

American Forum

Taking issues from the Sidelines to the Headlines

Illinois Residents on Hunger Strike for Budget Justice

Thursday, May 28, 2009

Posted by American Forum at 11:22 AM



Community residents continue their hunger strike in the State Capitol building, with only a few days left in session and more than \$7 billion in cuts to vital state programs and services looming. Close to 200 community allies will join Hungry for Justice, an ad hoc group of residents aged 24 to 87, to send the clear message to the Legislature that they must protect the safety net for seniors, children, and working families, and pass a fair revenue increase.

"I'm blessed to be in good health, but what about all the seniors who aren't?" said Brenda Hobson of Westchester, age 65. "If the General Assembly votes cut these programs, we're all in trouble. That's why I'm here."

Slashing core programs such as home care services for seniors and people with disabilities, prevention programs that reduce violence, teen pregnancies, and substance abuse, and education and safety programs such as parent patrols and Grow Your Own teachers is unacceptable. An estimated 5 million Illinois families depend on these programs. At a time of economic crisis, cuts to our safety net are the worst possible action the Legislature can take.

TASC Public Policy Blog

Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities, Inc.

Illinois Legislature Slashes Governor Pat Quinn's Budget, Illinois Drug Treatment by 50%

June 1, 2009

(**Springfield, IL**) — The Illinois General Assembly this weekend slashed Governor **Pat Quinn's** proposed budget by 50 percent, gutting human services, including drug treatment.

Governor Quinn has said that he will not sign this budget.



Governor Pat Quinn

Quinn had proposed an income tax increase from 3 to 4.5 percent, [Senate Bill 2252](#), but the Illinois House defeated the plan [42-74-2](#). The Illinois Senate, however, approved its own income tax increase, [31-27-1](#), boosting the individual rate from 3.0 to 5 percent, [House Bill 174](#), but that measure stalled in the House, too.

With the budget deadline having passed at midnight Sunday, now the Governor's tax increase cannot pass without a "supermajority" in each chamber, or a three-fifths vote.

Governor Quinn, House Speaker **Michael Madigan**, House Minority Leader **Tom Cross**, Senate President **John Cullerton**, and Senate Minority Leader **Christine Radogno** met on Monday to begin negotiations to hammer out a permanent solution, and plan to meet again on Thursday, June 4.

This is a continually evolving story. Some of the latest news:

[Chicago Sun-Times](#): *“Unable to nail down the income tax increase, [Governor Pat] Quinn is in an epic bind. If he can’t convert 29 Republican and Democratic income tax opponents to “yes” votes in the coming weeks, Quinn must cut billions of dollars in vital state services as he gears up for a 2010 gubernatorial run later this year.”*

[Chicago Tribune](#): *“We must close our budget deficit. If we don’t, 45,000 people with addictions will lose treatment, 3,000 children of working parents will lose their child care,’ Quinn said Sunday. ‘Nine thousand kids will be forced out of their homes because foster care funding is reduced; [thousands] of children will forgo adoption.’ But few in Springfield expect that to actually happen.”*

[TASC](#)’s statewide services are funded by a variety of sources, including state and federal government along with corporations, foundations, and individual donors.

<http://iltasc.wordpress.com/2009/06/01/illinois budget for human services in limbo/>

Social Service Agencies Prepare For Budget Cuts

Brad Palmer & AP

(2009-06-01)

BENTON, IL (WSIU) - Without a new, complete state budget, thousands of people could be laid off at local agencies that deliver such services as home care for the elderly and treatment for drug addiction.

State government pays local groups to provide a wide array of services. But the budget that lawmakers approved Sunday night would require slashing those payments.

John Markley, CEO of the H Group - formerly known as Franklin-Williamson Human Services - says they could see a 50-percent reduction in state funding...which would lead to job reductions and a loss of services.

Markley says he can't get specific about the cuts yet because the budget has not been defined for local agencies.

Governor Pat Quinn said Monday that the state will start sending notices this week that local agencies could lose much of their state funding.

The H Group is a private, not-for-profit agency that serves individuals with behavioral, emotional, mental, family or substance abuse problems in 27 southern Illinois counties.

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State agencies fear massive budget cuts

Posted: June 2, 2009 09:02 PM CDT



QUINCY, Ill. (WGEM) -- If the Illinois state budget stands as is, there will likely be massive cuts in government services.

State agencies that provide services for the developmentally disabled, mental health, and crisis prevention are among those that could be hit the hardest. That means layoffs and services lost for those who need it most.

