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**Probe won't faze Ryan**

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SPRINGFIELD-Under the cloud of a broadening corruption probe, Gov. Ryan unveiled a proposed $ 46.5 billion budget Wednesday and vowed not to let the scandal in his old office distract him from his duties.

"I'm not going to let anything get in the way of me being the best governor I can be for the people of this great state," Ryan said during his annual budget address to the General Assembly, prompting a standing ovation.

Appearing relaxed in the legislative chamber he once led, Ryan delivered a speech that was overshadowed by Tuesday's federal racketeering indictment of Dean Bauer, a longtime friend and the man Ryan appointed to root out corruption in the secretary of state's office.

In the hourlong address, Ryan again apologized for the scandal and afterward was inundated with questions from reporters about Bauer's indictment. The questions came before any about his budget or legislative priorities.

But as he has been for much of the week, Ryan was mum about his relationship with Bauer, and repeatedly threatened to end an impromptu news conference in the Capitol rotunda if the Bauer questions persisted.

"If you want to talk about the budget, if you want to talk about state government, if you want to talk about programs that are important to the people of Illinois, I'll be glad to do that," Ryan told reporters. "But understand that I don't intend to answer any (other) questions."

Ryan's minutelong standing ovation from lawmakers lacked the supportive whoops and hollers he received last year, but most gave the governor's appearance this year high marks.

"I think after he started with the speech, people just got past what was going on with the secretary of state scandal and got onto the business of the state," Rep. Patricia R. Bellock (R-Hinsdale) said.

In his address, Ryan:

-Attempted to mute growing legislative pressure for tax cuts this spring, pledging not to "give away the store just to soothe election-year anxieties."

Unveiled a $ 1.9 billion plan to encourage technology development and education over five years.

-Proposed investing half of the state's tobacco settlement proceeds during the next five years, and spending the rest on various human service initiatives.

Indicated he would travel to South Africa later this year to open an Illinois trade office.

-Failed to urge lawmakers to enact a prohibition on the sale of political fund-raising tickets to state employees, an idea he has floated twice in the last week. Aides said Ryan still intends to push for the reform.

House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) predicted Ryan would be able to enact many of his initiatives despite the scandal.

Meanwhile Wednesday, Senate President James "Pate" Philip (R-Wood Dale) said that he had been approached by a second former state senator about getting a state job for Russell Nisivaco, who became manager of the Naperville driver's license facility and has been implicated in the Bauer indictment.

"I'm the (GOP) county chairman. I helped get him hired, yes," Philip said of Nisivaco, suspected of using $ 2,683 in office funds to buy Ryan fund-raising tickets.

Philip said he was approached about helping Nisivaco get a job by state Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka when she was a senator and former Sen. Greg Zito (D-Melrose Park).

Topinka denies Philip's claim; Zito could not be reached.