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Judge postpones Tripp's trial

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Linda R. Tripp's criminal trial on state wiretapping charges will be postponed until July.

Tripp had been scheduled to stand trial Jan. 18, but Howard County Circuit Judge Diane O. Leasure yesterday granted Tripp's request for postponement. Leasure set a trial date for July 10.

Tripp's defense attorney said yesterday that he sought the delay to seek more time to file motions and attack the state's case.

"The amount of time required to litigate the outstanding issues is unknown," Joseph Murtha said.

Lawyers for both sides are awaiting the judge's ruling on what evidence state prosecutors can use at her trial.

Leasure must determine whether evidence was tainted by testimony given by Tripp under an immunity deal with independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr during his investigation of President Clinton.

Attorneys are working on more motions and legal briefs and likely will argue their points before Leasure in February, Murtha said.

Tripp, a resident of Columbia, was indicted in July on two counts of violating Maryland's wiretapping law for taping a telephone conversation with then-White House intern Monica Lewinsky and having her attorney disclose the tape's contents to Newsweek magazine.

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