CHICAGO — Jesse Jackson Jr. once possessed the makings of a political star. Son of a civil rights leader and a Democratic congressman with a strong base of support on Chicago's South Side, he set his sights on becoming the city's mayor, or a senator from Illinois.

Those dreams of higher political office have been dimmed – perhaps irrevocably – by Jackson's association with the corruption case of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich. One damaging detail to emerge is that Jackson may have known about supporters' plans to raise at least $1 million on the condition that Blagojevich appoint him to President Barack Obama's former Senate seat.

Of all the public figures whose names came up during the trial, Jackson has suffered the most political fallout. These days he keeps a low profile in his district, rarely appearing in public and avoiding the media – especially when it comes to questions about Blagojevich.

"There's no doubt that his ambitions have taken a hit," said Roosevelt University political scientist Paul Green. "Right now all his options are on hold."

Jackson, 45, has not been charged and denies wrongdoing, but there's little doubt he remains on the radar of federal prosecutors. A House ethics investigation of him, delayed at prosecutors' request, was scheduled to resume after the trial.

While his congressional seat appears safe in the November election – he has won it since 1995 with more than 80 percent of the vote each time – even Jackson's staunchest allies agree his reputation has suffered.

"An association with Blagojevich can be seen as toxic, but this is undeserved," said Democratic U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, who was a national co-chair of the Obama presidential campaign with Jackson. "He's getting a raw deal."

Jackson's name has been tangled with Blagojevich's since the governor was arrested in December 2008 and charged with conspiring to sell or trade the Senate seat, among other things.

Jackson admitted he was "Senate Candidate A," one of several people Blagojevich considered appointing. According to the criminal complaint, Jackson's supporters were willing to raise more than a million dollars for Blagojevich if he named Jackson to the seat. Jackson denied knowledge of the alleged offers.

At the trial, however, prosecutors said the state's former international trade director, Rajinder Bedi, told them Jackson was present at a meeting when Bedi and a businessman discussed fundraising for Blagojevich and Jackson's desire for the seat. During testimony, when
prosecutors indicated Bedi was about to describe the incident, the judge cleared jurors from the room.

Later, Blagojevich's brother, Robert, testified that the businessman, Raghuveer Nayak, had offered to raise up to $6 million in exchange for Jackson's appointment. Robert Blagojevich said he considered the offer "a joke," but passed the information along to the governor.

An FBI wiretap played in court caught Blagojevich warming to the idea of naming Jackson because he thought he could get something "tangible upfront." Blagojevich has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Jackson has denied that he was part of any "improper scheme" and vowed in a July statement to eventually clear up "misstatements made by some." He said he has "never been advised that I am a target of this investigation."

Randall Samborn, a spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's office in Chicago, declined to discuss Jackson.

Jackson has purposely maintained a low profile since the accusations become public, his father said.

"It's temporary," Jesse Jackson Sr. said of his son's problems. "You are going to feel the impact of the wind even if you're not directly in the storm."

Jackson's congressional career has largely been low-key, but he remains popular in his district, which covers the city's South Side and some suburbs. Business owners and leaders cite Jackson's family legacy, willingness to attend public events and his drive to improve infrastructure.

"His good has outdone the issues that have been brought up," said Kathy Nussbaum, director of the Homewood Chamber of Commerce in his district.

Since the latest associations with Blagojevich, there are inklings that enthusiasm for him is waning in the district. For the first time, the black-owned Kankakee City News has chosen not to support Jackson and instead endorsed his Republican opponent. The publisher cites the Blagojevich association.

However, many believe Jackson won't be permanently tainted.

"Bottom line, I would not take Jesse Jackson out of the calculation," said Alan Gitelson, a Loyola University of Chicago political science professor. "These are the kinds of things you can overcome. Time passes and people change their opinions."