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Contact:
John Jackson
618-303-1240
David Yepsen
618-559-5854

State's Budget Impasse Starts To Bite In Southern Illinois

More than a third of southern Illinois voters (37.4 percent) say either they or someone in their immediate families have been affected by the current Illinois budget stalemate, according to a poll by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Another 56.6 percent said they have not been touched by it.

Among all southern Illinois voters, the largest group (10.0 percent) said they had experienced a job loss or threatened job loss from the budget impasse. The next largest group of responses were from those who said they had been affected by healthcare and health insurance cuts (3.7 percent). Also, there were 3.2 percent who said they had experienced social service cuts; 2.7 percent who said their city governments had experienced cuts; 2.5 percent who said they had experienced changes in child care costs or services, and 2.0 percent who said their impact had been through higher education cuts.

The remainder of the impacts of the budget conflict included a range of volunteered responses, which included impacts on the local economy (1.2 percent), cuts to utility assistance programs (1.0 percent), and mental health care (0.7 percent).

The poll of registered voters in 18 counties south of Interstate 64 was taken September 22-October 2. The survey was based on a random sample of 401 registered voters who responded to telephone interviews. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percentage points. Thirty percent of the sample were cell phone users.

In the open-ended comments, respondents volunteered such specific answers as their family had to relocate because of loss of a state job, their health care had been adversely affected, respondent's husband was on disability and now can't get it, loss of meals for shut-ins, delayed payments on dental services, doctors want their payments up front now, proposed closing of the Hardin County Work Camp, and other generalized negative consequences.

“These responses show clearly that what’s happening—or not happening—in Springfield is having a direct impact on a lot of people’s lives in southern Illinois” noted John S. Jackson, a visiting professor at the Paul Simon Institute and one of the designers of this poll. “Decision-makers need to consider that their inaction is causing very specific harm, which people notice, and the negative effects are accelerating as time goes by” Jackson added.

But David Yepsen, director of the Institute, said “maybe one reason nothing’s happening in Springfield is that a lot of voters don’t feel the effect of this stalemate. Most people don’t work for a government. Most people don’t rely on safety net programs like day care or health care. If they did, perhaps the logjam would break because political leaders would be feeling more heat.”

“It’s also true some people might not feel it because the state is still spending money without a budget,” Yepsen said. “Schools, for example, did get an appropriation. Other spending is directed by court-orders.”

One of the reasons for the budget stalemate is Republican Governor Bruce Rauner’s insistence that the Democratic-controlled General Assembly act on his “Turn Around Illinois” plan as a part of a his business-friendly legislative proposals. He has linked passage of these to his approval of a state budget

One of the key components of this plan is his demand for the passage of a state right-to-work or open-shop law in Illinois. Democratic lawmakers are adamantly opposed.

On this particular proposal, most of the voters in southern Illinois support the governor’s position. When asked if they would vote for or against such a law, 53.4 percent said they would support it, 2.0 percent said they leaned toward it, 36.2 percent said they were opposed and 1.7 percent said they leaned against it while 3.5 percent were undecided, and 3.2 percent did not know where they stood.

“Southern Illinois has traditionally been a stronghold of union support, going back to the heyday of the United Mine Workers and other unions active in this area,” Jackson said. “This is a fairly remarkable level of anti-union sentiment. This indicates that the unions have their work cut out for them if they want to lead public opinion on this crucial issue.”

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The poll of 401 registered voters covered the 18 southernmost counties in Illinois: Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, Washington, White, and Williamson.

The sample has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that if we conducted the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances, the result would be within plus or minus 4.9 percentage 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. Field work was conducted from September 22 – October 2. No auto-dial or “robo” polling is included.

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 polling web site, simonpoll.org.

Simon Institute polling data are also archived by three academic institutions for use by scholars and the public. The three open source data repositories are: the University of Michigan's Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (OpenICPSR; <http://openicpsr.org/repoEntity/list>), the University of North Carolina's Odum Institute Dataverse Network (<http://arc.irss.unc.edu/dvn/dv/PSPPI>), and the Simon Institute Collection at OpenSIUC (<http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ppi/>).

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.

Frequency Tables

Effects of the Illinois Budget Stalemate

Have you or someone in your immediate family been affected by the Illinois budget stalemate?

Response	Percent (n=401)
Yes	37.4%
No	56.6%
Other/don't know	6.0%

(If yes) How has your family been impacted by the lack of a state budget? (Did not offer response options, categorized from list below)

Response	Percent (n=401)
Child care costs/services	2.5%
City government cuts	2.7%
Drug treatment costs/services	0.2%
Facility closure (e.g. Splash Park, shooting range)	1.0%
Health care	3.7%
Higher education	2.0%
Highway and road construction/maintenance	0.2%
Housing (affordability/quality)	0.2%
Job lost/threatened	10.0%
Local economy	1.2%
Mental health care	0.7%
Social services (generally)	3.2%
Utility assistance program cuts (home heat, air, etc)	1.0%
Other (specify)	3.0%
Don't know/no answer	5.5%
Missing (not affected by budget)	62.6%

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Frequency Tables

Right-to-Work

Some states have passed right-to-work or open shop laws that say workers have the right to hold their jobs in a unionized workplace, whether they join the labor union or not. If you were asked to vote on such a law, would you vote for it or against it? (If undecided the interviewer probed “which way are you leaning?”)

Response	Percent (n=401)
Vote for	53.4%
Lean for	2.0%
Lean against	1.7%
Vote against	36.2%
Undecided (not read)	3.5%
Other/don't know (not read)	3.2%