



December 7, 2015

State Budget Process

The state of Illinois continues to struggle to find common ground to enact a state budget, and we are now going on 6 months without a fully funded state budget. In a compromise with Governor Rauner, I am a chief co-sponsor of Amendment #4 to Senate Bill 2039 to fund some portions of the state's budget obligations. The bill, which was passed by the House on December 2, 2015, could pass the Senate as early as December 13, 2015 and then would be sent on to the Governor. This bill appropriates \$3,116,802,915 of what are called Other State Funds, a small amount of General Revenue Funds, and Federal funds for many items.

I would like to share some of the highlights of the appropriations which were authorized by the House of Representatives on December 2, 2015:

- Distribution of Motor Fuel Tax funds to local governments
- Distribution of Riverboat tax funds to local governments
- Lottery Prizes
- Proceeds of communication taxes to various 9-1-1 emergency operations centers
- Proceeds of specialty lottery tickets to MS, HIV/AIDS, Breast Cancer, Veterans and Special Olympics funds
- Operations of the Illinois Math and Science Academy
- Firefighter and Police training funds for ILEAS and MABAS
- Road salt and solvents, fuel and vehicle maintenance for the IDOT winter snow fleet
- IDOC and civic center debt service obligations
- Federal Adult Education funds
- LIHEAP state portion
- Funding for Choose Chicago and downstate convention and tourism bureaus
- Domestic Violence Shelters and Programs
- Tobacco Quitline

With the cold weather months upon us, it is even more important that the state do the right thing and help struggling families keep their homes warm. I've voted a number of times over the last several months to fund the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the important home heating program which assists low-income households with

utility bill assistance, but partisan politics and reckless ideas have prevented the funding from getting to the families that need it. Amid strenuous state budget debates, funding for many state assistance programs, such as LIHEAP, halted. Senate Bill 2039 would allocate \$165 million, a full year of appropriations, to the LIHEAP program to help elderly residents and struggling families to heat their homes. I hope that now, with Republican legislators finally joining us in support of this bill, that the politics have ended and that the governor will approve this needed funding.

The bill also funds the Illinois State Lottery with \$1 billion for payouts on all lottery games, including \$2 million for the Red Ribbon Game scratch-off game. Spearheaded by Ben Montgomery, a resident of Chicago's West Side, the net proceeds from the Red Ribbon game provide funding for HIV and AIDS prevention services throughout the state. It is very important that people who spend their resources on a state-run game receive their prize in full when they win - after all, it's the right thing for Illinois to do.

We are still far away from a fully-funded state budget in Illinois - more work must be done to implement a budget that avoids disastrous cuts that affect middle-class and struggling families - but with Senate Bill 2039, we took an important step forward to make sure that state resources are used to benefit our communities. I will continue to work with all of my colleagues and the governor to fully fund a state budget.

The House of Representatives is not scheduled to reconvene until January 13, 2016, but we will continue to work to craft a state budget with the hopes of voting on a fully-funded budget in January of 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District