

News Tuesday, April 8, 2008 5:58 PM CDT

House OKs recall plan, but Senate remains roadblock

By Kurt Erickson
kurt.erickson@lee.net

SPRINGFIELD -- The Illinois House approved a plan Tuesday to offer voters a California-style recall process for getting rid of unpopular or incompetent politicians.

But the measure, squarely aimed at embattled Gov. Rod Blagojevich, appears to be little more than another chapter in the ongoing clash between the state's top Democrats.

Although there is some support for the proposal in the Senate, it doesn't appear as if it will move forward in that chamber, where Blagojevich enjoys a close political alliance with Senate President Emil Jones, D-Chicago.

Jones, who controls what legislation is heard in the Senate, wouldn't say Tuesday whether the measure will get a hearing. Jones also wouldn't say whether he thinks Blagojevich should be recalled.

"I haven't seen what they voted on," said Jones. "I haven't read it."

A top Jones lieutenant offered tepid support for the proposed constitutional amendment.

"I haven't read it. I've been busy doing all my other things. But on its surface, it deserves a debate," said Senate Majority Leader Debbie Halvorson, a Crete Democrat who is running for a seat in Congress.

The proposal, approved in the House on a 75-33 vote, would change the state constitution to allow the recall of nearly all state elected officials in the middle of their terms.

If approved, the recall process would take nearly a year because it would not kick into gear until after hundreds of thousands of citizen signatures had been collected. Voters would then cast votes to kick the official out of office, as well as vote to choose the official's replacement.

The measure has gained steam as Blagojevich and Jones have faced off against House Speaker Michael Madigan, D-Chicago, for the past year. Compounding the governor's political problems is the ongoing federal corruption trial of former advisor and fundraiser Antoin "Tony" Rezko.

Supporters said Illinois should join 18 other states that offer the recall option.

"Everywhere I went over spring break, people asked about this. It was a demand," said state Rep. Chapin Rose, R-Mahomet.

Advertisement

I got it at Martin's



"The people of the state of Illinois deserve the opportunity for a mulligan, a do-over," added state Rep. Roger Eddy, R-Hutsonville.

"If a public official is no longer performing the job they have sworn to do, if they are hurting the very people they were elected to serve, then the people should be able to remove them from office," said state Rep. John Bradley, D-Marion.

Opponents said it would keep lawmakers from making tough decisions for fear of initiating a recall movement.

"Will the doctors try to recall you if you vote with the trial lawyers?" asked state Rep. Jay Hoffman, D-Collinsville, who is Blagojevich's point man in the House. "Don't do this because you don't like one man."

Madigan voted against the proposal. He said his negative vote reflected views he has held since he helped craft Illinois's current constitution in 1970, during which the idea of recall was given a thumb's down.

"They were all rejected in favor of Illinois having a government representative of local government," Madigan said. "That's what I support."

State Rep. Brandon Phelps, D-Harrisburg, said he voted against the amendment because there are more important issues to deal with.

"If there's some kind of gamesmanship going on I don't want to be part of it," Phelps said. "I'm tired of the games. I think there's more critical needs out there."

Rank-and-file members of the Senate were not sure how they'd vote if Jones allows the measure to come up for a vote.

"I've not really made up my mind," said state Sen. Gary Forby, D-Benton. "I'm not there yet."

But, Forby said some residents of his Southern Illinois district are clamoring for the recall option.

"There's a lot of people in my district pushing hard," Forby said.

State Sen. Kwame Raoul, D-Chicago, said altering the state constitution because of Blagojevich's problems "is a dangerous thing."

"We shouldn't necessarily do things in reaction to one individual," Raoul said. "I think the best way to recall the governor is to vote them out."

The governor's office did not immediately return calls for comment. Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn supports the proposal.

Among Senate Democrats, who control the chamber, state Sen. Mike Jacobs, D-East Moline, was an exception. He favors the idea.

"I was, if not the first, among the first, to say we should have recall in Illinois," said Jacobs. "Recall provides us a weapon to go after politicians who are thumbing their noses at voters."

Jacobs said details that are emerging from the Rezko trial make it clear to him that recall is needed.

"Anyone reading the newspapers right now is clearly embarrassed. As a citizen, I think we deserve the right to have some kind of recall on the governor at this point," Jacobs said.

The legislation is House Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 28.

 [E-mail this story](#) |  [Print this story](#) |  [Search archives](#) |  [RSS](#)
 [Show comments](#) |  [Hide comments](#) | [Hide comments on all stories](#)

[Subscribe to the Pantagraph](#)
[Contact the Pantagraph staff](#)
[Home page](#) | [Previous page](#) | [Top](#)

Reader comments on this story - 1 total

Note: All views and opinions expressed in reader comments are solely those of the individual submitting the comment, and not those of the Pantagraph or its staff.

Jarhead71 wrote on Apr 8, 2008 6:31 PM:

" Makes it really easy for the Governor to be in favor of RECALL when Emil Jones has his back. If Jones does not call the bill for a vote, it dies in the Senate and never makes it to the Governor for signature. "

Add your own comments

You must be logged in to leave comments.
If you don't have a member ID, [please register](#).

*Member ID:

*Password:

Remember login?
(requires cookies)

[Forgot Your Password?](#)



[Top of Page](#) | [Home](#) | [News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Free Time](#) | [Life](#) | [Money](#) | [Nation/World](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Blogs/Columns](#) | [Archives](#) | [Site Map](#) |

[Weather](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Homes](#) | [Rentals](#) | [Coupons](#)

[Customer Service](#) | 301 W. Washington St., PO Box 2907, Bloomington, IL 61701-2907 | Ph. 309-829-9000 | 800-747-7323

Copyright © 2008, Pantagraph Publishing Co. and Lee Enterprises. All rights reserved. | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)