Panel rejects special election for Burris

by UPI

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. - A special election to replace embattled U.S. Sen. Roland Burris, D-Ill., now seems unlikely after Illinois Senate Democrats rejected the idea in committee.

Meanwhile, new information has resurrected the possibility of a quid-pro-quo arrangement between Burris and impeached former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who appointed Burris to the seat after being arrested on a federal corruption complaint, the Chicago Sun-Times reported

On the day Blagojevich named Burris to fill President Barack Obama's vacated U.S. Senate seat, a key Burris aide, Fred Lebed, phoned an associate and said, "We'll have to do some things for the governor," the associate, John Ruff, recalled for the Sun-Times.

Ruff also recalled Lebed saying he had had discussions about Burris' interest in the seat with Blagojevich representatives in October, which contradicts Burris's sworn statement that is part of a state perjury investigation.

Lebed acknowledged speaking with Ruff, but called Ruff's claims "totally false," the Sun-Times said.

In Springfield, the failure of an Illinois Senate subcommittee to pass a measure calling for a special election Thursday takes some of the heat off Burris, the Chicago Tribune reported.

Burris, who is African-American, has been rocked by controversy over affidavits in which he revealed broader discussions with Blagojevich aides, allies and family members about getting appointed to the seat than he previously disclosed. Burris also acknowledged that he tried and failed to raise money for Blagojevich.

Race entered the debate when state Sen. Rickey Hendon criticized Republicans for being "hellbent on targeting Roland Burris."

"Why target the only black U.S. senator in the country?" Hendon asked.

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