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Final Edition

**Burris' son got state job from Blago; He serves as housing authority counsel despite facing foreclosure on his own home**

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The son of embattled Sen. Roland Burris is a federal tax deadbeat who landed a $75,000-a-year state job under former Gov. Rod Blagojevich five months ago, the Chicago Sun-Times has learned.

Blagojevich's administration hired Roland W. Burris II as a senior counsel for the state's housing authority Sept. 10 -- about six weeks after the Internal Revenue Service slapped a $34,163 tax lien on Burris II and three weeks after a mortgage company filed a foreclosure suit on his South Side house.

A spokeswoman for the Illinois Housing Development Authority indicated Wednesday there was nothing improper about Burris II's employment by the agency, whose mission includes overseeing mortgage programs for low-income home buyers and anti-foreclosure initiatives.

Burris II's hiring, however, raises more questions about Sen. Burris interactions with Blagojevich and his inner circle at a time when the governor was soliciting Sen. Burris for campaign contributions and Burris was angling to have Blagojevich appoint him to the Senate seat once held by President Obama.

Blagojevich appointed Burris to that seat in late December after Blagojevich was charged with trying to sell the vacancy to the highest bidder.

Sen. Burris, 71, is fending off calls for his resignation and is the subject of a Senate ethics probe and a perjury investigation by the top prosecutor in Downstate Sangamon County. Those probes stem from conflicting testimony Sen. Burris provided to the House panel that drafted impeachment charges against Blagojevich, who was removed from office Jan. 29.

Separately, federal authorities have been investigating hiring decisions by Blagojevich's administration. Authorities, however, have not expressed any interest in Burris II, Housing Development Authority spokeswoman Rebecca Boykin said.

"Roland Burris II was hired by the Illinois Housing Development Authority's Legal Department based on his qualifications in response to a published job posting," Boykin stated. "As an employer, it is not IHDA's practice to request financial information from applicants."

Sen. Burris' office, Burris II and Sen. Burris' lawyer, Timothy Wright III, did not return telephone calls and e-mails seeking comment. Blagojevich's publicist also did not respond to questions about Burris II's hiring.

Burris II, 42, once worked at the same law firm as his father: Burris, Wright, Slaughter & Tom. That firm merged with another in the fall.

Burris II had resolved two federal tax liens in 2005 before being hit with the $34,163 lien in July. That lien against his property seeks unpaid taxes for 2004, 2005 and 2007.

A month after the IRS filed the lien, Burris II's lender filed its foreclosure suit. Since Burris II and his wife got the $372,000 mortgage on July 18, 2006, they've paid less than $3,000 on it, the suit alleges. The balance due is $406,685, including interest and penalties.

The fact that Burris II faces foreclosure but is working at a housing-related state agency "reeks of hypocrisy," said state Rep. Jim Durkin (R-Western Springs), who was the first to call on Sen. Burris to testify before the impeachment panel.

"It's probably not the area where he [Burris II] should be counseling Illinois citizens on how to stave off foreclosure," Durkin said. "I guess it just begs the question: Why was he placed there, and to what extent did Sen. Burris have conversations regarding the placement?"

Burris II built his home in the booming Bronzeville neighborhood on land he bought from the City of Chicago in 2000. City records show he paid $1 for the lot as part of an effort to clean up his once-blighted block.