



July 5, 2017

We Finally Have a State Budget

Over the last weeks and months, the House has worked hard to come up with an actual budget and a set of bills involving revenue, appropriations and implementation that were passed with both Democrat and Republican votes and were then sent to the Senate. With the Senate passing this set of bills and with a bipartisan Senate override of the governor's veto of the budget on the 4th of July, and the upcoming bipartisan House override of his veto, which I anticipate at the time of this writing, we finally have a budget for our state after almost three years without one. But, as I said on the floor of the House, this budget plan is not a compassionate budget, and is instead a compromise that is brought on by the threat of a junk bond rating, not by the pain of the people.

This budget is certainly a compromise. This is not a budget that I would prefer, as it does not fully fund those supports that are needed by those most in need. This budget calls for a 5% across the board cut for state agencies. But we have actually cut much more than 5% over the last three years, as the budgets for our agencies have already taken large hits since Governor Rauner has been governor. Higher education, especially our state universities, and social services have been greatly impacted, and some services have been totally eliminated. Just as an example, at a time when Illinois has the nation's highest unemployment rate among African Americans, and unemployment among African American youths is even higher, state-funded youth employment programs have not been funded during this time when we haven't had a budget. By not having a budget, we already cut needed programs by default. This budget is actually \$1.2 billion less than the budget that the governor proposed in February, with lower taxes and less spending, but he still vetoed it. The governor proposed a massively out of balance "budget" in February without an answer for where the money would come from for his own budget. We had to raise the taxes to even get back to some basic services that are now much less than we had before.

With the lack of a budget, our state has had to pay more to borrow money as our credit rating decreased. This money paid for interest could have been used for programs that our communities so clearly need. And all of this could have been avoided, but the governor chose not to work well with the General Assembly.

Furthermore, this set of bills involving revenue, appropriations and implementation does address some of the ideas and issues brought forth by the governor, including pension reform that will help to lower the state's pension costs, but the governor still vetoed it.

This is a budget compromise bill that will not fully protect senior citizens in Illinois. It is a compromise bill that will not reduce the youth and black unemployment rate in Illinois. It is a compromise bill that will not fully protect people fighting addictions across Illinois. It is a compromise that will not fully protect and Illinois' most valuable people. It is a compromise that gives us more time to work on a compassionate budget. I know some members of the House may have voted their district and voted against this bill, because they feel that this bill still doesn't cut social service programs deep enough. But, I was willing to compromise and vote yes for a bill that is not perfect for the state or my district. I was willing to vote yes to end this long budget impasse and end the years of mismanagement.

I received many phone calls and emails from constituents asking for a tax increase to fully fund a real budget, and also many calls to override the governor's veto. We must have a fairer Illinois, with the wealthy contributing their fair share and a state that moves people to a better situation so that government works better for all of us.

Having a budget, a basic job of government, will do more to stabilize our businesses and institutions than any of the policy changes that the governor has been proposing. And we have to remember that passing this legislation does not mean that we cannot work on and achieve compromise on policy issues such as property tax relief, workers compensation, and term limits for the benefit of everyone in Illinois.

Sincerely,

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

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District