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**Gov blasts 'spending orgy'**

Blagojevich rips into state lawmakers for reversing budget cuts

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD -- Stung by rebellious Democrats, Gov. Blagojevich angrily accused lawmakers Thursday of being "drunken sailors" on a "spending orgy" after the House once again chose Secretary of State Jesse White over him in a budget-driven popularity contest.

The insults flew as the House voted to restore $16 million in cuts Blagojevich had made, then topped that off by overwhelmingly voting for a second straight day to side with White in undoing a contentious budget deal he had struck last month with the governor. The Senate put $132 million back in the budget.

An adrenaline-charged governor stormed before reporters and vented, "You've got a spending orgy going on here, and this is what they do here."

Sweat dripping from his brow, he continued, "This is what got us into a $5 billion budget deficit. You've got a whole bunch of hungry legislators looking for more money from the taxpayers, and they're piling on to find more and more money.

"We're going to keep fighting to reform and change the system and give the people a government that stops spending their money like a bunch of drunken sailors."

Blagojevich was careful not to single out White, House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) or Senate President Emil Jones (D-Chicago) by name. But it was clear his message was aimed squarely in their direction. Madigan wouldn't take reporters' questions. Jones said he believed the governor had misspoken.

"I know he didn't mean that," Jones said.

On Wednesday, Madigan stunned Blagojevich by allowing a vote restoring nearly $10 million Blagojevich had cut from White's budget. The governor and secretary of state had agreed last month on a deal to restore just $5 million and "address" another $4.8 million for employee pensions without ballooning White's budget.

The House vote caused Blagojevich's administration to go ballistic and accuse White of breaking his word. The reverberations ripped through the Statehouse on Thursday.

"It's a violation of all laws of human decency to say Jesse White has ever broken his word on anything. And I want someone to show me where I've broken my word," White said after lobbying House members to stand by their vote from Wednesday.

The chamber did so. A procedural maneuver by House Minority Leader Tom Cross (R-Oswego), a Blagojevich ally, fell 11 votes shy of the 60 votes needed to bring up the measure for another vote.

White also turned his anger at Blagojevich's budget director, John Filan. Filan had promised White's office to have legislation introduced enabling the secretary of state to tap into $10 billion in borrowed money -- rather than his office budget -- to pay the pension obligations.

White said that never happened, and he called on Blagojevich to consider dumping Filan, the architect of the pension-borrowing plan, as well as fee increases and the proposed sale of the Thompson Center to balance the budget.

"The real problem seems to rest with the budget director, Mr. Filan. I think we should zero in on him," White said. "I think he is not the sharpest knife in the drawer."

Blagojevich stood by his embattled budget chief. When asked to respond to White's comments, the governor said only, "I disagree with him."

While the governor was beating up on the Legislature, he was forced to acknowledge that he had not phoned a single legislator to ask them to stick by his cuts.

"I was en route flying here. We really haven't made any [calls]," the governor said.

Blagojevich said his decision to shuttle back and forth between Springfield and Chicago each day since the Legislature convened on Tuesday was rooted in his desire to be at his home with his wife and two daughters rather than at the Executive Mansion.

"Rather than spending the night at that 34-room, 50,000-square-foot mansion with all the servants and cooks that go along with it . . . I wanted to go home and see my 7-year-old and kiss my baby," he said. "If you're asking me if I'm guilty of that, I plead guilty. And I did it and that's what I'll continue to do."

Many at the Statehouse said the revolt against the governor's budget cuts could have been blunted had he taken the time to cajole legislators -- a group he has seemed to spend less time with than with reporters this week.

"If I'm going to say this body is spending like a bunch of drunken sailors, I'd have told my daughter, 'Honey, I ain't going to see you for a couple, three days, I've got to spend time in Springfield,' " said Sen. Denny Jacobs (D-East Moline), a frequent critic of the administration.

Sen. Donne Trotter (D-Chicago), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, also bristled at the governor's words.

"That's a good life he's living, and that's wonderful for him, and it's wonderful he's spending time with his family. But we were elected to take care of all the families here in the state of Illinois," Trotter said. "If he has a problem with the

Legislature and the process, he should come talk to our leadership and talk to the members, and not again try to run government through a press release because he's on the run."

To some, the jousting appeared driven only by ego.

Rep. Julie Hamos (D-Evanston) held up a roll call of Thursday's vote on the Blagojevich-White budget agreement. She'd scrawled on the document, "The testosterone bill."

"Women should be running this place," Hamos said in disgust as she walked off the House floor.