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Originally posted: January 27, 2009

Senate trial: Today, recordings of the governor

5:09 p.m. Senate adjourns until Wednesday morning

The Senate adjourned at 5:04 p.m. and will return Wednesday at 9:15 a.m.

Earlier senators heard state Rep. Chapin Rose recount allegations of wrongdoing against Blagojevich that were made in guilty pleas and federal trial testimony by Ali Ata, a former state official and campaign contributor, and Joseph Cari, a former national Democratic fundraiser.

Rose followed FBI Special Agent Daniel Cain, who was peppered with written questions by senators after they heard Blagojevich and his allies on the federal recordings. Cain was prohibited from answering most of the questions because they were outside the bounds of the criminal complaint he wrote before Blagojevich was arrested.

Among the unanswered questions senators asked were why the investigators started and stopped the wiretaps when they did, why they arrested Blagojevich when they did and whether any state senators are on any of the thousands of hours of recordings made of the governor and his allies.

3:08 p.m. Details of the recordings

Senators are now trying to get answers to their questions about the recordings, but an assistant U.S. attorney from Chicago is blocking answers from FBI Special Agent Daniel Cain, who has testified much of the day only for the purposes of validating the recordings.

Questions about what precipitated the recordings are among those being rebuffed by the assistant U.S. attorney.

There was little of substance new in the recordings and transcripts. But senators listened intently, following along with the printed words, as the voices of Blagojevich and his allies echoed through the chamber.

In the recordings, Blagojevich could be heard speaking to his brother and his longtime friend, Lon Monk.

Prosecutors say the discussions were part of an effort to squeeze campaign contributions from racetrack owner John Johnston in exchange for the governor signing a bill favorable to the horse-racing industry.

They also have said the governor was concerned about getting the donations before the end of the year when an ethics law was taking effect that was placing a cap on such contributions.

The first conversation took place on Nov. 13 between the governor and his brother, Robert, who is the head of the governor's campaign fund. Robert is heard on the recording saying he had just spoken to Monk, who at the time was representing Johnston, the president of Balmoral Park racetrack.

"Talk to Lon. And uh, he says Johnny Johnston is good for it," Robert says. "Lon's going to talk to you about some sensitivities legislatively tonight when he sees you. With regard to timing of all of this."

"Right - before the end of the year though, right?" the governor responds.

Rod Blagojevich



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All 50 aldermen on the Chicago City Council had to file paperwork earlier this year detailing their outside income and gifts. The Tribune took that ethics paperwork and posted the information here for you to see. You can search by ward number or alderman's last name.

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"Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah," Robert Blagojevich says. "So, uh – there was no waffling there... we just gotta figure it out and...and so he'll give you the specific details."

"Ok, so...but clearly before the end of the year, right?" Blagojevich says. "They're pushing a bill. So that's probably what he wants to wait on."

No donations arrived by early December when the three remaining calls were recorded. In one, on Dec. 3, Monk and Johnston could be heard setting up a meeting. Then, almost two hours later Monk calls the governor.

During that conversation, Monk tells the governor that he was continuing to pressure Johnston about contributing to the governor's fund. He said there were concerns that Johnston might be skittish – concerns Johnston tried to downplay. Johnston also offered to donate later, something Monk said was not acceptable, Monk told the governor.

"I said, 'No. That's not my point. My point is this has all gotta be in now," Monk says. "He goes, 'I hope I'm gonna have it next week, but you have my commitment. I've always been there. I'm gonna be there."

"Good," Blagojevich responds.

The next day Monk and the governor speak again at which point Monk suggests to the governor that Blagojevich call Johnston directly to assure him that he plans to sign the bill, which would divert a percentage of Illinois casino revenue to the horse racing industry.

"It's better if you do it just from a pressure point of view," Monk says. The governor agrees and says he'll talk to him about picking dates for a bill signing, which causes Monk to ask the governor the odds he'll sign the bill by next week.

"You know, they're good," Blagojevich says.

Monk then reassures the governor that Johnston will make the contribution.

"I'm telling you, he's gonna be good for it. I got in his face," Monk says.

"Okay, good," the governor responds.

Just days after he was arrested, Blagojevich signed the bill.

The day after that call was recorded, the Tribune ran a story stating Blagojevich's calls were being tapped.

### 2:55 p.m. Senate listens again

The Senate has returned from its recess and the prosecutor is going to have the recordings played again while senators follow along on transcripts, which they didn't have the first time.

