

December 12, 2008 Friday

Final Edition

**Quinn says he would appoint new senator; Lt. gov says special election best but would cost too much and take too long**

By Dave McKinney

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Poised to replace Gov. Blagojevich, Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn urged state legislators Thursday to impeach his former running mate and said his first priority as Blagojevich's successor would be filling the Senate seat vacated by President-elect Barack Obama.

Quinn's move toward making the appointment put him somewhat at odds with his populist past -- he has favored placing matters in voters' hands -- and with a legislative push expected next week to set a special election for early next year.

"Ideally, I think, that is the best way to go, and I favored that. But I think we have to look at the totality of circumstances today in our country," Quinn said. "If you have a federal election, and it's going to mean Illinois won't have a U.S. senator for half a year at a time where major decisions will be made about the future of our state and country, then I think you have to evaluate that and balance that with philosophical views."

Quinn stopped short of saying he would veto legislation to set a special election, but he cited the multimillion-dollar expense of holding a vote and the fact that it conceivably might not be resolved until June as reasons he might anoint an Obama successor on his own if Blagojevich departs.

State and national Republicans pounced on Quinn. An appointment could deprive the state's resurgent GOP of competing for the seat. Rep. Mark Kirk is one top Republican who has shown interest in a Senate race.

"He's the one who is the great populist. Let people have their say," Sen. Christine Radogno (R-Lemont), the incoming Senate minority leader, said. "Not only has he backed away from his original positions. Now, it's all of a sudden: 'Never mind about the voters.' "

Quinn declined to spell out the process he would use to evaluate Senate candidates, but he emphasized that he would not appoint himself.

Quinn also would not rule out any of the potential nominees who courted Blagojevich, including Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr.