



League of Women Voters of Illinois
332 South Michigan Avenue
Suite 1150
Chicago, IL 60604

To: All Local League Presidents

Re: The IL Fiscal Crisis and the Responsible Budget Coalition—Survey Project:

How does the IL fiscal crisis affect you and your neighbor?

Date: September 23, 2010

To support the work of the Responsible Budget Coalition and to help improve public awareness of the effects of the state fiscal crisis on all aspects of life in Illinois, we are inviting all Leagues to participate in a survey project. This is an optional project but it would be helpful if as many Leagues as possible took part, either in concert with your local Responsible Budget Coalition Coordinator or independently.

When are we asking for this to be completed?

With the upcoming elections and candidate forums, we are aware that Leagues are looking at a busy fall. We hope to have the surveys completed by November (the surveys are brief) and publicize the information in November after the elections through the month of January before the Legislature returns to session in February.

Why are we doing this?

The broad picture of how the state's economy is affecting Illinois citizens is daunting at best to understand. Most people have neither the time nor the interest to follow more than the broadest of brush strokes painted by the media. However, when faced with what is going on in their own community, it tends to hit home.

What are we asking your League to do?

With this in mind, we are asking you to contact some of the important community services that would provide good insight as to the effects of the fiscal crisis on your community. We have shared this strategy with the Responsible Budget Coalition and you may find it easier to facilitate it by working with those already identified as members of the RBC in your area.



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How will this be accomplished?

The plan is to use identified members of the RBC or other agencies of your choosing to do a short survey. It can be done in person, over the phone, or by email. We will help you with all aspects of the survey, the compilation and publishing of information, media contacts, etc. This need not be time consuming as there are several options you can utilize to publicize the material **dependent upon your**

League's time commitment: a public forum, electronic media, public access TV, interviews on local radio shows, a press conference, or editorial board meeting with your local paper as part of our campaign to get this important information out to the general public.

Title: How does the IL fiscal crisis affect you and your neighbor?

We have developed 6 questions many of the sectors who are affected by the state budget should be able to answer. We ask that you pick representatives from 4 or 5 at most. It would be helpful if one of the organizations chosen could be your municipality as the concerns they're facing due to the fiscal crisis will touch everyone in the community:

We have divided the agencies into government and private sectors and ask that you try to include both categories.

Government

- County probation department
- School districts
- Municipality
- Township (some provide health, mental health, services to youth and the aged. Ask which they provide.)
- Some areas may have publicly funded mental health authorities
- Public libraries



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Private Sector

- Private Health/mental health providers
- Housing
- Social services
- Violence prevention organizations (both youth and women)
- Youth services, including delinquency prevention
- Services serving the elderly
- Early childhood services

The survey questions are identified below: (Please note--The questions listed are not set in stone. They can be tweaked to better represent the agency you're interviewing. The intent is to remind the public that inadequate funding is like a stone dropped in still waters; the impact may be greatest at the center but is ever widening. For example, fewer mental health beds available will have an impact on police, hospitals, and potentially more tax dollars spent on incarceration, in addition to lost wages no longer spent in the community when workers are laid off. Please encourage respondents to expand on the questions if it better explains their position.)

1. How have the recession and cuts in the IL budget affected how you serve your clientele? What specific actions have you taken to keep your doors open to continue to serve your clients?
2. The recession has hit all areas of public service from education and social services to municipalities. How have the state budget cuts to other services affected your organization? For example, if you are a social service agency providing employment training have cuts to child care affected your clients' ability to remain with your program?
3. Identifying the major services you provide, if some of your budget was restored, where would your priorities lie for where that money goes? Are there economies that you have made that you can continue to live with given the current recession?
4. Personal stories can have a big impact on the listener. Can you give a story of a client that has been impacted by the budget cuts?



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5. How would you like to see the state address this budget crisis?
6. Can you address how fewer state dollars will affect local property taxes? (This will be especially pertinent for municipalities who are trying to attract businesses as well as provide services and those entities, such as public schools, which depend on property taxes for the majority of their funding.)
7. In addition to impact on direct services, how has it impacted your ability to meet regulatory mandates? (this extra question might be especially useful for public school districts).

We appreciate your League's willingness to participate in this survey and its follow up. Please keep us apprised of your progress as well as any help we can provide. You can contact us at issues@lwvil.org . If there is a particular person you wish to contact, put their name in the subject line. We can also provide the name and contact info for your area's RBC coordinator.

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