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Final Edition

**The Gov and Gandhi**

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Gov. Blagojevich's impeachment trial starts today in Springfield, but the governor -- who compared himself to human-rights heroes Nelson Mandela, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi in a television interview broadcast Sunday -- will be on ABC's "The View" and other shows instead.

Blagojevich flew to New York on Sunday in advance of appearances on a number of news and talk programs, including "Good Morning America," "Larry King Live," "On the Record with Greta Van Susteren" and "The View." A pre-taped interview, portions of which aired Sunday, will be broadcast on NBC's "Today" show.

Neither Blagojevich nor his lawyers plan to participate in his Illinois Senate impeachment trial, which begins at noon at the Capitol, because they say the rules are rigged against him.

The governor's national media blitz serves two purposes: Getting out that message and trying to shape public opinion because of the possibility that a jury could one day decide if Blagojevich goes to prison.

The impeachment trial follows Blagojevich's Dec. 9 arrest on criminal charges, including allegedly trying to auction President Obama's vacant Senate seat. As Dec. 9 unfolded, Blagojevich told NBC, "I thought about Mandela, Dr. King, Gandhi, and tried to put some perspective in all of this, and that's what I am doing now."

Blagojevich also said the impeachment trial will be so unfair, he could bring in "15 angels and 20 saints led by Mother Teresa" to testify on his behalf, and "it wouldn't matter." Senate leaders vehemently have denied the governor is being denied due-process rights.

While Blagojevich is in New York, his legal team is expected to continue weighing whether to file a lawsuit to attempt to derail the impeachment trial and whether to replace powerhouse criminal-defense lawyer Ed Genson, who announced last week he wants off the governor's case because Blagojevich and some of the other lawyers on his team weren't listening to him.

With an empty chair for Blagojevich, the scene in the Senate should be far less chaotic than expected. Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Fitzgerald, adorned in a black robe, will preside over the first impeachment trial of an Illinois governor in the state's 190-year history.

Senators will have to turn off their cell phones, put away their BlackBerries, not surf the Internet and avoid eating on the Senate floor while the trial is under way.

So far, House prosecutor David Ellis intends to call 13 witnesses against the governor and has identified 24 exhibits he will use to argue that Blagojevich abused his power. The trial could last up to nine days. Forty of 59 senators must vote to convict for Blagojevich to be ousted.

In another development Sunday, U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.), said he plans to introduce a constitutional amendment to end appointments to the Senate by governors and require special elections in the event of a Senate seat vacancy.