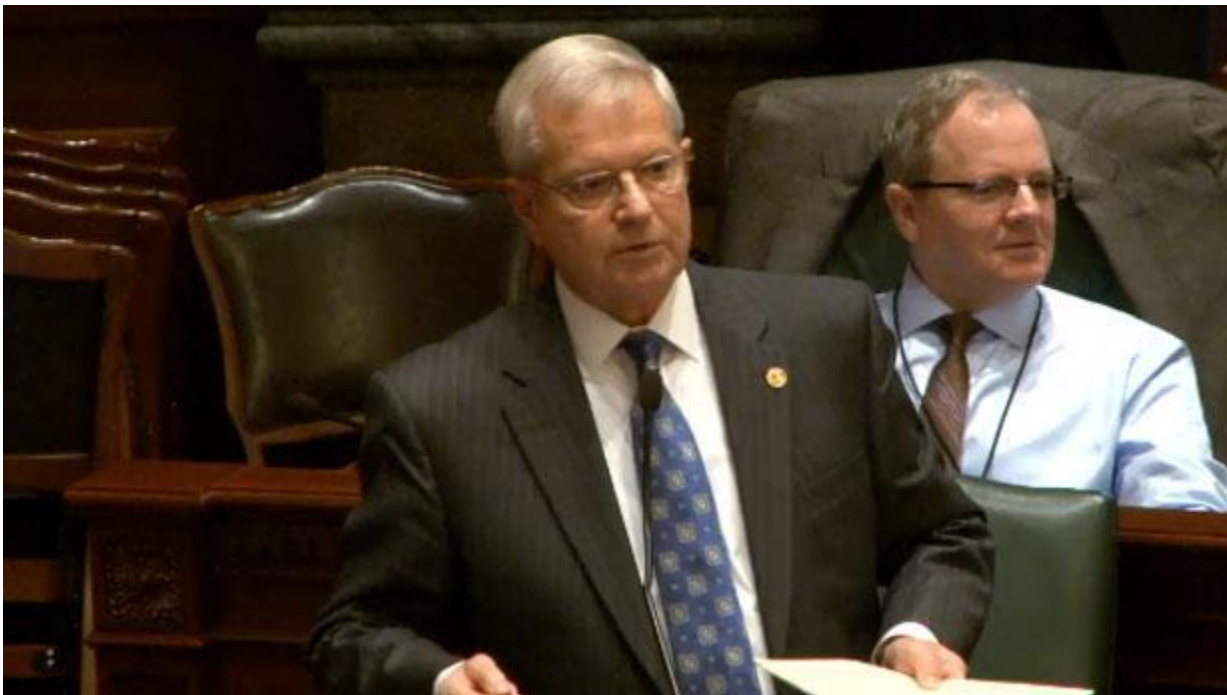


LETTER TO THE EDITOR: We need a balanced budget now

by Illinois State Representative Dwight Kay
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Letter to the Editor

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In a truly remarkable feat Illinois has now gone almost 12 months without a budget. You read that right, 12 months. The budget impasse continues to drag on and House Democrat Leadership is sending signals they are not interested in real solutions

as we near adjournment on May 31st. On Friday, the House adjourned to take Saturday off despite the willingness of my colleagues and I to stay and work on a budget compromise.

Instead of working in a bipartisan manner towards a balanced budget, Chicago Democrats are instead playing games. On May 25th House Democrats rammed Senate Bill 2048 through the House, a \$40 billion dollar out of balance budget that would spend \$7 billion more than we take in. This is a fantasy budget, it's not real and we can't afford it. This proposed budget is irresponsible and would only serve to plunge Illinois even further into the red. Your household has to live within its means, but Illinois continues to fail to do so. The simple truth is we cannot continue to spend money we just don't have.

The lack of a budget is endangering our most vulnerable citizens with funding for programs such as autism, epilepsy, domestic violence and senior services jeopardized by the budget impasse. Many of our human services groups have been brought to the brink due to delays in payments that many are struggling to endure. We simply cannot allow our human service infrastructure to crumble due to the whims of the one party controlling the legislature.

It is important to note that there have been glimmers of hope in the budget making process. In April the legislature worked in a bipartisan manner to appropriate \$600 million to fund higher education and MAP grants. This helped to avert significant university cutbacks and ensured that students would not lose their grant money, and on May 12th the legislature approved \$700 million in stopgap funding to keep vital human services operating in the State of Illinois on a short-term basis until a complete budget is enacted.

The action on these two bipartisan bills are proof that the General Assembly can come together in a bipartisan manner to get work done and I hope that this bodes well for future budget negotiations.

However, time is short. If we reach June 30th without a balanced budget we will compound our problems by not having a budget for two consecutive fiscal years. Our state cannot continue in this manner.

Twelve months is far too long to wait, we need a balanced budget now.

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