

Durbin: Senate considered Burris' race

by UPI

CHICAGO - U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., says race was a factor when the Senate moved to seat embattled Sen. Roland Burris, D-Ill., the body's only African-American.

Durbin said a combative and racially tinged appearance by African-American U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush, D-Ill., at a Dec. 30 news conference called by now-impeached Ill. Gov. Rod Blagojevich to announce Burris' appointment to the Senate added a racial overtone to the situation, the Chicago Sun-Times reported Monday.

"My colleague from Illinois, Congressman Bobby Rush, made strong statements along those lines," Durbin told Chicago radio station WGN. "They were painful and hurtful, and it became part of this calculation."

Even though Durbin has called for Burris to resign in the wake of revelations he failed to reveal that Blagojevich had asked him for campaign contributions, Durbin said he would still work with Burris.

Burris, meanwhile, visited a black church in Chicago Sunday, while Rush defended him to reporters, saying, "He hasn't done anything that's indictable" and accusing politicians seeking Burris' resignation of having "stalking horses" ready for test-runs for his seat, The Chicago Tribune reported.

Two Democratic politicians Monday said they are willing to run for Burris' seat if the Legislature schedules a special election: Rep. Jan Schakowsky and state Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias, The Hill reported.

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