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Blagojevich Impeachment Panel Split on Subpoena for Obama Aides

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By Joe Carroll

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Dec. 26 (Bloomberg) -- An Illinois panel considering the impeachment of Governor [Rod Blagojevich](#) is divided over whether to subpoena aides of President-elect [Barack Obama](#) and a U.S. congressman.

The committee is looking into the Democratic governor's alleged attempt to auction Obama's vacant U.S. Senate seat.

Blagojevich's attorney, [Edward Genson](#), today sent the 21-member impeachment committee a list of witnesses he wants summoned to testify before the panel next week. The list includes Obama's chief of staff appointee [Rahm Emanuel](#) and adviser [Valerie Jarrett](#), both of whom were interviewed last week by federal prosecutors in a corruption probe of the governor's office.

Republican members of the impeachment panel want Democratic Chairwoman [Barbara Flynn Currie](#) to grant Genson's request to subpoena Emanuel, Jarrett and U.S. Representative [Jesse Jackson Jr.](#), a Chicago Democrat and aspirant to Obama's former Senate post.

Currie, the sole member of the panel with the authority to issue subpoenas, didn't return phone messages seeking comment. Last week, she indicated she doesn't plan to seek testimony from anyone involved in the U.S. attorney's criminal investigation.

Republicans can't force Currie to issue subpoenas because Democrats control a 12-9 majority on the panel, state Representative Roger Eddy said.

"I think we should subpoena these people, but there is no way in the world the Democrats are going to allow them to be questioned," Eddy, one of nine Republicans on the panel, said today in a telephone interview.

Genson, who is representing Blagojevich in both the criminal case and the impeachment process, didn't return phone messages left at his office at Genson and Gillespie.

Genson Request

"At present, the Genson request is under review," Steve Brown, an aide to Democratic Illinois House of Representatives Speaker [Michael Madigan](#), said today in an e-mailed message. "No additional information or comment is planned at this time."

Blagojevich, 52, was arrested Dec. 9 at his home in Chicago's Ravenswood Manor neighborhood after federal agents accused him of trying to sell Obama's vacant Senate seat for as much as \$1.5 million, an ambassadorship, a position in Obama's Cabinet or a lucrative job running a non-profit group.

The federal inquiry was expanded this week to include his decision to shut a state-run maximum-security prison. FBI agents and investigators from U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald's office interviewed Illinois State Senator Dan Rutherford, whose district includes the Pontiac Correctional Center, about the

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circumstances surrounding Blagojevich's announcement in May that the facility would close, Rutherford said on Dec. 24.

#### Transition Team Report

Obama's transition team released a report on Dec. 24 that it said cleared Emanuel, Jarrett and the president-elect of any "inappropriate" talks with Blagojevich about who would be named to the vacant Senate post.

Emanuel had one or two conversations with the governor in early November about potential Senate appointees, and "about four" discussions on the same topic later in the month with Blagojevich's then-Chief of Staff John Harris, the transition team's report said. Harris was arrested the same day as Blagojevich and resigned his post three days later.

Jarrett, who was initially interested in succeeding Obama in the Senate before the president-elect asked her to take a White House job, never discussed the Senate appointment with the governor, the report said.

Jarrett considered Blagojevich's desire to be named U.S. secretary of health and human services "ridiculous" when it was relayed to her by an Illinois union official, the report said.

#### 'No Deals'

Jackson, a son of civil rights leader Jesse Jackson, held a press conference the day after the governor's arrest to say he made no deals with Blagojevich to secure the Senate appointment. At a Dec. 8 meeting with the governor, Jackson said he presented his record, qualifications and vision for becoming a U.S. senator.

The impeachment committee was created on Dec. 15 after Madigan said the governor had been given ample opportunity to resign. Currie, whose district includes the state senate constituency once represented by Obama, is the second-most powerful Democrat in the Illinois House, behind Madigan.

The committee's next hearing is scheduled for Dec. 29 in the state capital, Springfield. Blagojevich would be the first governor impeached in the state's 190-year history.

#### 'Lynch Mob'

On Dec. 19, the governor held a meeting with reporters in Chicago where he said he was innocent of the criminal charges and characterized the impeachment proceedings as "a political lynch mob."

Eddy said Emanuel, Jarrett and Jackson should be called to testify unless Fitzgerald indicates that would impede his criminal investigation. On Dec. 23, Fitzgerald rejected the panel's request for access to affidavits, wiretap applications, fundraising lists and names of anonymous witnesses mentioned in the 78-page criminal complaint against Blagojevich.

"I think it'd be nice to hear from them," state Representative Mike Bost, a Republican member of the committee, said today. "It's Barbara's call, so we'll see what call she makes."

To contact the reporter on this story: [Joe Carroll](mailto:jcarroll8@bloomberg.net) in Chicago at [jcarroll8@bloomberg.net](mailto:jcarroll8@bloomberg.net)

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