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**House OKs school bill;**

**Education package approved 62-56**

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Staff reporters

SPRINGFIELD-In a surprise victory, Gov. Edgar won the first round today in his bout against fellow Republicans to change how the state funds its schools by raising income taxes 25 percent.

The state House passed Edgar's education package by a 62-56 vote, two more than the minimum needed for passage. As he proclaimed victory, the Republican governor thanked the seven GOP legislators who broke ranks to join Democrats in support of Edgar's plan.

"It took courage to stand up and make the right vote," Edgar said. "I hope this will have a good hearing in the Senate."

How it might fare in that chamber remained up in the air this afternoon. Senate President James "Pate" Philip (R-Wood Dale) was not immediately available for comment.

Edgar himself tried to set up an appointment with the powerful DuPage County Republican after the House vote, but Philip told him he didn't have the time.

"Sen. Philip got an unexpected delivery," said a buoyant House Speaker Michael J. Madigan, the Chicago Democrat who joined forces with Edgar to pass the plan.

Philip and House Minority Leader Lee A. Daniels (R-Elmhurst) have been alternately cool or outright hostile to Edgar's plan, which would raise $ 614.3 million for schools and yield $ 900 million in property tax relief by hiking the income tax from 3 percent to 3.75 percent.

After the bill passed the House, Daniels called Philip to map a strategy for the Senate.

"My advice (to Philip) is that the income tax is unneccesary," Daniels said. "My advice is create an alternative."

In the debate before the vote, Daniels and numerous House Republicans made a last pitch for their alternative -- relying on natural revenue growth and smaller taxes and user fees to fund the package.

"There are better ways to accomplish what we all want," said Rep. Tom Cross (R-Oswego). "The evidence is clear: We are raising taxes when we can (reform education funding) in a far superior way, natural revenue growth."

The vote tally surprised some observers, who didn't think enough Republicans would break ranks with Daniels, who fears a vote for the income tax increase will be used against his members in campaign literature.