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**Senate spurns gun bill**

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SPRINGFIELD-Gov. Ryan, known for his prowess at working the Legislature, endured a humiliating defeat Friday when the Republican-led Senate rejected an anti-crime package he supported.

Senate President James "Pate" Philip, a fellow Republican and a friend of Ryan's, orchestrated the defeat and ensured that the General Assembly's stalemate over the Safe Neighborhoods Act will spill into the weekend unresolved.

The four legislative leaders were to meet with Ryan this morning to chart their next steps, with tensions running ever higher.

The governor had walked onto the Senate floor for last-minute arm-twisting Friday night and was sitting beside Philip when the measure fell seven votes shy. With a sour look on his face, Ryan turned to the Senate president and said, "I ain't going home."

An angry Ryan said he planned to ruin the holidays of lawmakers by keeping them in the capital this weekend and next week, if needed, to pass the package.

"It's a sad day in Illinois, I can tell you that. But this thing isn't over," Ryan said. "I'll keep them here Christmas Day if that's what it takes to get something resolved."

In Friday night's 29-18 Senate vote, only seven Republicans broke rank from Philip and supported Ryan. Twenty-two Senate Democrats also backed the plan. Thirty-six votes were needed to get the bill on the governor's desk.

The General Assembly was in its fifth day of a special session that Ryan convened last Monday to put Mayor Daley's Safe Neighborhoods Act back on the books after the state Supreme Court struck it down as unconstitutional.

By a 92-30 vote earlier in the day, the House passed and sent to the Senate a plan favored by Ryan, the three other legislative leaders, Attorney General Jim Ryan, Daley and Cook County State's Attorney Richard Devine.

It would have allowed prosecutors to charge gun owners with a felony if they were caught illegally with weapons. But judges could have imposed a six- to 12-month probation, then given the gun owners the chance to have the charge wiped from their records after a year.

Philip and his supporters rejected that approach and insisted that less controversial items in the Safe Neighborhoods Act be passed separately. The debate over the gun measure then could wait until January.

"Is there a crisis?" Philip asked, belittling the urgent tone that Ryan has attached to the issue. "I mean, everybody kept saying all these criminals were coming out.

They certainly are not coming out. There isn't a crisis. Reasonable people can sit down and work things out, particularly when there isn't the pressure."

Authorities have said the arrests and convictions of hundreds of people in the state could be affected by the overturning of the act.

Philip, who has been pounded by newspaper editorial writers for opposing the governor, also launched a tirade against the press and showed little concern over the impact Friday's vote could have on the governor's popularity.

"Quite frankly, I never thought about it. I don't look at things (like) are the papers going to be happy? Are the polls going to be happy? Once in a while, you have to step up to the plate and do what's right."

The Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence seized on Friday night's vote, saying Philip was soft on crime and concerned only with the wishes of the National Rifle Association.

"The Friday night Senate vote was a last-ditch effort by President Philip to put a Christmas gift under the tree of the gun lobby," said Bob Williamson, a group board member.

Earlier in the day, the NRA testified against the bill voted down by the Senate and endorsed current law that allows only a misdemeanor for getting caught illegally with a gun.

"For 60 years, it was a misdemeanor. It worked well," said Todd Vandermyde, a lobbyist for the pro-gun organization.