



Paul Simon Public Policy Institute

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**POLL SHOWS ILLINOISANS FAVOR BUDGET CUTS OVER TAX INCREASES
BUT OPPOSE SPENDING REDUCTIONS IN MAJOR STATE PROGRAMS**

SPRINGFIELD, ILL. – Overwhelming majorities of registered voters in Illinois believe the governor and the General Assembly could solve the state's budget problems by cutting spending, but they oppose reductions in areas that comprise more than 90 percent of General Revenue Fund Appropriations, a poll conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute shows.

Moreover, the preferred option for raising additional revenue is a graduated income tax, which likely would require a constitutional amendment that could not be implemented in the near future.

"The results underscore that the media and our political leaders need to do a better job of informing citizens about our disastrous budget situation if Illinois is to regain solid fiscal footing and meet the serious challenges in education and other vital areas that will allow our state to grow economically and preserve our quality of life," Mike Lawrence, director of the Simon institute, said Thursday.

"The comptroller stressed a few weeks ago that the state has a backlog of bills topping \$1.8 billion, and the downturn in the economy threatens to significantly enlarge the problem. It has never been more important for Illinoisans to understand what is going on in Springfield. They need to be better informed about the options. They need to be told the truth by the people seeking office and by elected officials."

Two out of three respondents to the statewide poll, which was conducted from September 23 through October 17, said state leaders were not doing a good job of putting together a budget.

Four out of five viewed the problem as overspending rather than inadequate revenues.

However, 85.6 percent oppose cuts in funding for kindergarten through high school, 72 percent reject university reductions, 77.3 percent shun cuts in police and prisons, 73.3 percent oppose cuts in natural resources, state parks and the environment, 73 percent reject cuts in services for the needy and 65.7 percent reject cuts in funding for state workers' pensions.

"Realistically, there is not enough spending in other areas to close the budget deficit, which likely will grow without dramatic action," Lawrence said.

Offered the opportunity to suggest areas for reduction, there was no consensus. The most prevalent proposals were to cut the salaries of elected officials and the most highly paid state employees.

"Few people would argue that we should not eliminate waste or retool programs that don't work. But the kind of perspective we need is this: You could reduce spending on the legislature to nothing – chop away \$50 million -- and still not come anywhere near solving our budget problem," Lawrence said.

Charlie Leonard, a visiting professor at the institute and the poll supervisor, said, "These results show that – even while focusing on their jobs, their families, a struggling economy and a presidential campaign – news of the budget problems in Springfield has filtered down to most voters. Illinoisans are happy with the services they receive in individual areas but feel they don't get a good value for their tax dollar. A state government that appeared to work together better might ease taxpayers' concerns to some extent."

Among those who had opinions on how state government was handling the budget, neither Governor Blagojevich nor the legislative leaders received high marks. Less than 10 percent rated the governor's performance on the budget as excellent or good. The legislature had a comparable rating of 14.9 percent. The Senate President Emil Jones (D-Chicago) scored 11.4 percent, and the House Speaker Michael J. Madigan (D-Chicago) won approval from 26.9 percent.

Other poll results showed:

- *Nearly two-thirds of Illinoisans favor amending the state constitution to allow for recall of state elected officials.

- *Citizens are virtually evenly divided on the Nov. 4 ballot question of whether to convene a state constitutional convention to consider such changes as recall and a

graduated income tax – although 69.3 percent said they have received insufficient information on the issue.

*Nearly 70 percent favor the current system of electing judges rather than having them appointed.

*Three out of four people interviewed said there should be limits on the amount individuals and groups can contribute to judicial candidates.

*A slight plurality of Illinoisans favors partial public funding of Illinois Supreme Court campaigns.

