


BREAKING: BURRIS FESSES UP

 Chicago tenor Roland Burris is singing a new tune:

U.S. Sen. Roland Burris has acknowledged he sought to raise campaign funds for then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich at the request of the governor's brother at the same time he was making a pitch to be appointed to the Senate seat previously held by President Barack Obama.

Burris' latest comments in Peoria Monday night were the first time he has publicly said he was actively trying to raise money for Blagojevich. Previously Burris has left the impression that he always balked at the issue of raising money for the governor because of his interest in the Senate appointment.

In comments to reporters after appearing at a Democratic dinner, the senator several times contradicted his latest under-oath affidavit that he quietly filed with the Illinois House impeachment panel earlier this month. That affidavit was itself an attempt to clean up his live, sworn testimony to the panel Jan. 8, when he omitted his contacts with several Blagojevich insiders.

Now this is something that Marcy (see: [here](#) and [here](#)) predicted, as did many of you. So, it is not exactly a shocking Captain Renault moment. That said, it is still extremely damning and is going to lead to a justified uproar. Already Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan is calling for a deeper investigation, although she has held short of claiming perjury by Burris.

It is just the bundling efforts that Marcy

predicted may be in play that appear to be in issue:

Burris said Robert Blagojevich told him, “‘We need to raise some funds. We hope that you could probably get some of your friends together.’ I said, ‘What type of money we looking for?’ He says, ‘Can you raise us 10-or-15 thousand dollars?’

Here are the new details Burris has copped to as of last night:

“So some time shortly after Obama was elected, the brother called,” Burris said last night of Robert Blagojevich. “And now in the meantime, I’d talked to some people about trying to see if we could put a fund-raiser on. Nobody was—they said we aren’t giving money to the governor. And I said, ‘OK, you know, I can’t tell them what to do with their money.’”

“So when the (governor’s) brother called me back, I said, ‘Well, look Rob...I can’t raise any money from my friends. I said, maybe my partner and I, you can talk this over and see, could we go to some other people that we might be able to talk to that would help us out if we give—because we give a fundraiser in the law office, nobody going to show up. We’ll probably have a thousand dollars for you or something to that effect.’

Burris said prior to his final conversation with Robert Blagojevich in November he came to the conclusion that because of his interest in the Senate seat, he couldn’t raise money for the governor.

“I said, ‘No. 1, I can’t raise any money for you and I can’t give you any money because I don’t want to have a conflict,” Burris said he told Rob Blagojevich.

The obvious point there seems to be that, at least so far, there is no evidence against Burris nor admission by him of him actually raising cash as opposed to attempting to do so. He will use this as a basis for arguing that there was no *quid pro quo*. Quite frankly, that is a fair argument – so far. The other thing is that, in relation to his testimony in front of the Illinois Legislature in January, Burris will say that when he testified "I talked to some friends" he was admitting to talking to the people Jim Durkin was inquiring about and just forgot to specify further, and it was an oversight. Do I believe that? No. Could I sandpaper him up and put him on the witness stand in a perjury trial and argue it up with a closing statement to sell it to a jury? You bet.

There is one other factor that muddies the waters, Mike Ettinger, Robert Blagojevich's lawyer (and in what has to be a conflict at this point, Rod Blagojevich's attorney of record in the criminal case), is now spreading a slightly different version:

Ettinger said Robert Blagojevich did not know about Burris' interest in the Senate seat until the lasts of the three calls, which occurred in November after the election.

Ettinger said Robert did reach out to Burris in October, but to ask him to host a fundraiser, not to make a personal contribution. No specific amount was discussed, Ettinger said.

Ettinger has said he understands Burris contends he had told five people about his interest in the seat during the fall time frame.

"That may be, but my client wasn't one of them," Ettinger said.

The lawyer said his client spoke with Burris in November while on the phone at the Blagojevich campaign office, which leads him to believe that call was

recorded by federal agents, who had tapped the campaign headquarters' phones.

During that conversation, Robert Blagojevich learned of Burris' interest in the seat for the first time, and no fundraising effort with Burris went forward, Ettinger said.

The real problem, per the age old maxim, is that it isn't the underlying act in politics, it is the lying and coverup. Burris may never get convicted of perjury, at least if the facts don't materially change (Ha!), but he has already bought the farm on credibility. It will be interesting to see if Harry Reid, Dick Durbin and the Senate try to expel him. One thing is for certain, there are already behind the scenes chats with Burris trying to get him to resign. He has been awfully cocky and persistent so far, but we shall see.

UPDATE: Burris says he is game for any investigation:

U.S. Sen. Roland Burris said today he is open to a Senate ethics investigation into how he got the Senate seat from ex-Gov. Rod Blagojevich and that he has reached out to a Sangamon County prosecutor who is reviewing Burris' sworn testimony before Illinois lawmakers.

Burris made a brief statement to reporters in Peoria today, saying an aide had reached out to Sangamon County State's Atty. John Schmidt, who is reviewing testimony Burris gave last month to House lawmakers in Springfield about his contacts with allies of the ousted governor.

"I have made an effort to be as transparent as I can," Burris said. "I have nothing to hide."

Burris said, "I welcome the opportunity to go before any and all investigative bodies...to answer questions they have."

"There was never any inappropriate (contact) between me and anyone else," Burris said. "And I will answer any and all questions to get that point across and keep my faith with the people of Illinois."