Ron Howell with Recovery Resources in Quincy says his agency, which provides a number of services including substance abuse treatment, is still trying to recover from last year's 35 percent budget cut.

"We lost about 20-25% of our clinical staff. We have slowly begun to replace those folks and get back up to speed, but we're not there yet," says Howell.

Now Recovery Resources, like other state funded agencies, could lose even more funding beginning July first.

Howell says under the state budget passed by lawmakers, he'll have to figure out a way to stretch six months worth of funding over an entire year.

"It puts staff in a position of uncertainty. It means clients we serve will wonder about whether services will be there beyond a 6 month period. Generally it does a disservice to the human service field as a whole," says Howell.

During an interview on WGEM Radio, State Senator John Sullivan admitted the cuts in services come at a bad time.

"This reduction in services is going to increase the unemployment across the state of Illinois. When you see people being laid off that only contributes to the recession. So those folks aren't working, they're not receiving an income, so they're not paying taxes and so on. So it kind of exasperates the problem," says Sullivan.

Sullivan hopes lawmakers will be able to come up with more money by the end of the year, or agencies like Recovery Resources will have some tough decisions to make.

Governor Pat Quinn is trying to shame lawmakers into voting for an income tax increase to avoid massive budget cuts.

Quinn blasted lawmakers Tuesday for throwing the state's poor overboard when they passed a budget without enough money for the next fiscal year.

He's meeting with top legislative leaders on Thursday to try to broker a deal.

Quinn details possible deep spending cuts

By RYAN KEITH

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Jun 03, 2009 @ 11:06 AM

Gov. Pat Quinn put out a more detailed warning of budget cuts facing service providers Wednesday as part of a counteroffensive to a half-year budget lawmakers approved earlier this week.

But as providers plead for help, lawmakers are split on whether such warnings will spur a new budget deal.

Quinn's office provided a fact sheet detailing deep cuts and devastation facing providers and others throughout the state if nothing more is done than the budget lawmakers approved, which provides spending at 50 percent of what Quinn wanted for next year.

Alcohol and substance addiction programs would see 65,000 people lose treatment. Child-care services would be cut for 80,000 low-income working mothers. A whopping 463,000 children and teens would lose services for issues such as substance abuse, delinquency and teen pregnancy.

Quinn spokeswoman Katie Ridgway said the governor is trying to work out an improved budget plan with legislative leaders before July 1, the start of the state's new fiscal year. He's pushing an income tax increase to help restore some of the spending.

But if lawmakers fail to pass a "fair and equitable budget," these and other cuts would be inevitable, Ridgway said. That includes state employee layoffs, more service cuts and "other Draconian measures," she said.

Ridgway also said state agencies are putting together contingency plans with additional cuts to meet the 50 percent reduction if necessary.

"When the plans are completed, we will have a more clear picture of how this budget would affect state operations," Ridgway said.

The scenario doesn't assume lawmakers would provide more money later in the year.

Providers soon will receive notices detailing what those cuts could mean. Already, they're predicting dire consequences this summer.

Senior services groups say programs to help seniors deal with abuse and electric bills could be gutted entirely. Rape crisis centers could each lose two full-time staff positions, putting hundreds of rape victims at risk as they try to regroup.

"The solution is for the leaders to take responsibility for the state budget crisis so it doesn't compound the individual crisis every victim experiences," said Polly Poskin, executive director of the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

Democrats said they'll continue to work with other leaders to put together a more complete plan while trying to provide stark education about the consequences of not doing more.

"We are going to work with the governor and all caucuses to negotiate a budget solution that works for everyone," said Rikeesha Phelon, spokeswoman for Senate President John Cullerton.

Steve Brown, spokesman for House Speaker Michael Madigan, said the message to lawmakers and the public must be clear.

"We've got services we put on the books, we've got to fund those services, or we've got to pass bills to cut those services," Brown said.

But some Republicans say it's too soon to be warning of major cuts. They want to focus on reducing government spending before talking about tax increases.

"I think this all becomes a political game," said Rep. Rich Brauer, R-Petersburg. "They didn't cut into the bureaucracy. They cut into the service providers."

House Minority Leader Tom Cross, R-Oswego, said he understands why Quinn is trotting out severe warnings. But Cross said he's first looking at ways to squeeze more efficiency out of government and hopes to talk more about those ideas when he and other leaders meet today in Chicago.

"None of this stuff is going to happen overnight," Cross said. "We're talking about some fundamental change before we go where the governor would like to go."

Ryan Keith can be reached at 788-1518.