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute project surveyed more than 800 voters statewide through telephone interviews. The Survey Research Office at the University of Illinois-Springfield's Center for State Policy and Leadership conducted the telephone interviews. The survey results have a statistical margin for error of +/- 3.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

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**Paul Simon Public Policy Institute
Southern Illinois University Carbondale**

**Poll Results of Registered Voters in Illinois
Conducted September 23-October 17**

Released October 23, 2008

1. First, we'd like to know -- generally speaking, do you think things in our country are going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?

Right Direction	6.3%
Wrong Direction	88.2%
DK/NA	5.4%

2. And what about the direction of the State of Illinois? Generally speaking, are things in Illinois going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?

Right Direction	12.4%
Wrong Direction	75.4%
DK/NA	12.1%

3. And how are things going in your area of the state? In general, are things in your area going in the right direction, or in the wrong direction?

Right Direction	40.4%
Wrong Direction	49.6%
DK/NA	10.0%

4. Regardless of what you think about the direction your part of the state is going, tell us what you think about the overall quality of life in your area. Taking everything into account, would you say the overall quality of life in your area is:

Excellent	9.4%
Good	37.8%
Average	35.1%
Not so good	9.8%
Poor	6.1%
DK/NA	1.5%

Next, we'd like to know what you think about some public policy questions that are being talked about in Illinois. First is: (rotate)

5. Some people are talking about amending the constitution to allow recall elections for holders of statewide elected offices, such as secretary of state, governor, or lieutenant governor. That is, the people could vote at any time to remove an elected official from office rather than waiting until the next election. How do you feel about allowing recall elections for holders of statewide elected offices? Would you say you:

Strongly favor	29.7%
Favor	35.7%
Oppose	19.2%
Strongly oppose	8.5%
DK/NA	6.9%

6. There will be a question on the ballot this November asking voters whether there should be a convention in 2009 to rewrite all or parts of the Illinois state constitution.

Some people think the Illinois constitutional convention is necessary because there are so many important issues that our current political leaders are not addressing, and that delegates to a constitutional convention will address those issues in a more responsible fashion.

Other people say that the means of addressing these important issues already exist, and that a constitutional convention could go off track and actually make things worse.

Which is closer to the way you feel:

- that a constitutional convention is necessary because our state's political leaders are not addressing important issues. or
- that there already are ways to address these problems. A constitutional convention won't help much, and could actually make things worse.

Necessary	43.6%
Not necessary	40.3%
DK/NA	16.1%

Now here are a few questions about government taxes and services.

7. First, when it comes to the federal government in Washington -- how good a value would you say you get in terms of services for the taxes you pay? Would you say you get:

An excellent value	1.4%
A good value	9.3%
An average value	37.7%
Not so good a value	24.0%
A poor value	23.6%
DK/NA	4.1%

8. And what about the value of services you get for the tax dollars you pay to the state of Illinois? Would you say you get:

An excellent value	0.5%
A good value	11.7%
An average value	34.9%
Not so good a value	26.8%
A poor value	23.4%
DK/NA	2.6%

9. Next, what do you think about state government spending in your area of the state? In terms of its share of state spending, do you think your part of the state gets:

More than its fair share	8.5%
About the right amount	33.8%
Or less than its fair share	44.7%
DK/NA	13.0%

Now we'd like to know what you think of various aspects of the quality of life in your area. For each feature that I read, I'd like for you to tell me if you think it is excellent, good, average, not so good, or poor.