### 2:47 p.m. Senate in recess to go over transcripts

The four recordings were described by House prosecutor David Ellis before each one was played.

The recordings sometimes bounced off the walls and boomed through the ornate chamber, punctuated with patches of static. Senators appeared to struggle at times to make out who was saying what, leaning forward in their maroon leather seats.

The Senate recessed so Republicans and Democrats could meet separately to go over the recording transcripts.

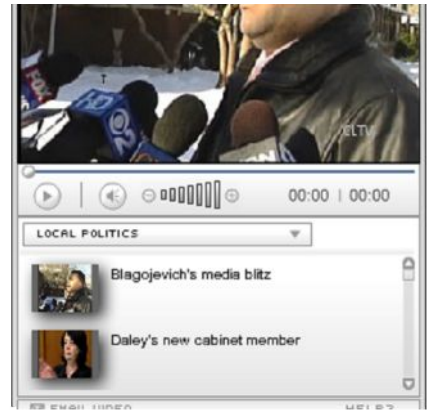
### 2:20 p.m. Here's our link to the transcripts, with audio to be posted soon:

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-blagojevich-audio,0,1146556.audiogallery>

### 2:12 p.m. Blagojevich recordings make their public debut

Covert recordings of Gov. Rod Blagojevich made by federal investigators in his corruption case were played for the first time in public today, at his Senate impeachment trial.

Senators listened intently to the snippets of tape – about six minutes in length – dealing with the governor's consideration of gambling legislation and alleged interest in a corresponding campaign donation. They did not hear any of the governor's famously colorful language, denoted in federal complaints and discussed in earlier testimony about his alleged efforts to sell a U.S. Senate seat.



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his alleged efforts to sell a U.S. Senate seat.

During the wiretaps in November and December, four individuals were captured in the four conversations -- Gov. Rod Blagojevich; his brother and head fundraiser, Rob Blagojevich; Lon Monk, lobbyist and former Blagojevich chief of staff; and John Johnston, president of Balmoral Park racetrack.

Senators listened intently to the brief recordings played loudly in the Senate chamber. Blagojevich can be heard speaking with his brother and Monk about campaign contributions from Johnston.

During the conversation with his brother, Blagojevich seems concerned about receiving the contribution before he end of the year, which is when a state ethics law was taking effect limiting campaign contributions.

**1:58 p.m. Here's a link to the recording transcripts. We'll post on our site as well.**

<http://www.ilga.gov/senate/InterceptedCommunications.asp>

**1:52 p.m. The recordings:**

Senators are silently listening to recordings of Blagojevich talking to his brother, Rob Blagojevich, and then former chief of staff Lon Monk, in intercepted telephone conversations.

U.S. Atty. Patrick Fitzgerald got permission from a federal judge to allow the impeachment panel to hear covert FBI recordings in which Blagojevich and Monk allegedly discussed how the governor would sign horse-racing legislation in exchange for campaign contributions.

During the wiretaps in November and December, four individuals were captured in the four conversations -- Gov. Rod Blagojevich; his brother and head fundraiser, Rob Blagojevich; Lon Monk, lobbyist and former Blagojevich chief of staff; and John Johnston, president of Balmoral Park racetrack.

The topic was a bill that diverted a percentage of Illinois casino revenue to the horse racing industry. Prosecutors have alleged that Blagojevich was using his support for the bill to try to squeeze campaign money from a pair of contributors. The governor signed the legislation after his arrest last month.

**1:43 p.m. The recordings are about to be played in the Senate.**

**1:22 p.m.: Senate president invites governor to attend trial**

Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) today urged Gov. Rod Blagojevich to come to his ongoing Senate impeachment trial to plead his case before lawmakers vote on whether to convict and remove him from office.

Cullerton told reporters in front of the Senate chambers that "it would be in the governors best interest if he would come to Springfield and defend himself."

"He's not appreciating, I don't think, the seriousness of this matter, and he is not appreciating the fact that he can come to defend himself," Cullerton said.

Cullerton maintained the governor is free to come to the trial to put up his best defense and has refused to take advantage of opportunities to request witnesses and provide documents that could help buttress his position.

Without Blagojevich or any defense counsel, the governor is forfeiting his opportunity to challenge the case put on by House prosecutor David Ellis.

