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**Plurality of Illinois Voters Believe Budget Fix Needs Revenue Increases;
Most Oppose Cuts in Services**

Registered voters in Illinois are less likely than in the past to believe “cutting waste and inefficiency” can solve the state’s budget woes, and more likely to believe that revenue increases are at least part of the solution, according to the results of a Simon Poll released Monday.

As in six previous polls, conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, interviewers presented respondents with three options for fixing the state budget deficit:

1. Increase taxes, because programs and services have already been cut; or
2. Cut waste and inefficiency in government, because the state takes in enough money to pay for services; or
3. A combination of cuts and revenue increases, because the budget problem is so large.

For the second time in seven surveys going back to 2009, almost half (48 percent) chose a response that included revenue increases—whether tax increases alone (14 percent) or in combination with budget cuts (34 percent).

Just over four in ten (42 percent) said the budget problem could be fixed by cutting waste and inefficiency alone—the lowest number in the time series, and down from a high of 58 percent in 2011. (*See Table 1 and/or Figure 1.*)

Simon Institute visiting professor Charlie Leonard said he and his colleagues believe they are measuring a real sea change in the way Illinoisans view the budget problem. “Because mistrust of state government is unusually high in Illinois, compared to the rest of the country, voters have long believed there must be enough waste and fraud to offset the massive budget deficits we have faced for years,” Leonard said. “However, after detailed, protracted coverage in the media, and facing the real prospect of cuts to programs they like, we think Illinoisans are coming to grips with a problem that is far larger than they used to believe.”

The statewide poll of 1,000 registered voters was conducted February 28 – March 10 by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. The survey has margin for error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. The live-interview survey's sample included 30 percent cell-phone respondents.

In the 2015 survey, partisanship predictably influenced responses. Half (51 percent) of Republican respondents believed cutting waste alone could balance the budget, compared with just under half (46.9 percent) of Independents and just over a third (34.9 percent) of Democrats.

Similarly, belief that cuts alone could solve the problem was higher downstate (47.3 percent) than in the Chicago suburbs (42.6 percent) or in the city of Chicago (33.5 percent).

Program Cuts

Since 2008 Simon Institute polls have asked Illinois registered voters whether they favor or oppose budget cuts for a number of state programs, from education to infrastructure to social programs for the poor and disabled. (*See Table 2 and/or Figure 2*)

Respondents were more likely to favor cuts to state workers' retirement than in any other area tested. Even so, opposition to cuts in retirement spending was higher than support (at 44.3 percent in favor to 49.1 percent opposed).

Support was lowest for cuts in spending on programs for the disabled (13.2 percent) and cuts to K-12 education (15.7 percent). While opposition to cuts in specific program areas outweighs support in every instance, it is also true that levels of support for cuts in those areas has grown, again in each of the seven program areas tested.

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The Simon Poll interviewed 1,000 registered voters across Illinois. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that if we were to conduct the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances the results would vary by no more than plus or minus 3 points from the results obtained here.

Live telephone interviews were conducted by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas. Cell phone interviews accounted for 30 percent of the sample. A Spanish language version of the questionnaire and a Spanish-speaking interviewer were made available. Fieldwork was conducted from February 28 – March 10. Customer Research International reports no Illinois political clients. The survey was paid for with non-tax dollars from the Institute's endowment fund.

Crosstabs for the referenced questions will be on the Institute's web site, paulsimoninstitute.org.

Note: The "Paul Simon Public Policy Institute Poll," the "Simon Poll" and the "Southern Illinois Poll" are the copyrighted trademarks of the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University. Use and publication of these polls is encouraged- but only with credit to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU Carbondale.

Table 1 – Options for Fixing Budget Deficit 2009 - 2015

The state of Illinois has a budget deficit of over [amount varies by year]. I'm going to read three statements that people have made about how to fix the deficit, and ask you which one comes closest to your views. If you haven't thought much about this issue, just tell me that.

	2009	2010	2011	2013	2014a	2014b	2015
Illinois' public programs and services have already been reduced significantly. We can only fix the problem by taking in more revenue, such as a tax increase	10%	9%	7%	8%	10%	16%	14%
The state takes in plenty of money to pay for public services, but wastes it on unnecessary programs. We can fix the problem by cutting waste and inefficiency in government	57%	57%	58%	55%	52%	43%	42%
Illinois' budget problem is so large it can only be solved by a combination of budget cuts and revenue increases	27%	27%	29%	29%	29%	32%	34%

Note: 2014a refers to the survey conducted in the spring of 2014, 2014b refers to the survey conducted in the fall of 2014.

