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## Fallout continues in Illinois' 'Memo-Gate'

By [Kevin McDermott](#)

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SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan has long been known around Springfield as "The Velvet Hammer" for his ability to quietly crush political adversaries.

But the velvet has slipped off the hammer this week.

Madigan is in a rare defensive position in his year-long tussle with Gov. Rod Blagojevich, after the airing of a secret memo from his staff directing legislative candidates to call for Blagojevich's impeachment — complete with instructions to deny that they're getting instructions.

The leaked memo may already have weakened Madigan's position in ongoing conflicts over state spending and other issues, with the Democratic governor's allies emboldened in their defense of him and even some Republicans taking his side.

"It's outrageous," state Rep. Kurt Granberg, D-Carlyle, said Wednesday of the Madigan memo. "It's very transparent now that this is just a personal vendetta" by Madigan against Blagojevich.

The episode has chipped at the aura of political infallibility that Madigan has long enjoyed.

"It was pretty heavy-handed and out of character ... for someone who has a reputation of nothing happening by accident," said Kent Redfield, a political scientist at the University of Illinois at Springfield. "If the idea was to draw attention to the governor's problems, what it's ended up doing is drawing attention to this memo."

That was clear on Wednesday, as Blagojevich and other leaders met in Chicago on budget issues.

House Republican Leader Tom Cross, talking to reporters, accused Madigan of "a scheme to lie" to the public about his own involvement in anti-Blagojevich campaigns.

Senate President Emil Jones chided Madigan (who in addition to being House Speaker is the State Democratic Party Chairman) for going after a Democratic governor.

Madigan is the only leader who hasn't been at the recurrent budget meetings, sending surrogates and generally refusing to negotiate, Blagojevich says.

State Rep. Jay Hoffman, D-Collinsville, a top Blagojevich ally, suggested Wednesday that fallout from the memo gaffe might ultimately force Madigan to take a softer stance.

"Using a Democratic office to carry out his personal feud with a Democratic governor, to me, that's offensive," said Hoffman. "If that brings him to the realization he's got to stop these games, then it's a positive."

Madigan's office says the memo was merely a staff-written response to inquiries from numerous Democratic legislative candidates this year who asked Madigan's office how to respond to questions the media have been asking about whether Blagojevich should be impeached.

Madigan spokesman Steve Brown rejected the assertion by Hoffman and others

that, as a top Democrat, Madigan had a duty to support Blagojevich.

"We're not going to fall over the cliff with these people," said Brown, who cited a widespread belief among the public that Blagojevich's administration is inept and perhaps corrupt. "If Mr. Hoffman thinks Democratic Party resources ought to be used to defend the schemes of this administration, he's whistling in the dark."

The 14-page memo — first revealed by The Associated Press on Tuesday — advises legislative candidates to call for Blagojevich's impeachment for myriad reasons, including the recent corruption conviction of his top fundraiser, Antoin "Tony" Rezko.

"Criminal activity in the Blagojevich administration is no longer theoretical — it is proven," the memo advises them to say.

Ultimately, the impeachment memo could have the ironic impact of making it less likely that Blagojevich actually faces impeachment — because his defenders certainly will point to the memo as evidence that such talk is merely a cynical political tool.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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