



CHANGE OF SUBJECT

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Quinn's chance to erase Blago's unpardonable inaction

Gov. Pat Quinn can act today to begin cleaning up a disgusting pile left behind on his desk by his predecessor, Rod Blagojevich.

That pile consists of at least 2,600 petitions for pardons or sentence commutations, many of which were sitting there for years waiting for Blagojevich to act one way or the other.

Each includes a confidential recommendation from the Illinois Prisoner Review Board, which has carefully considered each case. And while not all of them have merit, all of them deserve an answer sooner rather than later.

But Blagojevich, rather than simply act as the law requires, chose to fight a lawsuit filed by a group of Cabrini Green Legal Aid clients who'd been waiting up to five years for an answer. Their suit asked the federal courts to order the governor to start making decisions.

Blagojevich lost the opening round: "The unequivocal and mandatory language of [Illinois law] requires that the Governor make some decision within a reasonable period of time," wrote U.S. District Judge Joan Gottschall in a ruling allowing the suit to go forward last year.

Blagojevich made a decision, all right. He decided to keep stalling and keep wasting our money by paying an outside legal firm to fight Gottschall's ruling.

A hearing on that case before a three-judge panel of the Seventh Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals is scheduled for Tuesday. Quinn, who had nothing to do with pardons (or with Blagojevich, for that matter) when he was lieutenant governor, has now inherited the role of defendant.

He can -- he should -- back down. He should announce that he agrees with Judge Gottschall. He should tell the court that he intends to render the lawsuit and her ruling moot by doing his job and beginning the methodical process of clearing out Blagojevich's malodorous backlog.

Efforts Friday to reach Quinn and Timothy Eaton, the private lawyer who represents Blagojevich/Quinn in the case were not successful.

SATURDAY UPDATE: Through a spokesman, Quinn declined to comment on the lawsuit. But the spokesman, Robert Reed, said Quinn has expressed a willingness to address the problem of the backlog.