

November 06, 2009

Quinn gets backing from former Blagojevich allies

Posted by Monique Garcia at 12:12 p.m. Chicago Tribune

Gov. Pat Quinn got the endorsement today of several North Side Democratic leaders who once hailed and later feuded with his running mate and predecessor, Rod Blagojevich.

Among those supporting Quinn's bid for the Democratic nomination in the Feb. 2 primary was Chicago Ald. Richard Mell (33rd), Blagojevich's estranged father-in-law.

"He's a straight shooter," Mell said of Quinn. "He might not do the most popular thing, I think he'd rather do the right thing rather than the popular thing, and that's unique today."

Mell and others said Quinn has provided leadership in a time of turmoil since Blagojevich was ousted last January following his arrest on corruption charges.

State Rep. John Fritchey, D-Chicago, who became one of Blagojevich's most vocal critics, said he decided to back Quinn after working [with] him for more than a decade on everything from consumer protection laws to ethics reform to environmental issues.

"Time and time again, he had always put what was right ahead of politics," Fritchey said. "He put what was the right thing to do for people over what was the right thing to do for him, because that's who Pat Quinn is."

Quinn, who stood by Blagojevich for re-election in 2006 even while the corruption scandal deepened, said the support of local politicians was important "because folks from your own back yard know you the best."

Quinn said he's not discouraged by Republican victories in Virginia and New Jersey during this week's governor races, saying he does not think that means voters are pulling away from the Democratic Party.

"I think every contest is waged on the issues and the character of the candidates," Quinn said.