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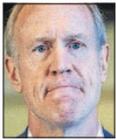
OUR VIEW | THE STATE OF THE STATE

Enough.

Illinois' budget standoff must be resolved, and must be resolved now.

Contact your elected officials

Gov. Bruce Rauner
217-782-0244



Senate President John Cullerton
217-782-2728



Speaker Michael Madigan
217-782-5350



Local legislators:

All can be reached via the switchboard at 217-782-2000

Senate:

District 44, Sen. Bill Brady

District 48, Sen. Andy Manar

District 50, Sen. Sam McCann

House:

District 87, Rep. Tim Butler

District 95, Rep. Avery Bourne

District 96, Rep. Sue Scherer

District 99, Rep. Sara Wojcicki Jimenez

District 100, Rep. C.D. Davidsmeyer

Whether or not our leaders manage to pass a stopgap funding measure this week, Illinois still needs the stability of a full budget to restore the health of our state and its economy.

For a year, our state's elected leaders have engaged in what can only be called political malpractice.

Illinois is the only state in the country that doesn't have a budget. Because of that failure, it has stiffed small businesses, social service agencies and its higher education system, leaving them trying to operate without money they're owed. Some operations have been cobbled together through a patchwork of court orders, and the state gets deeper in debt by the minute.

Gov. Bruce Rauner said on Monday the state was on the verge of crisis, and it would be an "outrageous, tragic failure" if schools don't open on time.

With all due respect, Governor, the state is already in crisis and the budget standoff has already been an "outrageous, tragic failure." A stopgap may delay imminent emergency and we desperately need that. But it's still not enough.

As legislators return to Springfield, for the first time this month, Illinois' historic, serious problems have been made even worse by the failure to compromise on a balanced, long-term spending plan.

The political war between Rauner and House Speaker Michael Madigan has been confounding and unconscionable. Rauner has insisted on passage of the so-called Turnaround Agenda, a series of pro-business measures, as a condition of the budget. Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton have seemed focused primarily on thwarting the governor.

Neither the governor nor the Legislature has put forth a balanced budget. Decades of delaying action and willfully ignoring issues like the state's epically ballooning pension obligations have devastated its financial stability. The state must make cuts, and yes, more revenue will be needed to stanch the economic bleeding.

The consequences of having no budget have been harsh and far-reaching.

The state's colleges and universities, which ought to be linchpins for growth and economic development, instead have been starved. Hundreds have been laid off, programs have been shuttered. High school graduates look at this mess, fear for their future and enroll in out-of-state colleges. Our best and brightest may not come back after they complete their education elsewhere. Mean-

while, more than 130,000 low-income students have had financial aid snatched away. Do these students who wish to better themselves and their future job prospects through education have other resources to continue? In most cases, no.

One million of Illinois' most vulnerable people — the poor, the at-risk kids, the elderly, the mentally ill, the homeless, the victims of domestic abuse or sexual assault — have been directly harmed by the state's dereliction of duty, as social service agencies cut services.

Hospitals and medical providers are owed hundreds of millions in unpaid state employee medical bills and delayed Medicaid payments.

Countless business owners, large and small, have struggled to survive because they haven't been paid. Cities and small towns have been left holding the bag for unpaid state bills.

And yet, it could get even worse.

More than \$2 billion in active road construction projects might be shut down, leading to as many as 25,000 workers losing their jobs.

The state's corrections system says it's on the verge of not being able to operate prisons.

Social services agencies will continue to turn away the ill, the homeless, the elderly.

The state's schools were spared last year by a separate appropriation. But this year, many districts face the possibility of not opening or not being able to stay open.

But what have citizens seen from the Capitol? We have seen political posturing. We have seen a governor who campaigned as a practical business leader dedicated to finding fixes instead act as an ideological purist. We have seen our elected representatives apparently unable to stand up to Madigan, Cullerton and Rauner to demand a resolution to the crisis. We have not seen compromise.

Perhaps the most damaging long-term effect is the toxic cynicism and frustration this crisis has created among residents, who have to wonder at this point if Rauner, Madigan and Cullerton simply view the toll on Illinois' people as mere collateral damage. At a recent Better Government Association panel on the impasse's impact, multiple social service providers said flatly they don't believe leaders are listening to their plight.

Many long-term changes are needed to restore Illinois to solid ground. Redistricting reform is a critical piece of restoring true political competitiveness that will lead to legislators facing more accountability to the voters.

But the day has come. Illinois' people cannot be held hostage for a second year without a budget.

Voters must revolt and demand better. Enough.

363

Days, as of today, that the state has operated without a budget

1M

Estimated number of people affected by cutbacks in social service agencies that haven't gotten funding

\$8B

Illinois' backlog of unpaid bills — a figure expected to keep rising as long as the state has no budget

Inside

About today's editorial: A column from interim publisher Rosanne Cheeseman and editor Angie Muhs about the decision process behind today's front-page editorial. **Page 8**



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TODAY THU FRI
80°/59° 84°/64° 83°/59°

Complete forecast, P36

NATION/WORLD

Benghazi report: No 'smoking gun'

WASHINGTON — House Republicans on Tuesday concluded their \$7 million, two-year investigation into the deadly attacks in Benghazi, Libya, but no "smoking gun" pointing to wrongdoing by Hillary Clinton. **P3**

SPORTS

Coaching greats Summitt, Ryan die

Pat Summitt, who carried women's college basketball to national prominence, died Tuesday at 64. Buddy Ryan, the pugnacious NFL coach and defensive mastermind, died Tuesday at 85. **P31**

