

REID ON TAPE MANIPULATING ILLINOIS SENATE SEAT BEFORE BLAGO'S ARREST



h/t MCCS1977

Thursday I described The Ugly Legal Optics Of Harry Reid's Burris Battle. There is a new cloud dimming the already ugly optics. An article that just hit the website of the Chicago Sun Times reports Harry Reid already had his heavy ham fisted hand deep in Illinois state politics well before Blagojevich was arrested:

Days before Gov. Blagojevich was charged with trying to sell President-elect Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat to the highest bidder, top Senate Democrat Harry Reid made it clear who he didn't want in the post: Jesse Jackson, Jr., Danny Davis or Emil Jones.

Rather, Reid called Blagojevich to argue he appoint either state Veterans Affairs chief Tammy Duckworth or Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, sources told the Chicago Sun-Times.

Sources say the Senate majority leader pushed against Jackson and Davis – both democratic congressmen from Illinois – and against Jones – the Illinois Senate president who is the political godfather of President-elect Barack Obama – because he did not believe the three men were electable. He feared losing the seat to a Republican in a future election.

This is certainly a stunningly rich development from about every perspective imaginable. Harry Reid has threatened to use the Capitol Police to

forcefully haul Roland Burris off the Senate floor should he try to enter because he feels Burris is tainted by Blagojevich's shady machinations of the open Senate seat. Only it turns out that Reid is the one smack in the middle of Blago's machinations, not Burris. And it would appear he is on Pat Fitzgerald's wiretaps doing so.

Blagojevich spokesman Lucio Guerrero confirmed that Reid (D-Nev.) and U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) – the new chief of the Senate Democratic political operation – each called Blagojevich's campaign office separately Dec. 3. Sources believe that at least portions of the phone conversations are on tape.

Before their contacts, Obama's chief of staff Rahm Emanuel called Blagojevich to tell him to expect to hear from Senate leadership because they were pushing against Jackson and others, according to statements the governor made to others.

The Reid-Menendez calls came a day before a Dec. 4 conversation overheard on government wiretaps where Blagojevich says he "was getting 'a lot of pressure' not to appoint Candidate 5." Candidate 5 is Jackson.

Did I mention that this is a nightmare from every available tangent? Not only is Harry Reid on tape with his finger stuck in the Illinois state pie, we now have Rahm Emanuel, the President-Elect's Chief of Staff, running flak for Reid's heavy handed interposition. Now it is certainly understandable that Emanuel and his boss, Obama, would have interest in Obama's former Senate seat; but, again, the appearance here is unseemly at best.

That said, the main story for the moment is Harry Reid and the Senate leadership. There is no basis for believing Harry Reid is a racist, or that his actions here are particularly

racially motivated, but it is no longer possible to dismiss the overtones that the picture must be starting to paint for some African American citizens in Illinois. Reid has been steadfastly determined to block the appointment of three black elected politicians – Emil Jones, Danny Davis and Jesse Jackson, Jr. because they are supposedly "not electable"; in favor of a white woman, Tammy Duckworth who has, you know, been previously found unelectable by the voters of Illinois. Or another white woman, Lisa Madigan, who managed to get elected mostly on the coattails of her powerful Chicago machine daddy. Lovely; what a picture that paints.

Oh, and now that nice gentlemanly 71 year old Roland Burris, another black man, who has previously been elected to statewide office in Illinois, can't be permitted in the hallowed Senate doors either. George Wallace must be laughing his butt off at Reid's bad optics and unseemly folly. And this is all occurring over the seat of the only black man in the lilly white United States Senate that was just vacated by the groundbreaking President-Elect Barack Obama. Malignant idiocy abounds.

Harry Reid will be the featured guest on Meet the Press Sunday morning. Jane Hamsher has already raised the curious difference between how Reid and the Democratic leadership has treated Roland Burris and how they handled and accepted Joe Lieberman, Harriet Miers, Karl Rove, Ted Stevens and Larry Craig, or for that matter the evisceration of Habeas Corpus, the Fourth Amendment and the Geneva and UN Conventions against torture. No moral leadership whatsoever was shown on any of those; anybody think it will occur to self aggrandized inquisitor David Gregory to examine Harry Reid over the discrepancy?

I'm taking odds, because I don't think David Gregory has the journalistic chops or the moral guts to ask the hard questions that have been asked here. Any takers?