

For Immediate Release

Date: Tuesday, December 30, 2008

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SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STATEMENT ON GOV. BLAGOJEVICH'S
APPOINTMENT OF ROLAND BURRIS TO THE VACANT U.S. SENATE SEAT FROM ILLINOIS

Washington, DC—Senate Democratic Leadership made the following statement today in response to reports that Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich will nominate Roland Burris to fill the vacant Illinois Senate seat. Earlier this month, all 50 members of the Senate Democratic Caucus called on Blagojevich to step down and under no circumstance make an appointment to fill the seat. The text of that letter is below the statement:

“It is truly regrettable that despite requests from all 50 Democratic Senators and public officials throughout Illinois, Gov. Blagojevich would take the imprudent step of appointing someone to the United States Senate who would serve under a shadow and be plagued by questions of impropriety. We say this without prejudice toward Roland Burris’s ability, and we respect his years of public service. But this is not about Mr. Burris; it is about the integrity of a governor accused of attempting to sell this United States Senate seat. Under these circumstances, anyone appointed by Gov. Blagojevich cannot be an effective representative of the people of Illinois and, as we have said, will not be seated by the Democratic Caucus.

“Next week we will start one of the most important debates of the year – outlining an economic recovery plan to create jobs and invest in America. And in the coming weeks, we will be working to protect homeowners and consumers, make America more energy independent, strengthen our national security, and improve health care and educational opportunities. There is much work to do and a lot at stake. It is thus critical that Illinois and every other state have two seated Senators without delay.

“We again urge Gov. Blagojevich to not make this appointment. It is unfair to Mr. Burris, it is unfair to the people of Illinois and it will ultimately not stand. The governor must put the interests of the people of Illinois and all Americans first by stepping aside now and letting his successor appoint someone who we will seat.”

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December 10, 2008

Dear Governor Blagojevich:

We write to insist that you step down as Governor of Illinois and under no circumstance make an appointment to fill the vacant Illinois Senate seat. In light of your arrest yesterday on alleged federal corruption charges related to that Senate seat, any appointment by you would raise serious questions.

It is within the authority of the Illinois legislature to remove your power to make this appointment by providing for a special election. But a decision by you to resign or to step aside under Article V of the Illinois Constitution would be the most expeditious way for a new Senator to be chosen and seated in a manner that would earn the confidence of the people of Illinois and all Americans. We consider it imperative that a new senator be seated as soon as possible so that Illinois is fully represented in the Senate as the important work of the 111th Congress moves forward.

Please understand that should you decide to ignore the request of the Senate Democratic Caucus and make an appointment we would be forced to exercise our Constitutional authority under Article I, Section 5, to determine whether such a person should be seated.

We do not prejudge the outcome of the criminal charges against you or question your constitutional right to contest those charges. But for the good of the Senate and our nation, we implore you to refrain from making an appointment to the Senate.

Sincerely,

Sen. Reid

Sen. Durbin

Sen. Schumer

Sen. Murray

Sen. Akaka

Sen. Baucus

Sen. Bayh

Sen. Biden
Sen. Bingaman
Sen. Boxer
Sen. Brown
Sen. Byrd
Sen. Cantwell
Sen. Cardin
Sen. Carper
Sen. Casey
Sen. Clinton
Sen. Conrad
Sen. Dodd
Sen. Dorgan
Sen. Feingold
Sen. Feinstein
Sen. Harkin
Sen. Inouye
Sen. Johnson
Sen. Kennedy
Sen. Kerry
Sen. Klobuchar
Sen. Kohl
Sen. Landrieu
Sen. Lautenberg
Sen. Leahy
Sen. Levin
Sen. Lieberman
Sen. Lincoln

Sen. McCaskill
Sen. Menendez
Sen. Mikulski
Sen. Ben Nelson
Sen. Bill Nelson
Sen. Pryor
Sen. Reed
Sen. Rockefeller
Sen. Salazar
Sen. Sanders
Sen. Stabenow
Sen. Tester
Sen. Webb
Sen. Whitehouse
Sen. Wyden