

LON MONK AND ROLAND BURRIS

There were two things of note that came up at yesterday's Roland Burris testimony before the IL impeachment committee. His \$1.2 million campaign loan gift from Joseph Stroud—who was also giving to Blagojevich at the time (who, incidentally, also employs Vicki Iseman as a lobbyist). And, his discussion(s) with Lon Monk about wanting the Senate Seat.

The Monk revelation is important for several reasons:

- It violates the spirit—though not the letter—of Burris' affidavit describing his appointment
- Monk is a central player in the Blago complaint—and was wiretapped himself
- The wiretaps Fitz was trying to get the legislature pertain to a scheme between Blago and Monk

The Monk disclosure violates the spirit of Burris' affidavit

In the affidavit he submitted to the committee, Burris claimed that,

Prior to the December 26, 2008 telephone call from Mr. Adams Jr., there was not any contact between myself or any of my representatives with Governor Blagojevich or any of his representatives regarding my appointment to the United States Senate.

Yet, in response to a question from State Rep Jim Durkin about whether he had talked to anyone

"associated" with Blago, Burris reluctantly admitted he spoke with Monk about the seat, "in September or maybe it was in July."

Now, Burris may well say that he didn't consider Monk a "representative" of Blago. Monk used to be Blago's Chief of Staff, but was no longer employed by Blago when Burris had the conversation(s) with him. Furthermore, Burris claims he didn't read the Blago complaint, which doesn't name Monk by name anyway, so there's no reason why the repeated mention of Lobbyist 1 in the complaint should have led Burris to reveal his contacts with that same Lobbyist 1. So Burris' conversation with Monk certainly doesn't contradict the letter of his affidavit.

Nevertheless, Burris was chatting about the seat with someone close to Blago, in the process of trying to drum up state business from that lobbyist specifically in context of his ties to Blago.

Monk was a central player in the Blago complaint

Burris' revelation is all the more interesting given Monk's role in the Blago complaint. Blago apparently used him to pressure potential donors on several schemes. Blago said Monk was going to hit up a Tollway Contractor for \$500,000 tied to a \$1.8 billion road project.

According to Individual A, after Individual B left the meeting on October 6, 2008, ROD BLAGOJEVICH told Individual A that he was going to make an upcoming announcement concerning a \$1.8 billion project involving the Tollway Authority. ROD BLAGOJEVICH told Individual A that **Lobbyist 1 was going to approach Highway Contractor 1 to ask for \$500,000 for Friends of Blagojevich. ROD BLAGOJEVICH told Individual A that, "I could have made a larger announcement but wanted to see how they perform by the end of the year. If they don't perform, fuck 'em."** According to Individual A, he/she believed that ROD BLAGOJEVICH was

telling Individual A that ROD BLAGOJEVICH expected Highway Contractor 1 to raise \$500,000 in contributions to Friends of Blagojevich and that ROD BLAGOJEVICH is willing to commit additional state money to the Tollway project but is waiting to see how much money Highway Contractor 1 raises for Friends of Blagojevich. [my emphasis]

Monk was also supposed to help hit up the Executive of the Children's Hospital for \$50,000 tied to \$8 million in funding for the hospital.

On November 12, 2008, at approximately 8:26 p.m., Fundraiser A called ROD BLAGOJEVICH and reported the status of fundraising efforts. During the conversation **ROD BLAGOJEVICH instructed Fundraiser A to call Lobbyist 1 the following day and ask Lobbyist 1 what to do about the fact that Hospital Executive 1 is not calling Fundraiser A back** and inquire whether it was possible that Individual A had instructed Hospital Executive 1 not to call back.[my emphasis]

And he was centrally involved in efforts to get money from the horse racing industry before Blago signed a bill diverting money from casino revenues to the horse racing industry.

Also during this call, ROD BLAGOJEVICH and Fundraiser A spoke about efforts to raise funds from two other individuals before the end of the year. Fundraiser A advised ROD BLAGOJEVICH that with respect to one of these individuals, Contributor 1, Lobbyist 1 had informed Fundraiser A that Contributor 1 was "good for it" but that Lobbyist 1 was "going to talk with you (ROD BLAGOJEVICH) about some sensitivities legislatively, tonight when he sees you, with regard to timing of all of this."

