



## PRINTER FRIENDLY

[\[Print\]](#) [\[Close\]](#)

### Illinois ethics package near agreement, over governor's opposition

By [Kevin McDermott](#)

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Tuesday, Apr. 29 2008

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Illinois lawmakers are close to an agreement to outlaw "pay-to-play" politics — an agreement that may include an unusual public vow that the Legislature will override any attempt by Gov. Rod Blagojevich to change the bill.

A Blagojevich spokeswoman hinted on Monday that the governor might, in fact, change the bill by "amendatorily" vetoing it. The governor says it doesn't go far enough — a stance his critics allege is designed to prevent any reform at all from passing.

The proposal would ban campaign contributions from state contractors, a currently legal practice that has put millions of dollars in Blagojevich's coffers and has attracted the attention of federal investigators.

The Illinois House passed legislation last year to ban such contributions. The Senate picked up the issue earlier this month, agreeing to negotiate with the House on a bill that could pass both chambers. Key lawmakers say an announcement could come this week.

The House sponsor, Rep. John Fritchey, D-Chicago, said he'd been pushing for a vow by the Senate to defend the bill against any veto attempt by Blagojevich, a Democrat.

"I want a public statement from Senate leadership that there will be ... an override of any veto of the bill," said Fritchey, who believes Blagojevich may use his amendatory veto powers to stall the reforms.

Sen. Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, the lead Senate negotiator on the issue, confirmed that the negotiations included a "mutual understanding" on how to respond to a gubernatorial veto.

Under Illinois law, Blagojevich can sign the bill into law, veto it completely, or "amendatorily" veto it by inserting new provisions. If he does that, the bill would have to go back to both chambers of the Legislature to either accept the changes he has made or let the bill die.

In the House, there would probably be little problem overriding a veto. In the Senate, it would have to get past President Emil Jones, a Blagojevich ally. A spokeswoman for Jones declined to comment Monday on whether Jones would publicly vow to override a veto, citing the pending negotiations.

Blagojevich's office strongly hinted Monday that he would alter the bill. Blagojevich has said he wants a stronger ethics package, to impose donation limits on everyone, not just state contractors. Illinois currently is one of the few states with no limits.

"Rep. Fritchey's bill does not go far enough," Blagojevich spokeswoman Rebecca Rausch wrote in an e-mailed statement Monday. "If he was really interested in comprehensive ethics reform, he would work with senators to strengthen the bill instead of making deals to avoid efforts to make it stronger."

Rausch declined to specify that Blagojevich would amendatorily veto the bill.

Reform lobbyist Cynthia Canary said the implication smacked of a time-worn Springfield strategy in which opponents of legislation "love it to death" by piling in new provisions that will provoke more opposition and cause it to fail.

"For the governor to suggest it will be better with more 'stuff' in it is disingenuous," said Canary, director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform. "Putting more stuff in it will kill it."

The Legislature is scheduled to return to session today.

---

If you enjoy reading about interesting news, you might like the 3 O'Clock Stir from STLtoday.com. Sign up and you'll receive an email with unique stories of the day, every Monday-Friday, at no charge.

Sign up at <http://newsletters.stltoday.com>

---