

IMPACT CIL, Contarino hope for best with state funds, but says they are needed immediately

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Times have not been easy for **Cathy Contarino** and staff at IMPACT CIL in Alton because of a lack of funds being distributed by the state of Illinois.

IMPACT, located at 2735 Broadway, was budgeted for certain state funds, yet a good portion have not been received because the lack of a state budget. Last week, Contarino attended an appearance by Gov. Bruce Rauner at the Alton Mental Health Center.

She commented on the bill Gov. Rauner has proposed by saying, “The bill did provide some potential funding for a stop-gap measure for education and mental health systems,

but I didn't see anything for independent living. The bill was 100 pages and fairly large. I feel in the short-term solutions, we need to look at the bigger issue of sustaining entities rather than putting a temporary fix."

Contarino also wishes the name-calling and constant back and forth bickering of the two parties in Illinois would stop.

"Everybody is pointing fingers at everybody else," she said. "The politicians need to stop pointing fingers and have a budget that is good for the people. Right now, we have not received payments of an independent living grant and are owed about \$321,000. We have provided a year's worth of service and are not getting paid."

The lack of state funds have led to major layoffs at IMPACT and reduced hours, forcing some to give up their health insurance.

Contarino said she is upset about having to do the layoffs.

She said three staff members have been laid off and hours of four others have been cut.

"We have services we can't cover now," she said. "We also have furloughed everyone who works here on Fridays. So we aren't open on Fridays and can't provide services that day."

Contarino has a long history with IMPACT and she said she never remembers a time like today.

"I am going on 30 years and we have had some cuts and threats, but never anything like this," she said. "How do you keep morale of the staff up in a situation like this one?"

It is Contarino's hope that somehow the politicians will put politics aside and settle the budget crisis and make it fair for all throughout the state.

"This shouldn't be about politics; it should be about people and people's lives," she said.