10. The quality of the environment in your area, such as clean air and water.

Excellent	12.4%
Good	44.0%
Average	28.5%
Not so good	7.1%
Poor	7.4%
DK/NA	.6%

11. The quality of infrastructure in your area, such as roads and bridges.

Excellent	3.9%
Good	26.5%
Average	31.2%
Not so good	18.5%
Poor	18.6%
DK/NA	1.3%

12. The quality of public safety in your area – for example, police and fire protection.

Excellent	18.5%
Good	44.6%
Average	24.2%
Not so good	5.3%
Poor	6.5%
DK/NA	0.9%

13. The quality of public education in your area – from kindergarten through high school.

Excellent	14.9%
Good	29.7%
Average	21.4%
Not so good	12.0%
Poor	16.6%
DK/NA	5.3%

14. The performance of the local economy in your area.

Excellent	2.9%
Good	23.3%
Average	33.0%
Not so good	21.0%
Poor	17.5%
DK/NA	2.3%

15. The quality of parks and recreational opportunities in your area.

Excellent	21.9%
Good	39.9%
Average	19.5%
Not so good	8.3%
Poor	8.9%
DK/NA	1.4%

16. We talked earlier about the possibility of a convention being called next year to revise the Illinois state constitution. How much information have you seen or heard about the ballot issue on the Illinois Constitutional Convention? Would you say you have seen or heard:

A lot of information	4.8%
Some information	24.5%
Not much information	36.2%
No information	33.1%
DK/NA	1.4%

17. The state government has been working to put together a budget to meet the needs of Illinois citizens. Based on what you know, how would you rate the job the state government has done this year in putting together a state budget? Would you say:

Excellent	.1%	1.4%*
Good	4.9%	6.7%
Not so good	23.9%	32.3%
Poor	44.0%	59.6%
Haven't been following enough to answer	24.0%	--
DK/NA	3.2%	--

*Second column indicates percentages based on those expressing an opinion.

18. Who, if anyone has been doing a really good job in terms of putting together a state budget?
(Open ended answers)

19. And who, if anyone, would you say has been doing a really poor job of in terms of putting together a state budget?
(Open ended answers)

Now I'm going to read you a short list of people and institutions - and for each, I'd like you to rate the job they have been doing in putting together a state budget this year.

20. First, what about Governor Rod Blagojevich? How would you rate the job he has been doing in putting together a state budget this year:

Excellent	1.4 %
Good	8.0%
Not so good	25.9%
Poor	61.4%
DK/NA	3.3%

21. What about the state legislature in general? How would you rate the job it has been doing in putting together a state budget this year:

Excellent	0.5%
Good	14.4%
Not so good	43.5%
Poor	33.8%
DK/NA	7.8%

22. What about the President of the Illinois Senate, Emil Jones? How would you rate the job he has been doing in putting together a state budget this year?

Excellent	0.5%
Good	10.9%
Not so good	28.4%
Poor	35.6%
DK/NA	24.7%

23. And what about the speaker of the Illinois House, Michael Madigan? How would you rate the job he has been doing in putting together a state budget this year?

Excellent	2.2%
Good	24.7%
Not so good	29.7%
Poor	28.6%
DK/NA	14.6%

24. Most leaders in the capitol believe that Illinois does not have the financial resources to address all the state's needs. Some say that this is because the state does not take in enough money to pay for everything it should do for its citizens. Others say that the state takes in plenty of money, and that the lack of resources is due to too much spending on unnecessary services and programs. Which is closer to your view?

The state does not take in enough money	13.7%
The state takes in enough but wastes a lot	77.9%
DK/NA	8.4%

There have been a number of proposals to address the state's budget problems by making cuts in state programs and services. I'm going to read several areas where people have suggested that the state could make cuts. For each one that I read, I'd like you to tell me whether you favor or oppose cutting spending in that area, OK?

25. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on: kindergarten through high school education?

Favor	10.7%
Oppose	85.6%
DK/NA	3.6%

26. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on: state universities?

Favor	20.9%
Oppose	72.0%
DK/NA	7.2%

27. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on: public safety, such as state police and prisons?

Favor	16.8%
Oppose	77.3%
DK/NA	5.9%

28. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on: natural resources, state parks and the environment?

Favor	21.2%
Oppose	73.3%
DK/NA	5.5%

29. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on: programs for the needy?

Favor	20.6%
Oppose	73.0%
DK/NA	6.4%

30. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on: state workers' retirement?

