Franken starts picking Senate staff

by UPI

MINNEAPOLIS -- Al Franken's staff said Monday the Democratic U.S. senate candidate has picked his Minnesota state director though he has yet to have his victory certified.

Franken has dipped into the congressional staff talent pool and selected longtime Democratic activist Alana Peterson, the Star Tribune reported. Peterson most recently was political director and state field director for U.S. Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn., the Minneapolis newspaper noted.

Franken spokeswoman Jess McIntosh said Peterson hasn't been hired because Franken has yet to be certified the winner. But Franken said in a news release that Peterson's experience will allow him to "hit the ground running on Day 1" once that happens, the Star Tribune said.

Franken leads Republican Norm Coleman, who held the seat the previous six years, by 312 votes following a recount and court contest. A three-judge panel last week ruled Franken had won.

However, Coleman has said he intends to appeal to the Minnesota Supreme Court, seeking the inclusion of another 4,000 or so absentee ballots, and Gov. Tim Pawlenty, a Republican, has not moved to certify Franken as the winner.

If Coleman loses at the supreme court level, he could then pursue his case in the federal courts, as some

supporters have urged him to do.

Republicans called Franken's announcement a "publicity stunt."

"While the due process and equal protection rights of our fellow citizens are being denied, Al Franken is determined to thumb his nose at the Minnesota Supreme Court," state GOP Chairman Ron Carey said in a statement.

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