

Brady seeks to curb governor's power

Amendment would place restrictions on special sessions

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SPRINGFIELD - On the same day Gov. Rod Blagojevich scheduled another special legislative session, state Sen. Bill Brady announced plans to push for a constitutional amendment to curb what he calls the governor's "abuse of power."

The Democratic governor scheduled a special session for Nov. 28 on the topic of mass-transit funding.

"This is the 17th one. He's made a mockery out of them and the system," said Brady, a Bloomington Republican who ran for governor in 2006.

"I'm hoping to remove a governor's ability to use these special-session calls from the perception of a little kid that doesn't get his way," he added in a phone interview Monday. "This (proposed amendment) clarifies and preserves the integrity of the special session."

Brady's proposal, which hasn't been filed yet, would place restrictions on a governor's ability to call special legislative sessions. For instance, a governor would have to give at least four days' notice before the first scheduled day of a special session. A special session could be convened on shorter notice if legislative leaders and the governor agree that an emergency exists.

Also, the governor would have to be physically present in the chambers of the Senate and House on the first day of a special session, and the session must be "permanently adjourned" if, after 15 consecutive session days, the House or Senate fails to pass legislation dealing with the stated reason for the special session.

Blagojevich called 17 special sessions of the Legislature in 2004 as well, Brady noted in a news release. The 34 special sessions he has called "account for half of the 68 special sessions called since the current Illinois Constitution was adopted in 1970," Brady said.

He added: "Gov. Blagojevich has called so many special sessions this year and accomplished so little that lawmakers have come to view his actions as a means to pressure and harass them."

In an e-mailed response, Blagojevich spokeswoman Abby Ottenhoff said: "At a time when the CTA (Chicago Transit Authority) is on the brink of another doomsday and the transit unions are threatening a work stoppage, Sen. Brady managed to send out a 400-word press release that completely ignores the crisis at hand. Not one word about what

he's willing to support to do to keep buses and trains running. Not one word about what he's doing to ensure the communities he represents get funding for their transportation needs."