

July 10, 2007 Tuesday

Final Edition

Jones blocked Web list of subcontractors; Under fire over stepson, now may back bill

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SPRINGFIELD -- Illinois Senate President Emil Jones has blocked legislation to put the names of state subcontractors on the Internet as his stepson's technology firm continues to rake in millions of dollars in under-the-radar government business.

But Jones (D-Chicago) indicated Monday he may be willing to soften his opposition to the Republican legislation -- or at least the concept behind it. Since January the bill has languished in the Senate Rules Committee, which Jones controls.

"I have no problem with the public knowing everything," he said.

The Chicago Sun-Times disclosed in Monday's editions that Jones' stepson's firm, Synch-Solutions, is in line for a $700,000 state payday after being hired by two firms employed by Gov. Blagojevich's budget office.

On top of those deals -- which can be found only by digging through obscure state contracts -- NBC5 reported Monday evening about another $11 million in government work for Synch-Solutions, run by John Sterling.

All of Synch-Solutions' work is legal, but it has raised nepotism questions for Jones as he tries to hold a fractious Senate Democratic caucus together in the ongoing state budget stalemate.

**DEALS WORTH MILLIONS FOUND**

The newest disclosures involving his stepson's firm include a $3.5 million contract from the Chicago Aviation Department, a $1.2 million contract from the cash-strapped Chicago Transit Authority and another $1.2 million from the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority. The CTA and tollway work were awarded through hard-to-find subcontracts. Synch-Solutions also netted a separate $3 million subcontract through Chicago's public schools, records show.

"It's the hidden aspect that's troublesome," said Sen. Christine Radogno (R-Lemont), whose legislation to put subcontractors on the Internet has been held up. "People don't know who's getting these contracts, and it fuels the speculation they're getting subcontracts because of their political connections as opposed to their qualifications."

Jones has maintained he has had no involvement in or knowledge of his stepson's government work, and Sterling has said all his company's business has been sparked by its "excellent performance."

However, the governor signed an executive order in February barring his own relatives from doing state business.

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