

BLAGOJEVICH'S NEXT MOVE

It's probably not a good thing for a potentially-tainted politically appointee—in this case, former IL AG Roland Burris, the guy whom Blagojevich appointed to replace Obama—to be engaging in discussions of precisely what kind of tool he is on the same day he's appointed.

"I am not a tool of the governor. I'm a tool of the people of Illinois," Burris told the Tribune Tuesday evening. "If I was worried about the taint [of Blagojevich], I would never have accepted that. I don't have any taint from Gov. Blagojevich."

As you've no doubt gathered, Blago's move to name Burris as Obama's replacement puts a lot of pressure on Senate Democrats to refuse to seat Burris (here's the always-interesting John Kass on the race politics involved).

But it also puts more pressure on Fitzgerald to come forward with his case in the near future.

Remember that Fitz has 30 days to indict Blagojevich, or until January 6. He could, if he needed to, ask for an extension (in which case we'd only see the request but not the justification for it, which would probably remain sealed). But with this latest move from Blago, if Fitz does so, it will be against the background of Senate Democrats trying to make the legally touchy case that they can avoid seating Blago's choice. If nothing else, Blagojevich's move yesterday may have been an attempt to try to get Fitzgerald—for the second time—to reveal his cards before he otherwise intended to.

And, of course, it adds to the pressure on the legislative impeachment committee. While the committee wrestles to decide how legalistic they

want to get with their inquiry, Blago is making very public moves to establish that he retains the full power of governor. While from my limited review, it looks like few are backing Blago's move, this does give Blago some momentum in the face of the committee's deliberation.

One more detail. Remember that Blago's defense attorney, said, two weeks ago, Blago would not appoint anyone. Yet even a week ago, Blago was offering the seat to Danny Davis.

Yet Burris was the second of two post-arrest finalists for Blagojevich when the governor offered him the job Sunday night. U.S. Rep. Danny Davis, a black congressman from the West Side, said he was offered the post by a Blagojevich representative a week ago and told the governor's office Friday he declined the offer.

Davis had said he would reject a Blagojevich appointment because the governor had "lost his moral authority" and would rather see "a governor who is not tainted" make the appointment. But on Tuesday, Davis said he would support Burris' selection.

I have no idea whether Genson subsequently endorsed Blago's political strategy of going ahead with the appointment (I would imagine Genson tracked any conversations about the appointment closely). But Blago sure seems intent on ratcheting up the pressure.