



May 28, 2010

Over twenty years, a generation or more, of following the path of least resistance, deferring the pain of necessary cuts and tax increases in favor of continuous borrowing has led us to the abyss of fiscal collapse and constitutional crisis. The budget this year comes to us as some sort of elaborate contraption, the framework of which is nothing but more borrowing. Any one of its many levers not being passed by the General Assembly causes the whole machine to collapse, and as well it should. More borrowing, cuts alone, or even simply increasing the income tax is not the answer. It will take a combination of all three accompanied by job growth and property tax relief.

By the end of FY 2010, a month from now, we will be close to \$15 billion in arrears. However, the fact remains that only four states spend less per resident than Illinois. In fact, after adjusting for inflation and population growth, we spend as much today in 2010 in real dollars per resident as we did in 1974.

Nonetheless, last year I voted to cut over \$2B from the budget - That was HB 174.

HB 174 would also have raised \$5B in new revenue and provide much needed property tax relief for both the people and businesses of Illinois. Unfortunately, the bill is now stalled in the House. As a result, last year, rather than doing the right thing and passing a balanced budget, we ended up borrowing over \$3B to make our pension payment and are now paying \$800 million in interest. The interest we pay for our debt is eating up all of our discretionary revenue. This has to stop. And so, in the absence of a strong show of support for a balanced budget, I cannot in good conscience support further borrowing.

No one wants state services to come to a halt, but quite honestly, in many instances they already have. Just ask the school districts who are owed tens of millions of dollars. Just ask our human service providers who are not getting paid and are closing their doors. Ask those laboring in overcrowded emergency rooms, our courts, those languishing unattended in nursing homes and the mentally ill awaiting treatment. Just ask victims of domestic violence being turned away from our crisis centers or the parents of the developmentally disabled who have to wait years if not decades for placement in a group home. For them, the state *has* shut down.

History will not be kind to those who place their own personal ambition or even that of their party above the best interest of the people we serve. Nor will it be kind to the timid or indifferent who see this great wrong and do nothing. How we, as citizens *together* in Illinois attend to the just demands of a civil society rests the great moral question of our time. As senator from Illinois' 22nd District, I have no choice but to vote no on a budget that does nothing to lift our people from the depths of our abyss. However, I remain open to any meaningful compromise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Noland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Senator Michael Noland
Illinois' 22nd Legislative District