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State Senate OKs ban on 'pay-to-play' cash

SPRINGFIELD | Legislator says gov has only tried to 'kill' reform

May 24, 2008 **BY JACLYN BRENNING Sun-Times**
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SPRINGFIELD -- The Senate on Friday overwhelmingly approved an ethics reform package banning "pay-to-play" politics that some legislators say have driven fund-raising scandals within Gov. Blagojevich's administration.

Under the bill, which passed the Senate 56-0, big state contractors would be prohibited from contributing to the campaign of the politician awarding the contracts. The bill returns to the House with amendments added by the Senate.

Rep. John Fritchey (D-Chicago), a proponent and sponsor of the original bill, said the only worry is getting the governor's signature for the bill to become law.

"It will rest on the governor as to whether he wants to put the best interest of the state ahead of the best interest of his campaign account."

The governor's office has refused to take a position on the bill, and legislators fear the governor will change if not outright kill the legislation.

Blagojevich spokeswoman Rebecca Rausch said, "This is a beginning, but it does not go nearly far enough. We urge the House to take this opportunity to make the bill broader and more comprehensive."

Rausch said it is "too early to speculate" on the governor's action should the bill be sent to him, and refused to say how the House could make the bill better. Fritchey, however, said any veto by the governor would be overridden by the Legislature.

"He's had six years to put together an ethics proposal," Fritchey said. "The only actions the governor has taken towards reform have been to try to kill it."

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