

## AReCO in the News

### **Blagojevich might move O'Hare fight**

Daley also supports moving decision from D.C.

By John Patterson Daily Herald State Government Editor  
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SPRINGFIELD - Fearing continued delays in Washington, Gov. Rod Blagojevich said Wednesday he expects to push a deal to expand O'Hare International Airport at the Illinois Statehouse rather than wait on Congress.

Blagojevich blamed U.S. Sen. Peter Fitzgerald, an Inverness Republican, for stifling the plan in the U.S. Senate. A Washington deal remains a possibility, but with Fitzgerald's opposition persisting, Blagojevich said he will turn to the state's legislative leaders for help as well. He said he's even willing to sacrifice the governor's current ability to veto airport expansion if necessary, a move he previously said would happen only as a last resort.

"I'd make an exception for the greater good in terms of moving that (O'Hare expansion) forward. That's \$18 billion to \$20 billion for the state economy, 195,000 new jobs," Blagojevich told reporters as he left a memorial service at Abraham Lincoln's tomb in Springfield.

Though there's little risk of Blagojevich rejecting the airport expansion deal, his concern is a future governor opposed to the project could try to stop it.

"What's to prevent a successor from undoing or stalling what's been begun in this administration?" Blagojevich said. "We're talking about a commitment of millions and millions of dollars."

Those fears are well-founded given the project is likely to outlast Blagojevich's four-year term. The governor's powers either need to be bypassed by federal legislation, or the General Assembly needs to take that power away. O'Hare expansion plans already have been introduced in Congress by U.S. Rep. William Lipinski, a Chicago Democrat, and U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, a Springfield Democrat. Neither could be reached for comment Wednesday, but Blagojevich said he hopes an expansion plan could be passed in both Capitols.

In Springfield, both House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President Emil Jones Jr. support O'Hare expansion. Both are Chicago Democrats.

Blagojevich's comments follow similar remarks from Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley on rerouting O'Hare expansion through Springfield. Blagojevich said he and the mayor have talked about O'Hare expansion but not recently and not about specific strategy.

Chicago City Hall offices were closed Wednesday, and Daley's spokeswoman could not be reached for comment.

Though the state legislature can approve runway expansion, finding funding is another matter. Daley recently said he's investigating corporate funding for such an expansion.

Some O'Hare expansion opponents were quick to criticize Blagojevich.

"Rod Blagojevich needs to act like a statesman for all of Illinois instead of a Daley puppet on O'Hare," said Jack Saporito, executive director of the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare.

However, others said a change of venue is appropriate.

"Senator Fitzgerald has said that the proper venue for debating repeal of the Illinois Aeronautics Act is in the General Assembly because Illinois legislators are accountable to the people of the state for decisions they make that affect Illinois communities," said Fitzgerald spokesman Brian Stoller. "There is no accountability for U.S. senators from other states."

State Rep. Carolyn Krause, a Mount Prospect Republican, said there have yet to be legitimate hearings on the plan anywhere. Her main opposition is the communities surrounding O'Hare could lose sizeable portions of land and tax revenue if the airport is expanded.

"I don't think that the real issue of the loss these communities will suffer has ever been put out there," Krause said. She cautioned Blagojevich that any action perceived as unfair is likely to end up the basis for lawsuits attempting to block expansion.