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Area legislators urge Blagojevich to resign

By GARY HENRY
Staff Writer

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The arrest of Governor Rod Blagojevich early this morning by federal authorities creates a conundrum.

Area legislators Senator Dale Righter (R-Mattoon), Rep. Roger Eddy (R-Hutsonville) and Rep Chapin Rose (R-Mahomet) said despite the arrest, Blagojevich remains the governor and retains all of the responsibilities and legal authorities that accompany the chief executive.

"He is still the governor, even if he is in custody," said Eddy.

Righter added that while Blagojevich is still legally the governor, his influence and authority are gone.

"His ability to lead was already greatly diminished, and now it is near zero," said Righter. "In terms of leadership, the state doesn't have a governor right now."

For Rose, the matter is governance. He said Blagojevich is legally incapacitated while in federal custody but that issue disappears if the governor makes bond.

The legislators said the best recourse is for Blagojevich to resign and clear the way for Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn to step into the office.

One of the allegations in the federal case against Blagojevich is the governor attempted to extort financial benefits from at least one person interested in filling the seat vacated when Barack Obama was elected to the presidency.

Righter described the allegation as "stunning and shocking."

"The governor cannot make an appointment to the vacant senate seat without a cloud hanging over that appointment," said Righter. "The governor clearly had to be aware that he was under close scrutiny."

"That's beyond what anyone would believe a public official is capable of," said Eddy. "That process does not include taking bids. That is sinister."

Rose concurred.

"I am not shocked that it came, but I am stunned at the breadth of the allegation," said Rose.

Neither Rose nor Eddy expect Blagojevich to resign, given the governor's past statements that he had done nothing wrong and the authorities were welcome to tape his conversations.

"My sense is he will try to fight it," said Eddy, adding that will only create further problems as the executive branch puts resources into a legal defense instead of dealing with governance. "We need to move forward with critical issues."

Eddy advocated a special session of the Illinois House of Representatives to bring articles of impeachment. He said the state cannot wait until Blagojevich's federal problems are resolved

"Impeachment is definitely in the cards," said Rose. "But the bigger question is what is John Cullerton going to do in the Senate? He (Blagojevich) would have been impeached a year ago if Emil Jones had not been the Senate president."

Jones retired at the end of the current legislative session and John Cullerton (D-Chicago) will be the Senate president with the start of the new session.

Eddy acknowledged impeachment cannot happen unless the Democratic majority in both chambers supports the effort.

In a late morning development, Rose said several legislators plan to send Blagojevich a letter providing the governor the option of resigning or face a call for an impeachment committee.

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"I fear he may have to be impeached because he is too arrogant to realize the game is over and he needs to do the right thing," said Rose.

The representatives said the state needs this matter resolved as quickly as possible.

"For 10 years, the people of Illinois have been going through this," said Rose. "First with George Ryan and now with Governor Blagojevich. The state needs to move beyond it, but we can't do that while we keep taking steps back."

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Boy from Illinois wrote on Dec 9, 2008 9:21 PM:

" WOW!
Resign or get IMPEACHED!

He has disgraced this great state and should follow Ryan to prison!

Just don't place him in the Edgar County Jail...

I'd hate to see him "break out"

Place him in an overcrowded prison caused by him closing so many..

Put him in the former Paris Work Camp and let everyone who lost their job have a SWAT at him.

Where will the investigation lead? Who knows.. "

Paris Resident wrote on Dec 9, 2008 9:33 PM:

" Lets hope this crook resigns and lets our state get back on track. We are running a huge deficit while other nearby states are in the black. We need to get back to fiscal responsibility and get rid of this huge deficit. There is no reason why we should be passing it along to our children. "

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