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Final Edition

**Panel may debate gov's fate in private**

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SPRINGFIELD-Could the final debate over whether to boot Gov. Blagojevich from office be conducted behind closed doors?

The idea is under consideration as a panel of state senators zeroes in on a set of rules for a trial of Blagojevich, should the House impeach him.

While incoming Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) said he hasn't made up his mind on the question, he told the Chicago Sun-Times he can see merit in debating Blagojevich's political fate in private, just as a jury deliberates out of the public eye in a criminal trial.

"We want this to be fair for everybody. You know what? It might be if someone wants to say something nice about the governor, but politically it's not appropriate, they might prefer to be in deliberations that are closed," Cullerton said.

But Sen. Matt Murphy (R-Palatine), who is on the panel, said voters will expect a public debate: "I just think most people feel they want as much openness as they can get in government right now."

Meanwhile, defense lawyers are putting up a fight over the release to a House impeachment panel of recordings involving the governor. Blagojevich's lawyers say they object to the release.