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Brown defends Cook's role in Quinn program

By Dave McKinney

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Cook County Circuit Court Clerk Dorothy Brown defended her husband's ties to Gov. Pat Quinn's now-disbanded and discredited anti-violence program, telling reporters Saturday that questions about her spouse and his involvement are driven by a "political witch hunt against me."

Brown made her comments in support of her husband, Benton Cook III, in response to a Chicago Sun-Times report that Cook had a felony conviction after writing bad checks when he was placed in charge of overseeing millions of dollars in West Garfield Park anti-violence programs funded by Quinn's Neighborhood Recovery Initiative.

Brown declined to answer questions about ongoing state and federal probes of the Neighborhood Recovery Initiative. Nor, during an appearance at the Chicago Society of the Polish National Alliance, would she say whether her husband had disclosed his 1999 felony conviction in Tennessee.

"I think it's a political witch hunt," she said, according to an audio recording of her comments. "I don't know who's behind it. But I'm sure it's a political witch hunt. My husband, he's a good man. He works very hard every day. And he works for the community. He works for young people. That's what he's about. But it is, basically, unfortunately, a political witch hunt on me."