

An open letter to Sen. Roland Burris from Cook County Clerk David Orr

February 17, 2009

Senator Roland Burris
Kluczynski Federal Building
230 S. Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Roland:

It saddens me to call for your resignation, but the time has come for you to step aside. Recent revelations about your contact with our former governor's brother and associates have made it questionable for you to represent Illinois in the United State Senate.

Your "defense" of not revealing the troubling contents of your conversations with former Governor Blagojevich's confidants is that you would have told more if properly asked.

You are disingenuously ignoring the context of your hearing. Our former governor was arrested and charged with selling President Obama's Senate seat. At that time, all Democrats demanded that no one take that seat at Blagojevich's behest. Yet, you accepted his appointment under a cloud of suspicion. It was your duty to prove yourself untouched by scandal. You know that the state of Illinois and the nation opposed any Senate appointee who was tainted by dealings with the Blagojevich circle.

Yet, you've glossed over your numerous conversations with those very people. You failed to disclose repeated contacts to the Senate Impeachment Committee. It matters not whether questions were properly posed. You are an attorney, and know better than that.

To serve as a U.S. Senator—especially in President Obama's former seat—you should have appeared before the Committee eager to disclose everything pertinent without being asked. Anything less is beneath you and far beneath our state's expectations for you.

Naturally, any nominee can play word games, a verbal hide-and-seek with the truth. But your silence in this matter is subterfuge, not gamesmanship. No Americans or Illinois voters nor your colleagues in elective office should have to suffer through more episodes in this unseemly drama. We deserve a clean break with the embarrassing Blagojevich era. This is not merely a legal issue; it is a moral issue.

I have supported you in the past as a colleague and as a friend. But today I ask you to step down and let the people of Illinois move forward into a new era of good governance.

Sincerely,
David Orr
Cook County Clerk

NOTE: This letter was also faxed to Sen. Burris.