

## A Call for Responsible Leadership

When the Illinois General Assembly left Springfield on June 1, they departed the Capitol with their job undone and their obligations unmet. Members of both parties have a shared responsibility to enact a budget that meets the state's moral and legal obligation to protect public safety, safeguard public health, strengthen our economy, and ensure every child has the educational opportunity they deserve. Yet members of both parties failed to enact a budget that supports the responsible management and delivery of vital services both within state government and through our community-based program partners in every corner of the state.

Privately, lawmakers from both parties recognize the need to raise additional revenue due to both the downturn in state revenues caused by the current economic crisis and a state structural budget deficit that dates back over several administrations. But publicly, both parties have failed to step up to the plate and do what is necessary, instead leaving a massive budget hole and resorting to political finger-pointing about who is to blame.

Now, as we approach the new fiscal year, we call on legislative leaders from both parties to set aside partisan politics and work together to craft a responsible budget, recognizing that:

- **It is morally irresponsible to hold Illinois families hostage to political games:** The appropriation bills approved by the legislature arbitrarily cuts both grant and operational funding for many public services by fifty percent or more. As a consequence, Illinois families who depend on those services and the communities they live in throughout the state are being held hostage to politics. Seniors needing pharmaceutical assistance and home care, women and children who have been victims of sexual assault, those with developmental disabilities and mental illness, working families needing health coverage and child care, college students, working parents in need of affordable child care, foster children and their families and many, many others are being told state government no longer works for them. *It is morally unacceptable to use such trauma and potential havoc to advance individual political agendas.*
- **Cutting the budget for needed public services is irresponsible in the current circumstances:** The worst economic downturn in memory and the highest unemployment rate in decades mean that the need for state supported services is greater than ever. To substantially reduce funding for those services, even given the state's strained finances, is to default on the state's constitutional obligations to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the people. The need for health care, education, income assistance and family services, among others, is increasing and state support for them should as well. Further, study-after-study shows that every dollar invested in the state's prevention programs saves taxpayers an average of \$6 to \$8 down the road. *Cutting vital preventative services will cost taxpayers more in the long run.*
- **There is a responsible solution:** Many lawmakers have recognized these imperatives and have shouldered their responsibilities. The Illinois State Senate approved a revenue plan that would have funded the state's critical human needs, address its long-term structural deficit, and provided relief from regressive taxation. That plan was endorsed by the Governor and approved by a committee of the Illinois House, yet it was never called for a vote before that chamber adjourned. Illinois legislators need to return to Springfield and enact an adequate revenue plan to fully fund need state services and operations along these lines before the new fiscal years starts on July 1.