Quinn Determined To Sell Tax Increase

Published : Wednesday, 03 Jun 2009, 10:34 AM CDT

Governor Quinn is a man on a mission, and he's determined now to sell the income tax increase that failed so miserably in Springfield.

"This is an epic battle for the soul of the Democratic Party in Illinois; our party does not stand for massive cuts," said Governor Quinn.

Cuts in social programs like drug and alcohol treatment at places like the Haymarket Center on the near west side, 65,000 addicts could lose treatment statewide. That's just one of scores of social programs in serious jeopardy.

"This is the worst time to be talking about cutting drug abuse treatment," said Anthony Cole of the Haymarket Center. "It's eight to one we can provide treatment for one eighth of the cost of putting someone in prison or jail."

Someone like recovering addict Brenda Solala.

"I would have probably been in jail or the hospital or worse," said Solala.

"Woe to those who would afflict the poor, we're not going to afflict the poor in this state," said Governor Quinn.

But those arguments did not carry the day with state lawmakers, and would not now without a serious effort by democratic leaders like Michael Madigan to get behind the tax increase and muscle the votes needed.

"I want to make sure all those in the democratic party put politics aside, put future elections aside and do what I'm doing do the right thing today for the people. And we can't have those worried about politics as usual calling shots," said Governor Quinn.

Progress Illinois

The Human Face Of The Budget Cuts

by [Angela Caputo](#) on June 04, 2009 - 9:24am

At the end of June, Illinois' current fiscal year will run out. And that's a frightening prospect for non-profits and other state agencies -- schools, early childhood education centers, health clinics, and so on -- who still aren't certain what sort of funding they'll receive. They remain in limbo because, even after all the end-of-session hoopla in Springfield this past weekend, there is [no budget deal](#) in place. Yesterday, Gov. Pat Quinn [released a list](#) of non-mandated human service programs that will bear the brunt of the \$7.5 billion worth of cuts lawmakers must make unless they approve new revenue sources during an overtime session later this month. The *State Journal-Register* [highlights](#) some of the devastating cuts outlined in the memo:

Alcohol and substance addiction programs would see 65,000 people lose treatment. Child care services would be cut for 80,000 low-income working mothers. A whopping 463,000 children and teens would lose services such as substance abuse, delinquency and teen pregnancy.

Quinn spokeswoman Katie Ridgway acknowledges that these cuts are just estimates based on the spending plan that went farthest during the spring session -- to fund 50 percent of the governor's budget and hand over the lump sums to agency directors who can figure out how to distribute it. State agency heads are crunching those numbers now, Ridgway tells us. In the meantime, the Ounce of Prevention Fund [offers a look](#) into what sort of impact that budget would have on the youth it serves. Their projections are ugly. Essentially, the Department of Human Services would get \$1.6 billion to cover \$3.5 billion worth of services including home visits, child care, and children's mental health; and the State Board of Education would get \$500 million to cover \$900 million worth of programs, including early childhood programs.

Chicago Democrat Rep. Greg Harris tells us that the best hope for bringing those budgets up is political pressure. "Will we be able to bring them up to 100 percent? I don't know," he says. "But we should be able to get them up to 80 or 85 percent,. A 50 percent cut, that's disastrous."

To wit, leaders of some of Illinois' largest nonprofits are zeroing in on lawmakers who cast 'no' votes on revenue enhancements last weekend. Obviously, the bulk of the attention should be paid to members in the House, where a proposal to temporarily raise the income tax was [shot down](#) in a 42-74-2 roll call late Sunday. But Lutheran Social Services' Dan Schwick tells us that they're planning to spread the political pressure around. "We're trying to target legislators in both houses," he says, "and then make sure they're visited in each district and invited to all the local rallies."

The human cost is exactly what Rep. Will Burns (D-Chicago) said was missing during last week's eleventh-hour budget debate, which [he described](#) as "really abstract." Some anti-poverty advocates in Chicago aren't trying to bring that point home. The Heartland Alliance is publicizing that, in Rep. Heather Steans' North Side Chicago district alone, the cuts will mean 1,000 fewer people will receive the mental health, substance abuse, and youth homeless shelter services they rely on.

Meanwhile, at the Thompson Center today, members of the Grassroots Collaborative will call on lawmakers to "stop politicking and start leading." The rally, which begins at 11:30 a.m., will coincide with a meeting between Quinn and the four legislative leaders from the House and Senate.

"We're confident that there's going to be a different budget," Schwick tells us.

progressillinois.com/2009/6/4/human-face-of-budget-cuts

Putting a face on state budget cuts

Human services agencies make case for funding

By JOHN R. PULLIAM

The Register-Mail

Posted Jun 04, 2009 @ 10:44 AM

GALESBURG —

The warnings of 50 percent budget cuts in Springfield in order to come up with a state budget come with human faces attached.

