

Embarrassing House Member Might Be on the Way Out

Written by Rich Miller
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Finally, a little bit of good news for Illinois Democrats.

In stark contrast to the glacially paced House Committee on Investigations, the panel charged with deciding indicted state Representative Derrick Smith's punishment looks like it will move forward much more quickly.

The investigations committee took two months to decide that there was enough evidence against Smith (D-Chicago) to warrant punishment. Smith was arrested and then indicted just before the March primary on charges that he accepted \$7,000 in cash bribes. It was June before that committee took final action.

The two House leaders then appointed members to the Select Committee on Discipline, and that committee's first meeting was last week.

Smith's attorney, Victor Henderson, strongly objected to hearing evidence within a few days, claiming it was just too soon to look at evidence in the case. Henderson also complained that a federal judge has required him to first obtain permission before he could use any evidence to defend Smith. And Henderson said no rush to judgment should take place before the November

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elections.

But the two House managers, who are essentially acting as prosecutors in the proceedings, dismissed Henderson's concerns by pointing out that this was an internal House matter and not a court of law. There's a big difference in the evidence required to kick a member out of the chamber and the evidence required to convict a citizen and put him behind bars.

The full House will have to reconvene to uphold any decision by the Discipline committee. That return date can't be set until the discipline committee makes its final decision, but by the looks of things, it might not be all that long from now.

Besides having Smith in their midst as a constant reminder to the public about Illinois' ongoing corruption woes, the House Democrats face the serious public-relations problem of Smith refusing to withdraw from the general-election contest.

But they got some good news last week when Lance Tyson said he'd gathered more than 7,500 signatures to run as a third-party candidate in Smith's 10th House District. He needed just 1,500 petition signatures, so he did quite well.

Tyson was picked to run as a third-party candidate by local Democratic ward committeemen and will run on the 10th District Unity Party ticket. He couldn't run as an "independent," because a new state law (based on a recent Illinois Supreme Court decision) prohibited it; Tyson took a Democratic ballot in the spring primary.

And the Democrats believe they may be able to kick the Republican candidate off the ballot in the Smith district.

Kimberly Small does not have enough petition signatures to qualify, the Dems say. They've filed two different objections to her candidacy.

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Small, who is white and running in a predominantly African-American district, was described as a “moderate” by local Republicans when she was appointed.

“Madigan and Illinois Democrats are now seeking to run a third-party candidate, which will serve to split Democrat voters in the district and give a Republican a chance,” read a press release at the time.

Small, who sells jets for a living, later drew some controversy when the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that she’d made some off-color jokes about the president and his wife on her Facebook page.

Also filing in the 10th District was Joseph R. Sneed, a real-estate broker and city worker. Sneed filed to run as an independent.

Tyson has not yet disclosed any large contributions. Smith, however, finally filed an amended campaign-finance report for the first three months of the year. Smith did not disclose any campaign spending at all when he initially filed his campaign-finance report in April. That was ridiculous and unbelievable, because he obviously spent quite a bit of money on his campaign.

But Smith finally disclosed last month that he had spent about \$58,000 during the first quarter and had almost \$46,000 in the bank as of the end of March. Smith also reported three in-kind contributions from House Speaker Michael Madigan’s Democratic Majority fund. The contributions were apparently made during the primary, but were not disclosed until now.

Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax (a daily political newsletter) and CapitolFax.com.