

Home

National

Sports

Special Reports

Commentaries

Intelligence

Letters

Editorial

## Kenyan-born Obama all set for US Senate

Kenyan-born US Senate hopeful, Barack Obama, appeared set to take over the Illinois Senate seat after his main rival, Jack Ryan, dropped out of the race on Friday night amid a furor over lurid sex club allegations.

The allegations that horrified fellow Republicans and caused his once-promising candidacy to implode in four short days have given Obama a clear lead as Republicans struggled to fetch an alternative.

Ryan's campaign began to crumble on Monday following the release of embarrassing records from his divorce. In the records, his ex-wife, Boston Public actress Jeri Ryan, said her former husband took her to kinky sex clubs in Paris, New York and New Orleans.



Barack Obama

"It's clear to me that a vigorous debate on the issues most likely could not take place if I remain in the race," Ryan, 44, said in a statement. "What would take place, rather, is a brutal, scorched-earth campaign – the kind of campaign that has turned off so many voters, the kind of politics I refuse to play."

Although Ryan disputed the allegations, saying he and his wife went to one 'avant-garde' club in Paris and left because they felt uncomfortable, lashed out at the media and said it was "truly outrageous" that the Chicago Tribune got a judge to unseal the records.

The Republican choice will become an instant underdog in the campaign for the seat of retiring Republican Senator Peter Fitzgerald, since Obama held a wide lead even before the scandal broke.

"I feel for him actually," Obama told a Chicago TV station. "What he's gone through over the last three days I think is something you wouldn't wish on anybody."

The Republican state committee must now choose a replacement for Ryan, who had won in the primaries against seven contenders. Its task is complicated by the fact that Obama holds a comfortable lead in the polls and is widely regarded as a rising Democratic star.

The chairwoman of the Illinois Republican Party, Judy Topinka, said at a news conference, after Ryan withdrew, that Republicans would probably take several weeks to settle on a new candidate.

"Obviously, this is a bad week for our party and our state," she said.

As recently as Thursday, spokesmen for the Ryan campaign still insisted that Ryan