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**Move to save 1 fat pension**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD - Poised to cut pension benefits for tens of thousands of government workers, House Democrats moved quietly Wednesday to spare a member of one of the city's best-known political families of any immediate, similar pension carnage.

The Illinois Senate Friday voted to repeal a state law that allowed retired Oak Brook Police Chief Thomas Sheahan to boost his pension by $30,000 a year, a windfall that was the subject of a March investigation by the Chicago Sun-Times and Better Government Association.

But state Rep. Michael Zalewski (D-Chicago) filed paperwork Wednesday to block the Senate move, noting House Speaker Michael Madigan's legal team raised constitutional questions about specifically targeting the brother of former Cook County Sheriff Michael Sheahan and James "Skinny" Sheahan, a longtime aide to ex-Mayor Richard M. Daley.

"We'd only be doing this to Mr. [Thomas] Sheahan. I don't make a judgment on the propriety of what he did. But there is a concern in the speaker's counsel's office that to pass this bill would be unconstitutional," Zalewski said.

A spokesman for House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) denied anyone working for Madigan had anything to do with the effort to kill the Sheahan amendment and said it was Zalewski's decision.

Zalewski is himself a member of a prominent Chicago political family. He is the son of Southwest Side Ald. Michael Zalewski (23rd).

Late Wednesday, the legislator told the Sun-Times he intends to file legislation to address Sheahan's pension but said it might not get consideration until lawmakers' fall legislative session because the General Assembly is scheduled to adjourn for the spring Thursday.

"I don't think with a day left we'll get a resolution," Zalewski said.

The 2007 pension sweetener that benefitted Sheahan - and Sheahan only - unexpectedly left Oak Brook with $750,000 in unfunded pension liabilities, but the 59-year-old Sheahan was profane and unapologetic during a March interview about his pension increase.

"I worked for 24 f------ years [in the public sector], I deserve every penny of it and I deserve a lot f------ more," said Sheahan, whose $77,000 pension comes on top of $65,000 he makes as part-time village manager of Lyons.

Oak Brook Village President Gopal Lalmalani called on the House to allow the Sheahan provision to be voted on. "It's just unfair what they're doing to us. I know there's a lot of politics at the last minute, but if there's any reform to be done, this is it," Lalmalani said.

State Sen. Kirk Dillard (R-Hinsdale), the author of the Senate provision taking aim at Sheahan, said his legislation is constitutional and patterned after a November measure that Gov. Pat Quinn signed, repealing the pensions of Illinois Federation of Teachers lobbyists Steve Preckwinkle and David Piccioli.