Vanya Peterson, associate director with Stone-Hayes Center for Independent Living, said Wednesday that “thousands and thousands of people are going to be affected.”

Gov. Pat Quinn’s office provided a fact sheet detailing deep cuts and devastation facing providers and others throughout the state if nothing more is done than the budget lawmakers approved, which provides spending at 50 percent of what Quinn wanted for next year.

Alcohol and substance addiction programs would see 65,000 people lose treatment. Child-care services would be cut for 80,000 low-income working mothers. A whopping 463,000 children and teens would lose services for issues such as substance abuse, delinquency and teen pregnancy.

Stone-Hayes serves clients in Knox, Warren and Henderson counties at no cost. Among the many services offered is independent living skills so that disabled individuals can live in the community.

Peterson, independent living advocate Charles Allen and Interim Director Dale Parsons point out this is not just about Stone-Hayes. They provided a two-page list of 32 agencies in the three-county area that could be affected drastically if the budget cuts are made.

“They’re holding human services and the people they serve hostage,” Peterson said. “Those who are least capable of advocating for themselves are being held hostage.”

So, what does this mean in human terms? Peterson gave one example.

“If this does happen, in a worst-case scenario, those people who end up on the streets are going to end up in the hospital emergency departments,” she said.

Both Peterson and Parsons said many human service consumers, left on their own, will go to hospital emergency departments, because small injuries become major events to many of them.

Allen said consumers already are worried about what the future holds for them.

“We’re already getting calls,” he said. Clients want to know, “ ‘What are we going to do?’ ”

“We’ve got some beautiful clients, beautiful people, but they need help,” Parsons said. “And, we’re

getting new people coming in all the time.”

Parsons said Stone-Hayes officials are trying to be proactive. The agency’s leaders called the governor’s office Tuesday, as well as the offices of state Reps. Don Moffitt, R-Gilson, and Rich Myers, R-Colchester, as well as state Sen. Dale Risinger, R-Peoria, and John Sullivan, D-Rushville.

Ann Ford, executive director of the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living, on Monday sent a letter to the governor, and the four party leaders in the General Assembly.

She wrote that the 23 centers she represents across the state serve almost 9,000 people a year.

“If their contracts are cut in half, some of those centers would have to close their doors, and others would have to impose such drastic reductions in staff that they could no longer respond to the needs of their consumers. ... Countless thousands of consumers would have nowhere to go for services.”

“If we didn’t have these agencies to fight for them, they would be on the side of the road,” Parsons said.

Peterson has a first-hand knowledge of what the cuts mean. She has a son with disabilities. The services offered by the state make all the difference in the world to him.

“He has a job, he is married, he pays taxes,” she said. She credits much of that to programs that would take the hits because of budget cuts.

“Do I think the money grows on trees?” Peterson asked. “Absolutely not, and that’s why we need the income tax increase and then use it responsibly.”

Senior services groups say programs to help seniors deal with abuse and electric bills could be gutted entirely. Rape crisis centers could each lose two full-time staff positions, putting hundreds of rape victims at risk as they try to regroup.

“The solution is for the leaders to take responsibility for the state budget crisis so it doesn’t compound the individual crisis every victim experiences,” said Polly Poskin, executive director of the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

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“I think this all becomes a political game,” said Rep. Rich Brauer, R-Petersburg. “They didn’t cut into the bureaucracy. They cut into the service providers.”

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

jpulliam@register-mail.com

Local Agencies

Knox, Warren & Henderson county human service organizations*

Bridgeway
Alternatives for Older Adults
Carver Community Action Agency
Catholic Charities
Lutheran Social Services
Knox County Health Department
DIGIT
Equip for Equality
Galesburg Handivan
Ill. Department of Rehab Services
Ill. Department of Human Services
Goodwill
VNA Community Services
Strom Center
OSF Holy Family Medical Center
Knox County Housing Authority
Starting Point
Jamieson Center
Rescue Mission
Safe Harbor
Help at Home
Marigold
Midwest Regional Homecare
OSF St. Mary Medical Center
Galesburg Cottage Hospital
Salvation Army
Workforce Investment Act.
Warren Achievement Center
Warren County Health Department
Warren County Housing Authority
Henderson County Housing Authority
Henderson County Rural Health Department

**Agencies that may be affected by proposed 50 percent state budget cuts*



Health program cuts in state budget

June 10, 2009 07:44 pm

— By TESA CULLI

tesa.culli@register-news.com

MT. VERNON — More than 100 health care, education and social service providers met with state legislators on Wednesday to emphasize the devastating affects a proposed 50 percent cut in the state budget to human service programs would have on the region.

