local government, every municipality and every park district from Cairo to Zion."

The bill gives the state the right to take "property that is an obstruction to air navigation." The city says that could be interpreted to give the state license to acquire Adler Planetarium and a parking lot; Michael Reese and Mercy hospitals; McCormick Place North; Solidarity Drive, and a linkup with Lake Shore Drive.

"For Forrest Claypool to suggest we're going to take over Adler Planetarium is just plain ridiculous," said Edgar spokesman Mike Lawrence, calling the city's assertion "scare tactics."

The legislation also gives the state authority to condemn private property on or adjacent to Meigs. But state transportation officials said that language was included in the bill to address outdated private land titles that surfaced when the state was researching ownership of Meigs.

During more than an hour of raucous debate, Democrats berated Republicans for siding with the governor when one of the GOP's long-established tenets is preserving communities' local control.

"All of a sudden local control isn't such a big deal anymore," state Rep. Lou Lang (D-Skokie) said.

Daley said Northerly Island is "one of the few pieces of property along the lake that you could turn into a park. Why shouldn't we do that as residents of Chicago? That's what this dispute is all about. . . . This is our lake."

House Speaker Lee A. Daniels (R-Elmhurst), in an impassioned speech on the floor, countered that Daley's plans for a park aren't embraced widely by Democrats, who are afraid to buck the mayor.

"In your hearts, there is not a person over on that side of the aisle who doesn't believe that this airport ought not stay open," Daniels said.

Contributing: Daniel J. Lehmann