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**Madigan's role in labor talks probed; Union endorsed speaker's daughter in primary race**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD-Federal investigators are probing House Speaker Michael Madigan's intervention in a wage dispute last spring between Eastern Illinois University and a labor union that later endorsed his daughter's attorney general campaign.

Within the past two weeks, a federal grand jury seated in Springfield has issued subpoenas to Madigan's office and the Illinois Board of Higher Education seeking documents related to a meeting last spring involving the labor talks.

The meeting, asked for by the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 399, took place in Madigan's Statehouse office. The speaker was present, along with university and union officials, Madigan spokesman Steve Brown said.

"There was a subpoena, and we complied with it. They were asking for information surrounding a meeting held a year ago between one of the unions and universities. It was a contract dispute one of the unions asked us to help resolve," Brown said.

Madigan's spokesman said he has no reason to believe Madigan or his staff are targets in the probe.

An aide to newly installed U.S. Attorney Jan Paul Miller, who oversees the state's central federal prosecutor's district, would neither confirm nor deny an ongoing federal probe on the matter.

Don Sevener, a spokesman for the Illinois Board of Higher Education, confirmed that his agency received three subpoenas dated March 26, seeking similar information. Two of the subpoenas were to the agency's executive director, Keith Sanders, and the other was to its legislative liaison, Ross Hodel.

Through these subpoenas, federal investigators have asked the agency for documents on the labor negotiations at Eastern and "any records that relate to those transactions. And it called for any budget records or phone records or anything like that," Sevener said.

Sanders was to appear before the grand jury April 5, but that was postponed, and a new date has yet to be set, Sevener said.

Vicki Woodard, an Eastern spokeswoman, confirmed that Local 399 represents 10 workers at the university. The group and university settled on a four-year contract last fall, giving pay increases of between 4 and 6 percent annually, she said.

Woodard said she did not think any subpoenas had been issued to the university, whose Springfield lobbyist is Loretta Durbin, wife of U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.). Mrs. Durbin could not be reached for comment.