

December 19, 2008 Friday

Final Edition

**Impeachment panel asks for tapes; Wants to hear from Rep. Jackson, Jarrett**

By Dave McKinney

Springfield bureau chief

SPRINGFIELD--The House impeachment panel Thursday asked to hear federal wiretaps of Gov. Blagojevich and presented a list of potential witnesses to U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald to determine if their possible testimony in the governor's impeachment hearings would compromise his criminal case.

In a letter, the panel also asked Fitzgerald to identify each person referred to by a letter or number in the criminal complaint against Blagojevich and indicated interest in hearing from those individuals in impeachment hearings, several sources familiar with the letter told the Chicago Sun-Times.

That means people including U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson and Valerie Jarrett, an adviser to President-elect Barack Obama, are in the sights of the committee because they were allegedly identified by the governor on wiretaps as under consideration for Obama's open seat. Prosecutors have alleged the governor was dangling the vacancy to the highest political bidder. Neither Jackson nor Jarrett is accused of any wrongdoing.

In the letter, the panel identified about 20 current or former members of Blagojevich's administration it wants to hear from and several lobbyists, including those representing horseracing interests, sources said.

Among those named are Blagojevich adviser and lobbyist John Wyma; former chief of staff and lobbyist Alonzo Monk; ex-Deputy Gov. Robert Greenlee; Deputy Gov. Louanner Peters; former Blagojevich budget director John Filan; current budget director Ginger Ostro, and Blagojevich's most recent chief of staff, John Harris, who was arrested and charged with the governor on Dec. 9 and has since resigned, sources said.

Another name on the list is former Blagojevich personnel employee Dawn DeFraties, who was wrongly accused by the administration of allegedly manipulating the state hiring process and fired. A Downstate judge threw out the governor's case against her.

Fitzgerald spokesman Randall Samborn would neither confirm nor deny receipt of a letter, which could be made public by the panel as soon as today.

On Thursday, Blagojevich lawyer Ed Genson decried the impeachment panel's reliance on the profanity-laced government wiretaps as a basis to impeach the governor, saying the wiretaps were obtained improperly and were blocked by federal law from being used as evidence in the legislative hearing. "I think you're using evidence that was illegally obtained," Genson told the committee.