

With a little under a month before the May 31<sup>st</sup> budget deadline, the House members currently sit in the dark on the details of the budget Governor Quinn will deliver to the legislature. There has yet to be a hearing in the House regarding the budget, whether cuts in spending or increasing taxes. The only information we have received is what the Democrat leaders have fed to the media. From what we know so far, Governor Quinn, House Speaker Madigan and Senate President Cullerton have proposed increasing the income tax by 50%, increasing the sales tax on gasoline, increasing the renewal fee on driver's license, and increasing how much teachers will contribute to their retirement. I wish I could point out the areas where they plan on cutting state spending but those details (even if they do exist) are not accessible.

After six years of Governor Blagojevich's corrupt and closed door tactics, I thought that we would begin to operate in a more inclusive and transparent manner. Instead, we have Democrat leaders (with former Governor Blagojevich's budget director still at the helm) forming a billion dollar plus budget in the back rooms of the capital and a Speaker who is essentially stopping legislation which would reform state government. With our current economic climate and the state facing a record deficit, we need accountability by having budget negotiations conducted by public hearings.

Instead of just talking about reform, I along with my House Republican colleagues have put together a package of legislation which will be crucial in ensuring the transparency and accountability of government while simultaneously eliminating its waste, fraud and abuse. The four pieces of legislation which were proposed include:

To identify and eliminate wasteful spending, House Bill 4134 would establish an Illinois Sunshine Commission of business leaders that would make specific recommendations to consolidate or eliminate duplicative or ineffective programs.

Governor Blagojevich was well known for promising the world to every organization, lobbyist and special interest group out there. All of those promises come at a high cost to the tax payer. Just like every resident who lives on a budget and has to prioritize their spending, House Bill 3189 would require that any new state spending would have to be offset with the elimination of an existing program.

To ensure that any tax or fee increase has fair representation, HJRCA 28 would require a supermajority (3/5) vote on any legislation that would raise taxes or fees on Illinois families or businesses.

The last piece of legislation would create the Stimulus Watch Act. Unless a program is created and appropriated by the General Assembly, this act would restrict the Governor from using any funds from the federal stimulus package to pay for it. This proposal was suggested after Governor Blagojevich's reckless and irresponsible behavior with appropriating state dollars for a church that was burnt and other activities.

This package of bills is only a brief overview of legislation that I along with my House Republican colleagues have introduced to make government accountable and more open and transparent to the people. The problem is that these good government pieces of legislation will never see the light of day because Speaker Madigan refuses to schedule a vote on this legislation.

To get the state out of its fiscal mess, the leaders need to put politics aside. I am calling on the leaders to negotiate the budget in public and to allow for good government legislation to receive a full debate and vote on its merits.