“We’re talking about fairly huge cuts,” said Michael Egbert, executive director of Opportunities for Access Center for Independent Living. “We would have to cut staff and the people we serve who are some of the most vulnerable people in the state of Illinois — and that’s unacceptable.”

Although 18 state representatives and senators were invited to the hearing, only two — Sen. John O. Jones (R-Mt. Vernon) and Rep. John Cavaletto (R-Salem) were in attendance. The providers urged the two legislators to vote for an income tax increase in order to prevent the described draconian cuts that would result if the present budget were passed. However, Jones said their worries will not come to fruition.

“Fifty percent is just a joke, folks,” Jones said. “Don’t pay any attention to it. It’s not going to happen.”

Jones said the 50 percent cuts proposed are part of the “political game” being played in Springfield.

According to Jones there are three people in charge of the budget decisions — House Speaker Michael Madigan, Senate Leader John Cullerton and Gov. Pat Quinn.

“They rule the roost,” Jones claimed. “It’s all about elections, folks. Cullerton and Madigan get along very well. Everything they do, they orchestrate. ... Quinn said he will not sign the budget and that’s why we haven’t sent it to his desk. It’s all a play to get us all riled up to vote for an income tax increase.”

But political play or not, area providers are worried. Egbert said one program his organization oversees has saved the Department of Human Services \$45 million last year alone by keeping people out of nursing homes and institutions.

Mark Stevens, the director of the Jefferson County Health Department also painted a grim picture of what would happen if the 50 percent cuts were to go into effect.

“In this economy, more people are needing services, but we have fewer and fewer people and resources to serve them and that’s unacceptable,” Stevens said. “If this were to happen, the advances that have happened over the last 10 years will be gone. And, once programs are shut down, it costs more to bring them back. ...

Your looking at disease rates going up because there will be no preventative services. Children won’t be getting immunized, women and children won’t be able to get nutrition and services they need because the programs will have to be cut. ... These services are even more important in the rural areas we serve.”

According to information presented by District 80 Superintendent Dr. Kevin Settle, the cuts would harm minority and low income students in the education system the most, forcing the district to cut programs and staff — which would then have a trickle down affect not only on the families, but on businesses and the local economy as the district is one of the major employers in the area.

Settle stated there is only one state in the country below Illinois when it comes to funding education. Gary Hake, the coordinator of Southern Illinois Case Coordination Services, which provides services for the developmentally disabled, said Illinois comes in 51st in the nation when it comes to funding community services.

Angie Hampton of the Egyptian Health Department, said when it comes to mental health and substance abuse programs, the proposed cuts would affect more than 175,000 people state-wide.

“And, 65,000 people could lose substance abuse treatment they desperately need,” Hampton told Jones and Cavaletto. “Worse than that, this doesn’t just affect that person. Loss of the treatment impacts their family, their children and it’s going to impact our community, our jails, hospitals and schools. Those systems are already taxed. ... I hear politicians say they can’t look a person in the eye and say they voted for a tax

increase. ... Well, if this happens, can you look people in the eye and say you bankrupted the systems that are affecting and saving their lives?"

Betty Barker of Addus Healthcare, which provides in-home services to seniors and the disabled, said the proposed cuts would be "stripping choice, independence and dignity from our elderly."

"I never thought I'd stand up in front of a crowd and ask for a tax increase," Barker said. "But I am. I'm asking so we can continue to take care of these people."

Cavaletto said the state has "taken and taken and taken and have not given back" to human services.

"I get frustrated," the first term representative said. "There's too much talking and not enough action."

Cavaletto said he took a no tax pledge in 2002 when he first ran for state representative.

"I don't trust a vote for an income tax," Cavaletto said. "Even if it were voted in, you still can't guarantee that you'll get paid."

Cavaletto and Jones urged those present to contact leaders in Springfield, making phone calls and writing letters about their concerns.

"In Springfield, people who shout the loudest get the most," Cavaletto said.

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Health program cuts in state budget

Source: Mt. Vernon Register-News | June 11, 2009

Tesa Culli

Jun. 11, 2009 (McClatchy-Tribune Regional News delivered by Newstex) -- MT. VERNON -- More than 100 health care, education and social service providers met with state legislators on Wednesday to emphasize the devastating affects a proposed 50 percent cut in the state budget to human service programs would have on the region.

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