

ROLAND BURRIS' BAD PR STRATEGY

As Burris' allies (and the Politico) would have it, the source of Burris' current problems is his crappy PR strategy.

Here's his former media relations guy, Bud Jackson, disclaiming any responsibility for his recent woes (Jackson worked with Burris until he became Senator).

As many of you may recall I actively helped my former client, Roland Burris, during his run-up to being successfully seated in the United States Senate.

Since that time, well ... **his team's public relations efforts have been less than stellar.** Turns out that, because my business is political communication, I need to let folks know that I have not been involved in the decisions that have led to the public relations fiasco over the past week. In fact, I actively counseled his team to take very different actions, to no avail...

I know based on my own private conversations and experience that Senator Roland Burris has been the victim of bad advice and, when set-up to fail, he certainly shall we say, has had less than adequate attempts to better and more clearly inform the public at a press conference, or two. **It has been painful to watch.** Regardless, the senator has more than 30 years of public service and his integrity has never been questioned. [emphasis original]

And here's the Politico's "news" story explaining that Burris' problems all stem from bad media strategy.

The crisis now threatening Sen. Roland

Burris' political career started with revelations about his entanglements with disgraced former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

But it was the way the situation was handled by Burris and his advisers – trapped between competing political and legal demands – that has made the problem much worse and has pushed him to the brink of losing his seat. In multiple interviews, several Senate aides and Burris confidants say the senator was unprepared from a public relations and political perspective to deal with the national media frenzy and ethics problems he now confronts.

[snip]

Absent an aggressive communications strategy, the press and the public have formed their own opinions that the senator got his new job on false pretenses. As his support crumbled, Burris made a calculated decision not to rile up his backers – many of whom are black – for fear that it would create a vicious racial debate. But this decision has made him appear completely isolated politically, with virtually nobody in Illinois or Washington speaking up for him.

With the **perception that Burris was not forthright under oath** in describing the circumstances of his Dec. 30 appointment, the junior Democratic senator has now dug himself in a very deep hole that even his backers acknowledge he won't be able to get out of unless he's vindicated by a state prosecutor's office and the Senate Ethics Committee, both of which are now investigating him.

Against this backdrop, Burris and his team continue to fight calls for his

resignation, saying doing so would be an admission of guilt when they believe they were **guilty only of a poor strategy**. [my emphasis]

One especially nice aspect of the Politico story is that the only named source is Danny Davis, the guy whom Blago offered the Senate seat to just before he approached Burris about it (and who wanted the seat himself).

"The whole thing got out of hand so quickly and perhaps too quickly for it to be effectively managed," said Rep. Danny K. Davis, a Chicago Democrat. "I think people have made up their mind ... and I don't know if there's a great deal he's going to be able to do to turn that around."

But aside from Davis, the Politico cites one after another anonymous source talking about what a shame it is that Burris didn't adopt a better PR strategy.

Not a one questions the wisdom of Burris actually **accepting** the seat after Burris made attempts to raise money—potentially in exchange for the seat. Nor do any of these unnamed sources—or Manu Raju, reporting the story—entertain the possibility that the problem was in Burris' seemingly deliberate attempt to keep his extensive discussions with Blago's team secret, and not his management of the crisis that broke out after those discussions became public knowledge. And none of Burris' anonymous allies or Raju consider the possibility that no media strategy would blunt the real suspicions people have that Burris deliberately hid his ties to Blagojevich just long enough to get the Senate seat.

Nope. It's all because Burris' smoke and mirrors were insufficient to the task, not any problem with the underlying reality of Burris' actions.