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Final Edition

**Off to meet feds; Burris questioned for hours -- likely about talks with Blagojevich aides -- as calls to step down get louder**

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Staff reporters

Federal authorities questioned Sen. Roland Burris on Saturday -- a long-awaited interview involving his Senate seat appointment -- the Chicago Sun-Times-NBC5 team has learned.

Burris is not accused of wrongdoing, but he was questioned in the case that centers on ousted Gov. Rod Blagojevich and his alleged attempts to sell President Obama's former seat.

Authorities interviewed Burris at his lawyer's office, ostensibly to keep the exchange out of the limelight Burris has recently found himself in.

The questioning, first reported online Saturday by the Sun-Times and NBC5, went on for several hours. It likely dealt in part with conversations between Burris and Blagojevich's brother, Robert. At least one of those conversations reportedly was caught on tape.

Burris admitted last week that his lawyers were in contact with the FBI about sitting for an interview, but he denied that the contact was his motivation for amending sworn testimony before a House impeachment panel.

And after the interview, Burris' lawyer, Timothy Wright, said, "I know for a fact that he's not a target of any investigation.''

The interview comes a day after the White House sent a message that Burris carefully consider his future.

A growing chorus, including most recently Gov. Quinn, has called on Burris to resign after the Chicago Sun-Times first reported last week that Burris failed to initially disclose under oath to a House panel that he was hit up for campaign cash in three conversations with Robert Blagojevich.

The U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics has opened a probe, and the Sangamon County prosecutor is reviewing Burris' testimony as part of a possible perjury investigation.

On Saturday, Burris spokesman Jim O'Connor refuted published reports that Burris had discussed the possibility of resignation.

"There have been no discussions on that, and he's anxious to get back to work in Washington," O'Connor said.

Burris is expected, in fact, to make staff appointments Monday -- including a replacement for a recent chief of staff who resigned Friday, and a legislative director.

The junior senator has indicated to associates that he intends to fight the controversy because he doesn't believe he has engaged in any wrongdoing.

Burris testified before an Illinois House committee Jan. 8 and did not include contacts with Blagojevich's fund-raising operation or with the former governor's aides. After Burris was seated in the Senate, he amended his testimony in a Feb. 4 affidavit, which was filed and not made public until the Sun-Times report.

Burris' appointment was under a cloud because the impeached former governor named Burris to the seat a few weeks after Blagojevich was criminally charged with trying to sell it.

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