

June 16, 2017

The Honorable Bruce Rauner
207 State Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62705

The Honorable John Cullerton
327 State Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

The Honorable Michael Madigan
300 State Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62606

The Honorable Christine Radogno
309G State Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

The Honorable James B Durkin
316 State Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

The Honorable Bruce Rauner
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street, 16-100
Chicago, Illinois 60601

The Honorable John Cullerton
1726 West Belmont Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60657

The Honorable Michael J Madigan
6500 South Pulaski Road
Chicago, Illinois 60629

The Honorable Christine Radogno
1011 State Street, Suite 210
Lemont, Illinois 6049

The Honorable James B Durkin
16W281 83rd Street, Suite C
Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527

Dear Governor Rauner, Speaker Madigan, President Cullerton, Leader Radogno and Leader Durkin:

The League of Women Voters of Illinois is a nonpartisan political organization of over 3,000 women and men from across the state. We study and advocate for positions that place public interest over partisan politics. At our state convention on June 10th and 11th, our membership urged our newly elected board to direct you, our governor and leaders in the General Assembly, to show political courage and meet your State Constitutional obligation to pass a full budget for Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018.

The damage being done to our state by partial stopgap budgets and three years of uncertainty has reached crisis proportions: falling credit ratings, crushing debt service, the undermining of our great colleges and universities, the loss of vital services to the most vulnerable among us, and the huge backlog of unpaid bills negatively impacting our local economies.

The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes that taxes should be fair and flexible. Our current tax system is regressive; we favor amending the constitution to allow for a graduated-rate income tax.

However, these steps need to be taken immediately to balance the budget without depriving citizens of vital services:

- Reinstate the temporary income tax rate increase that expired in January 2015.
- Broaden the sales tax to include an array of services, such as those of our bordering states of Iowa and Wisconsin.
- Tax retirement income, while exempting a reasonable and fair amount of that income to make such tax less regressive.
- Refinance the state's debt and pension obligations.
- Pass a financial transactions tax in recognition of that growing sector of our economy.
- Do not freeze property taxes, which support schools and local governments.

We know how challenging it might be to sell these kinds of revenue increases to voters. That is why your leadership, courage, and bipartisan cooperation are imperative. Illinois's problems are incredibly tough, so our lawmakers need to rise to the occasion. Remove partisanship, ideology, and personalities from the budget discussions and stop the destruction of the social fabric of our state.

Citizens appreciate and value political courage. Do what's right for Illinois and pass a budget.

Sincerely,

Bonnie K. Cox
President
League of Women Voters of Illinois