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**Gov set to ban executions;**

**Quinn expected to sign bill, making Illinois 16th state to repeal penalty since late '70s**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD - Gov. Quinn plans to sign landmark legislation today that will repeal the state's death penalty, said a key House lawmaker and sources briefed on his plans.

State Rep. Karen Yarbrough (D-Maywood), the bill's chief House sponsor, said she received notification from a Quinn legislative aide late Tuesday afternoon that the governor would enact the death-penalty abolition bill this morning.

"For Illinois, I think we'll be on the right side of history," she told the Chicago Sun-Times.

Quinn's office would not divulge the governor's intentions nor did it release today's schedule, saying an itinerary for the day's events likely would be forthcoming early in the day.

"Unfortunately, I can't confirm anything for tomorrow," said Quinn spokeswoman Annie Thompson late Tuesday.

Quinn's expected move will add Illinois to 15 other states that have abolished the death penalty since the late 1970s.

Not clear are Quinn's intentions for those now on Death Row, a group of 15 men that includes serial killer Brian Dugan, who was convicted in the 1983 murder of 10-year-old Jeanine Nicarico.

The repeal measure Yarbrough and state Sen. Kwame Raoul (D-Chicago) got through the Legislature in January is silent about the fate of those sentenced to death since former Gov. George Ryan set aside the death sentences of the 164 inmates on Death Row in 2003.

"I don't know if there will be action on the 15," Raoul said.

Yarbrough also was unclear on that question and said the Quinn aide with whom she spoke Tuesday did not address it.

"I'd hope he'd probably commute those sentences. What else is he going to do? But that's his call. I look to hear that same information," she said. "Just to get to this point is, like, special. Know what I mean?"

If Quinn signs the legislation and does not commute the sentences of those on Death Row, there is a possibility the number of condemned killers could grow because the abolition bill doesn't take effect until July 1. That would give prosecutors nearly another four months to seek death sentences in murder cases decided during that period.

Quinn's expected move will close the book on a sorry chapter in state history when 20 inmates sentenced to death were exonerated of their alleged crimes.

Twelve people, including mass murderer John Wayne Gacy, have been executed by the state since the death penalty was re-imposed in 1977. The last execution was in 1999, when serial killer and satanic cultist Andrew Kokoraleis was put to death by lethal injection.

But during his campaign for governor, Quinn indicated his support for the death penalty but pledged to keep in place the moratorium that Ryan first imposed and that remained through two later administrations.

As word of his intention trickled out, supporters of the death penalty condemned the governor for going back on his campaign promise to voters.

"Gov. Quinn always says the will of the people should be the law of the land. I don't think that's the case if he signs the bill," said Rep. Dennis Reboletti (R-Elmhurst), a former Will County prosecutor who voted against the repeal. "He promised the people of the state one thing, then he delivers something else."

The Sun-Times reported Saturday that President Obama - who as a state senator pushed through a series of death-penalty reforms - congratulated Quinn at the White House late last month on legislative passage of the death penalty repeal bill.

Yarbrough said Quinn's move on the repeal bill, along with his enactment of historic civil unions legislation that also passed in January, will secure his place in Illinois history and represent the highlight of her legislative career.

"For me, this would be the most significant thing I could've done in the General Assembly, probably in my lifetime," she said.