"He chooses which witnesses to bring and for how long to bring them, and we are going to just proceed and take as long as it takes for him to finish," Cullerton said. "And if the governor chooses to come in and defend himself, we'll take as much time as the governor needs to do that as well."

The president also defended the Senate's rules for the trial, something that Blagojevich has sought to portray as unfair.

Half-way through the second day of testimony at Blagojevich's trial, Cullerton noted the governor and his lawyers have failed to show up to cross examine witnesses.

"He has that ability, and he has chosen not to appear," Cullerton said. "He also could have requested any witnesses to come and testify in his defense. He has not yet done that.

"He could certainly come himself and testify," Cullerton said. "I would still urge him to do

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## About Clout

Clout has a special meaning in Chicago, where it can be a noun, a verb or an adjective. This exercise of political influence in a uniquely Chicago style was chronicled in the Tribune cartoon "Clout Street" in the early 1980s. Clout Street, the blog, offers an inside look at the politics practiced from Chicago's City Hall to the Statehouse in Springfield, through the eyes of the Tribune's political and government reporters.

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that. I certainly would vote to allow him to do that, and it would be appropriate. ... We're only hearing one side so far."

### **UPDATE by Ray Long at 12:38 p.m.**

The morning session recessed just two minutes before noon after detailing much of the affidavit against Blagojevich.

Cain, mostly giving a simple "yes" when asked to confirm several paragraphs of allegations at a time, sat stoically looking down through copper-colored wire-rim glasses as Ellis went over the affidavit.

During the testimony, aides posted huge placards on a stand at the front of the chamber with verbatim excerpts from the recordings -- including an alleged quote from Blagojevich saying the Senate seat is a "f--king valuable thing, you just don't give it away for nothing."

During one conversation with Harris, Blagojevich is quoted as saying that the state might not be able to help the Tribune company with the Wrigley deal and the Illinois Finance Authority because of the impeachment editorials.

"We don't know if we can take a chance and do this IFA deal now. I don't want to give them a ground to impeach me," Blagojevich is quoted as saying, continuing to say that "our recommendation is fire all those effing people, get 'em the eff out of there and get us some editorial support."

The Tribune financial adviser unidentified in the complaint who was in talks with the Blagojevich administration about help on Wrigley Field has been identified as Nils Larsen, a Tribune co. executive vice president who was instrumental in CEO Sam Zell's takeover of Tribune Co,

While neither Larsen nor Zell have responded to requests for comment, a company spokesman has said that neither Tribune Co. executives nor their advisers did anything inappropriate. The company has confirmed that Zell was contacted by the FBI and that the company was subpoenaed by federal investigators.

The editorial writers are still employed.

Ellis recapped testimony by Ali Ata, a former state official who pleaded guilty in the federal probe. In particular, Ellis honed in on how Ata had testified that he had been in a room where he had placed a \$25,000 contribution on a conference room table and that Blagojevich said he wanted Ata to get a state job where he "can make some money."

Ata had testified already in the federal corruption conviction of Blagojevich fundraiser Antoin "Tony" Rezko, including a conversation where Rezko called Ata a "team player" and that Blagojevich asked Rezko about getting a state job, including the top job at the Illinois Finance Authority.

Following further donations, Cain confirmed, Blagojevich told Ata he had better get a state job "where he could make some money."

The House prosecutor also recapped testimony and evidence presented during Rezko's trial about how Mercy Hospital's application before the Illinois Health Facilities Planning Board passed. The affidavit recounts a story about how former board member Stuart Levine, who has pleaded guilty, walked across the board meeting room and talked to another board member, Imad Almanaseer, in the middle of the vote.

Almanaseer testified that he asked Rezko why Rezko had switched the vote and that Rezko responded: "The governor wanted it to pass."

*Posted by Ray Long at 10:38 a.m.*

Day Two of the Senate impeachment trial of Gov. Rod Blagojevich began with an FBI agent testifying to the accuracy of covert federal tapes at the center of criminal corruption charges against the governor.

FBI Special Agent Daniel Cain is the author of the now-famous affidavit that accompanied the criminal complaint against Blagojevich released when he was arrested Dec. 9. The affidavit recounts a series of recordings in which investigators allege Blagojevich talked of selling his office in blunt, expletive-filled conversations with aides and allies.

Lawmakers have received approval to play about six minutes of the thousands of hours of recordings. They are expected to be played in the Senate today.

Under questioning by House prosecutor David Ellis, Cain said agents would repeatedly listen to the tapes to make sure they were accurate and were easily able to identify Blagojevich's voice on the tapes.

