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NEIGHBORHOOD RECOVERY INITIATIVE:Rauner calls on Quinn to support subpoena

By Natasha Korecki and Dave McKinney

Sun-Times staff reporters

Bruce Rauner's campaign is calling on Gov. Pat Quinn to support lawmakers issuing a subpoena for the testimony of Barbara Shaw, the former head of the governor's embattled Neighborhood Recovery Initiative program, before a legislative panel that's reviewing the program.

A subcommittee of the Legislative Audit Commission will vote Monday whether to subpoena former Illinois Violence Prevention Authority Director Barbara Shaw as part of its investigation into the now-defunct $54.5 million anti-violence program.

It's a move that House Speaker Michael Madigan, D-Chicago, favors, according to an aide.

"As far as I know, the speaker is prepared to sign off on subpoenas and, I think, move this process along," Madigan spokesman Steve Brown told the Chicago Sun-Times' Early & Often political website.

"It's likely if she's subpoenaed, she would testify," Shaw's lawyer, John Theis, told Early & Often earlier this week.

"If anyone is asked to participate, they should participate," Quinn office spokesman Grant Klinzman said Friday.

This is no-doubt a political hot potato for Quinn, who has been increasingly under fire for a series of issues stemming from the program.

Seizing the political moment, Rauner on Friday issued a statement urging that Shaw be questioned.

"The people of Illinois deserve to know the truth about the misuse of taxpayer funds in Pat Quinn's anti-violence program, and Barbara Shaw was a key player in the initiative," Rauner said in a statement.

The program, launched by Quinn one month before his 2010 gubernatorial election - and characterized by Republicans as a taxpayer-funded get-out-the-vote operation - is under investigation by Cook County and federal law-enforcement agencies.

Beyond Shaw, Brown would not delve specifically into others who might be subpoenaed to testify about their role in the anti-violence program, which was the subject of a scathing audit in February by Auditor General William Holland.

"I would assume they'd subpoena everyone involved in this whole process. I don't know how long a list that might be," Brown said.

Republicans contended in their letter Friday that subpoenas should be signed off on by the co-chairs of the Legislative Audit Commission and not Madigan and Cullerton. They pointed to two earlier instances in which subpoenas were issued by the audit panel without signatures from the House speaker and Senate president personally.

But Brown countered that having the leaders involved strengthened the process.

"If anybody wanted to quibble [with a subpoena,] the best response is that to make sure there's no way to question the validity," Brown said in justifying signatures from Madigan and Cullerton.

A spokesman for Cullerton could not be reached Friday afternoon about whether he, too, would be willing to sign off on a subpoena for Shaw.