Favor	24.1%
Oppose	65.7%
DK/NA	10.2%

31. Is there any other area of state spending in which you would support cuts?
(Open-ended responses)

There have been a number of proposals to address the state's budget problems by finding ways to raise more money to pay for programs and services. I'm going to read several ways people have suggested for raising more money. For each one that I read, I'd like you to tell me whether you favor or oppose raising revenues in that way, OK?

32. First is: A proposal to add brackets to the state income tax structure so that higher-income residents pay higher taxes. Do you favor or oppose this?

Favor	65.9%
Oppose	28.8%
DK/NA	5.2%

33. A proposal to raise the state portion of the sales tax rate. Do you favor or oppose this?

Favor	17.0%
Oppose	78.1%
DK/NA	4.9%

34. A proposal to expand the sales tax to cover services, for example, dry cleaning, haircuts, accounting, and so forth. Do you favor or oppose this?

Favor	28.4%
Oppose	67.6%
DK/NA	4.0%

35. A proposal to expand legalized gambling in Illinois. Do you favor or oppose this?

Favor	46.6%
Oppose	46.9%
DK/NA	6.5%

36. A proposal to sell or lease state assets, such as the lottery and the Illinois toll road system, to private investors. Do you favor or oppose this?

Favor	37.8%
Oppose	52.2%
DK/NA	9.9%

37. Is there any other way of raising state revenues that you would support?
(Open-ended responses)

And now I'd like to ask you a few questions about judges and the Illinois courts. In Illinois, we elect judges who run at first under party labels. After they are elected the first time, we then vote whether or not to keep a judge in office. In these elections, candidates can spend as much as they want - and there are no limits on how much or who can contribute to judicial candidates.

38. In Illinois, do you think judges should be elected or appointed?

Elected	68.6%
Appointed	23.1%
Other/don't care (vol)	2.2%
DK/NA	6.1%

39. Would you say you feel strongly about this, or not so strongly?

	Strong	Not so strong	DK/NA
Elected	75.1%	22.4%	2.4%
Appointed	61.2%	35.4%	3.3%

40. During election campaigns, do you think candidates for judge should -- or should not -- take stands on issues that they might have to rule on if they become a member of the court?

Should	48.1%
Should not	41.4%
DK/NA	10.5%

Now, I'm going to read you a series of proposals. Some people think that these are good ideas but others disagree. We'd like to know what you think.

41. The first proposal is: We should limit how much individuals can contribute to candidates who are running for judge?

Strongly support	49.4%
Somewhat support	24.5%
Somewhat oppose	12.0%
Strongly oppose	9.0%
DK/NA	5.2%

42. We should limit how much groups and organizations can contribute to candidates who are running for judge?

Strongly support	55.1%
Somewhat support	20.5%
Somewhat oppose	10.1%
Strongly oppose	8.8%
DK/NA	5.3%

43. Some have suggested a voluntary plan where judicial candidates for the Illinois Supreme Court can get taxpayer funds to replace large campaign contributions. In this plan, candidates would first have to raise a certain amount of money from small contributors to show that they are serious candidates. Then, the candidates would receive taxpayer funds for their campaigns. But -- they would have to agree to limits on how much they would spend overall. And -- they would also have to agree to limits on how much any individual, group, or organization could contribute to their campaigns.

Strongly support	20.3%
Somewhat support	27.9%
Somewhat oppose	18.2%
Strongly oppose	25.4%
DK/NA	8.2%

44. Next, I'm going to read you two statements, and I'd like to know which comes closest to your own view. The first statement is: Public financing of state Supreme Court candidates serves the public by allowing credible, qualified candidates to run for office without relying on the contributions of special interests. The second statement is: Public financing of state Supreme Court races is not in the public interest because it would force taxpayers to fund candidates they might not support.

Serves the public	46.2%
Not in the public interest	42.9%
Neither (vol)	2.8%
DK/NA	8.0%