Figure 1 – Percent Choosing Options for Fixing Budget Deficit 2009 - 2015

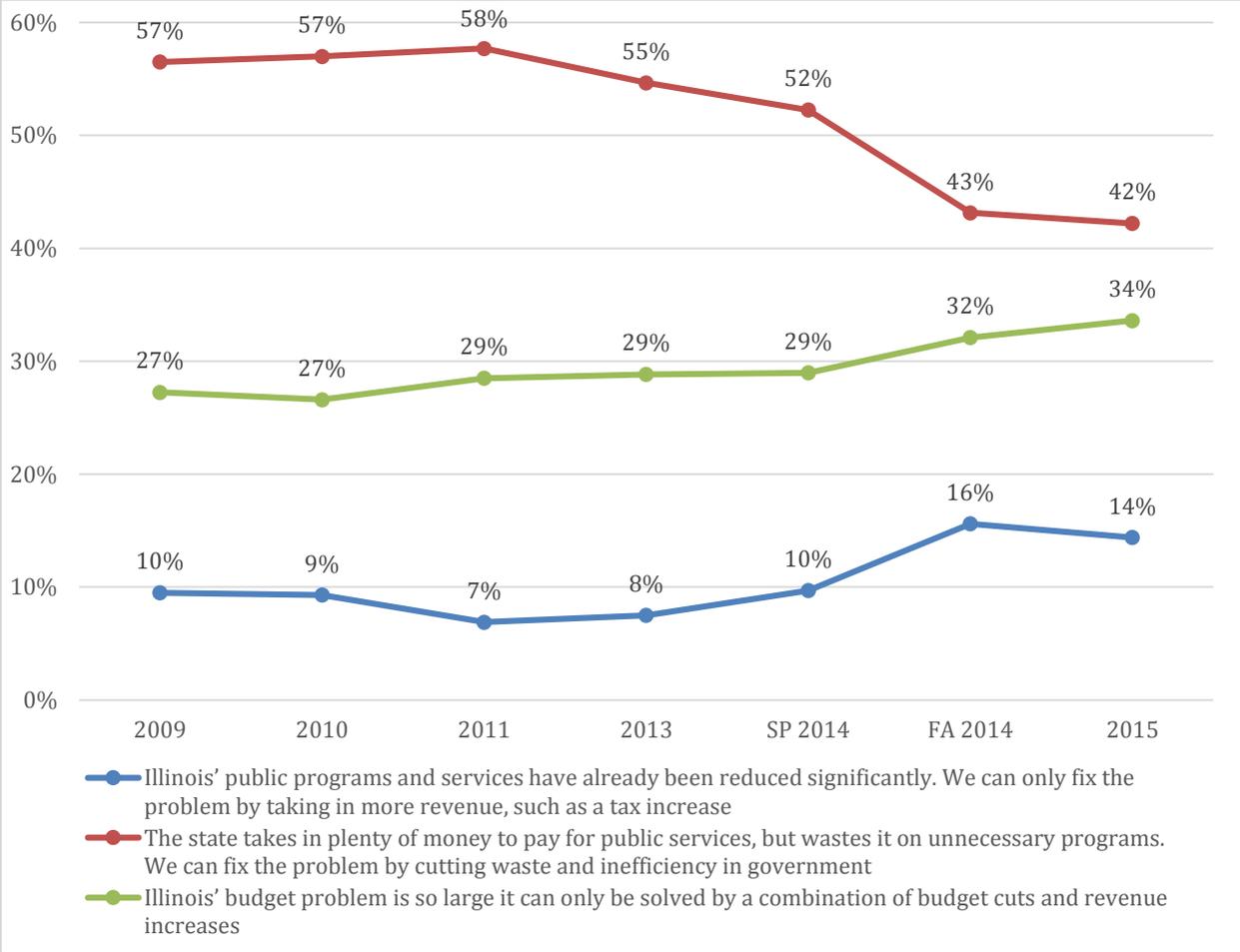


Table 2 – Percent Favoring Program Cuts, 2008 - 2015

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 budget cuts in that area.

Percentage Favoring Proposed Cuts 2008-2015

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2014a	2015
To state spending on K-12 education	12.5%	13.0%	14.0%	16.5%	17.7%	15.7%
To state spending on state universities	20.9%	31.9%	34.0%	38.2%	36.7%	35.9%
To public safety, such as state policy and prison operations	13.5%	16.3%	21.0%	20.6%	24.1%	26.9%
To state spending on natural resources, such as state parks or environmental regulation	19.3%	32.0%	40.0%	36.7%	31.4%	35.5%
To state spending on programs for poor people	21.2%	20.4%	24.9%	25.2%	26.2%	23.1%
To state spending on programs for people with mental or physical disabilities	--	11.8%	12.4%	12.3%	14.8%	13.2%
To state spending on pension benefits for state workers' retirement	21.7%	39.5%	45.5%	45.5%	41.5%	44.3%

Note: *There were no data on these questions in 2012, 2013, and the fall of 2014.*

Figure 2 – Percent Favoring Program Cuts, 2008 - 2015