ROD BLAGOJEVICH asked, "Right, before the end of the year though, right?" Fundraiser A responded affirmatively. Later in the conversation, ROD BLAGOJEVICH stated that he knows Lobbyist 1 is "down there (Springfield, Illinois)" with Contributor 1 "pushing a bill." In a series of calls since that time, it became clear that the bill Lobbyist 1 is interested in is in the Office of the Governor awaiting ROD BLAGOJEVICH's signature. The bill, which is believed to be a law which involves directing a percentage of casino revenue to the horse racing industry, is expected to be signed as soon as next week. In a call on December 3, **Lobbyist 1 advised ROD BLAGOJEVICH that Lobbyist 1 had a private conversation with Contributor 1 about the contribution ("commitment") Contributor 1 had not yet made and advised Contributor 1 "look, there is a concern that there is going to be some skittishness if your bill gets signed because of the timeliness of the commitment" and made clear that the contribution "got to be in now."** ROD BLAGOJEVICH commented to Lobbyist 1 "good" and "good job." In a call the next day, Lobbyist 1 asked ROD BLAGOJEVICH to call Contributor 1 "just to say hello, I'm working on the timing of this thing, but it's gonna get done." Lobbyist 1 suggested that it is better for ROD BLAGOJEVICH to make the call personally "from a pressure point of view." ROD BLAGOJEVICH stated that he would call Contributor 1 and indicate that ROD BLAGOJEVICH wanted to do an event (fundraiser) downstate "so we can get together and start picking some dates to do a bill signing." Lobbyist 1 assured ROD BLAGOJEVICH that Contributor 1 would be good for the donation because Lobbyist 1 "got in his face." [my emphasis]

It's worth noting, too, that the government had a wiretap on Monk's cellphone (in addition to those on Blago), suggesting he's also a close focus of the investigation, or he's cooperating.

Federal authorities had an additional, previously undisclosed wiretap in their investigation of Gov. Blagojevich – on the cellular telephone of someone in the governor's inner circle.

A new prosecution court filing indicates that, in November, authorities tapped the cell phone of "Lobbyist 1" – identified by the Chicago Sun-Times as Lon Monk, a longtime friend and college classmate of Blagojevich who was the governor's first-term chief of staff.

Since this wiretap wasn't put into place until November 2008, Burris' conversations with Monk pertaining to the Senate seat would presumably not have been taped.

Fitz was trying to release wiretaps pertaining to a scheme between Blago and Monk

Most interesting of all, however, is the fact that the wiretaps Fitz was trying to disclose to the impeachment committee pertain to a scheme involving Blago and Monk—the horse racing scheme described above.

After careful deliberation, the government applies for authorization to disclose a limited number of intercepted communications in redacted form. Although many relevant communications were intercepted, the government believes that, on balance, it is appropriate to seek the disclosure of four intercepted calls, in redacted form, to the Committee, and that disclosure of the calls by themselves would not interfere with the ongoing criminal investigation. These calls bear on a discrete episode of criminal conduct alleged in the complaint

affidavit, specifically at Paragraph 68(e), and the calls are evidence of a criminal offense that the government was authorized to monitor under the wiretap order.

Now, I've been wracking my brain to figure out why Fitz decided to try to release these four intercepts to the impeachment committee out of all of the intercepts to choose from. There are several possible reasons. This episode—more than any of the others described in the complaint—pertains to something that involves the legislature. In addition, since Blago signed the law in question on December 15, the episode may have more closure than the others described in the complaint.

But there is something else I noticed.

Fitz first mentioned trying to get the impeachment committee intercepts on December 22. But he didn't propose releasing these specific intercepts until December 29—the day after (we know from Burris' testimony) Burris accepted Blago's offer for the seat (Blago announced the appointment two days later, on December 30).

That's almost certainly just a coincidence. But I do find it notable that Fitz believed he had closure on a central allegation involving Monk just as the Burris appointment was finalized.

As I said, I think this is coincidental and not causal. But I do think it means that Burris' conversation(s) with Monk might turn out to be more embarrassing than he let on yesterday.