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Final Edition

**He won't go quietly; Lawmakers don't expect to be persuaded, but will gov give swan song or surprise?**

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Staff Reporters

SPRINGFIELD-It will be a speech for his political life.

But whatever Gov. Blagojevich says at his Senate impeachment trial today may be the final words on his political epitaph, since many at the Statehouse now measure his hold on power in hours.

Setting the stage for one of the most memorable political moments in state history, Blagojevich Wednesday made the stunning move to set aside his boycott of a trial he has derided as a "kangaroo court" and seek permission to make a 90-minute closing argument on why his governorship should be saved.

Only hours after goading Blagojevich for being a no-show at his trial, Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) announced on the Senate floor the governor had changed his mind, prompting some senator-jurors to break into wide grins, shake their heads and spin around in their chairs to talk to one another.

In the Statehouse pressroom, where a television was set up to monitor the third day of the governor's Senate trial, some out-of-town media expressed jeers of disbelief at the latest twist in the Blagojevich saga.

"I think it's cowardly on the one hand," said Sen. Dan Cronin (R-Elmhurst), who complained the governor tailored his appearance to avoid taking questions from senators. "He'll just simply offer his spin, much like we've probably already seen on the talk shows."

While few senators have been willing to publicly speculate on an outcome, several from both parties privately confided Wednesday they expect a unanimous or near-unanimous verdict against Blagojevich despite his dramatic, 11th-hour appeal.

Others, including Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno (R-Lemont) and Sen. Matt Murphy (R-Palatine), openly questioned whether the governor might use his speech to resign to avoid being the first Illinois governor driven from office by impeachment and barred from holding future elected office.

"There's a lot of people that he doesn't like in that Senate that I think he might want to deprive [of] that opportunity of voting him out of office," Murphy said.

If the governor makes resignation his one last political rabbit-out-of-a-hat, he'd be going back on some deeply held beliefs regarding his two daughters, which he expressed during his talk-show blitz.

"For me to resign would be to basically say to them that they shouldn't feel that their dad is an honest man," Blagojevich said Tuesday on "The Early Show."

Early Wednesday, Cullerton accused Blagojevich of "lying" about the trial's rules and again criticized him for boycotting the trial.

That was one of the factors, a Blagojevich spokesman said, that contributed to the governor's decision to come to Springfield today.

Senate Majority Leader James Clayborne (D-Belleville) praised Blagojevich for finally reaching that decision but appeared pessimistic about the governor's chances because his absence earlier this week allowed damning testimony -- including secret wiretaps -- to go unanswered.

"Unfortunately, all the testimony was heard," Clayborne said.

With Democratic Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn poised to take over, Blagojevich's speech probably will serve as a swan song more than a persuasive treatise on a governorship worth saving.

Asked whether she is looking for an apology to voters from a governor once elected on a promise to "end business as usual" in Springfield, Sen. Susan Garrett (D-Lake Forest) said she craves something beyond anything Blagojevich can say today.

"I would like to, if I had my choice, look him in the eye and just ask him, 'What went wrong? What happened?' " she said.