


POLITICS 

## The road to impeachment

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By Paul Meincke

**If Governor Blagojevich refuses to resign steps are already being taken to impeach him. What would the process involve?**

State representative Jack Franks, a long-time, vocal critic of Rod Blagojevich says that if the governor doesn't resign by Friday, he'll be pushing Monday for the impeachment machine to fire up.

One of his colleagues is already drawing up articles of impeachment. The House Republican leader is greenlighting impeachment, but the House speaker, at this point, hasn't committed to a process that is not clearly defined, and has been referred to as a "nuclear option".

"I think it's clear steps need to be taken to remove him from office, and the most expeditious form in the impeachment resolution," said Il. Rep. John Fritchey (D).

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The Illinois General Assembly has had very little experience with impeachment. The last, and only modern-day impeachment move focused on a controversial State Supreme court chief justice, but it ended when he chose to surrender his seat as chief.

There's no clause in the state constitution that says here are the grounds of an impeachable offense.

State Rep. John Fritchey, a fellow Democrat but long-time critic of the governor, is drawing up the framework for articles of impeachment.

They would argue that Blagojevich has violated his oath of office, is guilty of

violated his oath of office, is guilty of abuse of power, and based on the government's new criminal complaint, he engaged in official misconduct.

The House - in pursuing impeachment - has a much lower threshold than proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, but there are questions about how and how much of the government's criminal case against the governor can be presented in an impeachment proceeding.

A spokesman says the House speaker is moving cautiously on the issue.

There is a secondary move under consideration which would have the state's attorney general file a complaint asking the state Supreme court to remove the governor from power.

What the Supreme court could do is say this is not a criminal proceeding, but we recognize that the governor is not capable of serving and should at minimum be temporarily removed," said Lisa Madigan, attorney general.

The justices, however, may prefer this to be handled by the General Assembly, and they are lining up to do so.

The House would need only 60 votes to approve impeaching the governor. He would then be tried in the senate where a two-thirds vote is necessary to convict and remove him from office. Were it to happen, it is a process that would take weeks minimally, and perhaps months.

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