



# Jil's Statehouse Report

News from Springfield from State Rep. Jil Tracy  
[jiltracy@jiltracy.com](mailto:jiltracy@jiltracy.com)  
November 26, 2008



## *Fall Veto Session Wraps Up*

After the November election it is common practice for members of the General Assembly to return to Springfield and take care of unfinished business. This normally consists of either accepting or overturning the Governor's vetoes. However, nothing in the Illinois General Assembly is normal these days. So, while there was action taken on some of the Governor's veto motions, there was quite a bit of other business left to be resolved.

One piece of legislation, which has been caught in the middle of the political stalemate at the Capitol, finally found its way to the Governor's desk. Senate Bill 934 will require insurance companies to cover diagnosis, treatment and therapy for children suffering from autism. This bill has been passed by both the House and Senate a couple of times in the past year, ultimately failing to get the Governor's final signature because the Senate President and House Speaker could not compromise on how the program would be implemented. The election of a new Senate President seemed to temporarily break the logjam, and this was one of the first signs of actual progress on such an important issue in months.

But with every step forward at the statehouse, there are usually a few steps backwards and the Governor took it upon himself to stop that forward progress. Just as legislators were pulling out of Springfield and not set to return until after the New Year, the Governor announced his most recent amendatory veto. Word spread quickly of the Governor's choice to cut \$55 million out of a supplemental appropriation bill that was passed back in September. If you remember a few months ago the General Assembly returned for a brief session to approve legislation that would allow the Governor to use money from specially dedicated state funds in order to keep state parks, historic sites and other programs that target substance abuse and child welfare running. Governor Blagojevich signed the legislation authorizing the fund sweeps, but chose to alter the spending portion by using his amendatory veto. When all was said and done the Governor eliminated funds destined for seven state parks, 13 historic sites and slashed the budgets of Illinois Constitutional Officers, such as the Attorney General.

What needs to be questioned is the Governor's timing of his amendatory veto announcement. This legislation had been sitting on his desk for two months, and he waited until he was sure lawmakers had left Springfield before making the news public. Either he was just too busy in those two months to read over a vital piece of legislation, or he wanted to once again inflict political retribution against his rivals. I find it hard to believe he was "too busy." This divisive nature which Blagojevich chooses to run state government has gotten us nowhere. Real people are losing their jobs, historic sites that pay homage to one of our greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln, are in jeopardy and the Governor still can't take the time to sit down and discuss a compromise with legislators. Without some type of cooperation from the state's top official these situations and others are clearly not going to fix themselves.

## ***The Budget Mess***

For the past year we have heard about a national economic downturn and the state's grossly unbalanced budget. Recently, Comptroller Dan Hynes announced that the revenue situation may be worse than originally anticipated. Hynes was referring to the over \$4 billion in current unpaid bills, with the total possibly eclipsing \$5 billion by the end of the fiscal year. This means vendors who have contracts with the state could be waiting up to twenty weeks for payments on services they have already preformed. We are teetering on a very dangerous situation. Medicaid patients could be denied treatment, pharmacies whose customers rely on state payments may not be able to distribute medication and state police may not be able to fill up their gas tanks.

All of these problems will also be compounded by the fact that we are projected to take in about \$2 billion less in state revenue due to the slumping economy. Illinois can not continue on this out of control financial rollercoaster. Eventually the train is going to come crashing off the tracks and it is going to be the residents of this state that pay for the cleanup. Sadly, the state government, led by the Democrats in control continue to spend money they know we do not have. It is time to do some serious belt-tightening and buckle down our financial constraints. We must learn to live within our means, and if that means we need to stop creating new programs and stop huge expansions of current ones, then we must do it. There is room to reign in spending without jeopardizing vital programs. During tough economic times families are often forced to make difficult decisions. State government needs to harshly re-evaluate its programs.

What is certain is that we have a serious problem on our hands. This problem is not going to get any better by ignoring it, and the longer we wait the bigger financial hole we will find ourselves in. The budget needs to be thoroughly scanned, and we are going to have to find ways to save money. However, this must be done in a cooperative manner, with everyone involved.