"In the end, we were very confident it was the governor's voice in those conversations," Cain testified.

Senators followed along word for word in packets that contained copies of the affidavit that Cain, a 22-year veteran of the FBI, filed about the governor's alleged misdeeds.

Cain said he's been an FBI agent since 1986 and been in the Chicago field office since 1989. A University of Illinois graduate in accounting, Cain said he has worked evidence in the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City and Sept. 11 in Summerset, Pa.

As Ellis read portions of the affidavit, Cain confirmed it was what he wrote. One portion included allegations that Blagojevich sought to ramp up his fundraising activities to gather as much money into his campaign treasury as possible before a new law took effect Jan. 1 that restricts his ability to take contributions from state contractors.

#### **Update at 10:54 a.m.**

Ellis methodically walked Cain through the affidavit's stinging allegations, from Blagojevich's discussions about trying to leverage a Cabinet position in the Obama administration to private foundation jobs in exchange for a Senate appointment.

In each case, Cain confirmed comments attributed to Blagojevich, including some of the most explosive and profanity-laced conversations.

"I've got this thing and it's 'effing' golden," Blagojevich is quoted as saying about the Senate seat, according to the affidavit Ellis read and Cain confirmed.

Ellis also led Cain through confirmations of allegations that Blagojevich considered giving up the governorship in hopes of a \$250,000 to \$300,000 job with Change to Win, a group affiliated with the Service Employees International Union, in exchange for an Obama-favored candidate.

In addition, Blagojevich expressed his interest in getting his wife, Patricia, a high-paying job and how he could revive his political career, including the possibility of appointing himself to the Senate seat in order to avoid impeachment in the Illinois General Assembly.

Blagojevich also was captured in recorded conversations discussing that he could not get anything of value from the Obama administration for the Senate seat, according to the affidavit affirmed by Cain.

Ellis read Blagojevich's alleged comments about the Obama administration, noting the governor said, "They're not willing to give me anything except appreciation. 'Eff them.'"

#### **Update at 11:25 a.m.**

The steady description of the federal affidavit, with allegation after allegation, contrasted with Blagojevich's national media tour in which he has tried to portray the conversations as being taken out of context.

For 20 pages, Ellis read the affidavit outlining a series of alleged schemes Blagojevich and others discussed between Nov. 3, 2008 -- the day after Obama's election -- and Dec. 5, 2008, a few days before the governor's arrest.

"I want to make money," Blagojevich is quoted as saying. "The immediate challenge (is) how do we take some of the financial pressure off of our family."

Senators are sitting intently in their seats during the testimony, some using yellow markers to highlight comments. They looked down at their copies of affidavits while Ellis read the words to Cain and then looked up, some peaking over the rims of their glasses to hear Cain confirm again and again.

The lawmakers looked particularly intense when Cain testified that Blagojevich said he wanted his decisions based on his "legal, personal, political" affairs--in that order--and that then-Chief of Staff John Harris noted that, "legal is the hardest one to satisfy."

Blagojevich also made it clear that he believed he might be able to cut a deal with Senate Candidate 5, who has been identified as U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson (D-Ill.), who actively sought the seat, according to Ellis' reading of the affidavit.

Cain's confirmation in person also included Blagojevich saying he wanted to see campaign money raised for him up front but warned associates to be careful because "the whole world is listening."

Further, Cain confirmed the recordings portrayed Blagojevich as frustrated at being "stuck" as governor and thought he still might be able to rehabilitate his political standing to make a future run for president.

Ellis also cited federal allegations that Blagojevich and former Chief of Staff John Harris, a co-defendant in the criminal case, sought to have the Chicago Tribune fire editorial writers critical of Blagojevich in return for state financial assistance for rehabilitating the Chicago Cubs' Wrigley Field. The Tribune Co. owns both the Cubs and the Chicago Tribune.

Ellis read from Cain's affidavit about how Blagojevich allegedly was worried he was going

to be impeached in the spring and was concerned the Tribune would be "driving" the call for impeachment.

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### Comments

Funny how the folks who know whats right for us and have led the way in the most oppressive of laws regarding our second ammendment rights are now turning up to be the ones that we should have least trusted ever. Take notice fellow Americans, fear the govern(or)ment that fears YOU!

Posted by: Harry K | Jan 27, 2009 12:34:26 PM

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