

## **How to Talk about a Responsible Budget: *Suggested Language and Tips***

When advocating for a responsible budget, the language we use can help or hinder our efforts. Stating facts instead of denying myths, avoiding non-inclusive words such as “vulnerable” and speaking to the interests of a broad spectrum of the community will help us make our case.

Below are some suggested words, phrases and concepts that you can use in your advocacy work. Weaving this language into advocacy for your cause or organization will help us reach our individual and collective goals for a responsible budget.

1. Illinoisans want the public investment that helps our communities thrive, like great schools, healthy families and safe streets.
2. We can only accomplish this if our state's elected leaders support the revenue it takes to make those investments.
3. Providing Illinois with the resources needed for public investment must come first.
4. To help Illinois communities thrive we need to:
  - **Rebuild and repair roads, bridges and other key public infrastructure.** Projects that build good streets, provide transportation for businesses and create jobs have been put on hold.
  - **Make sure talented, motivated Illinois kids can go to college.** Too many of our best and brightest are deciding to attend college out of state because of cuts in financial aid, course offerings, and teachers.
  - **Provide the stability and certainty** businesses and families need to prepare for the future. Predictability is needed to hire workers, plan for services and grow businesses.
  - **Invest in our state's human resources.** From meals for seniors to childcare for working families, Illinois needs to make sure everyone gets the support they need to fully participate in the community.
  - **Raise new revenue.** Instead of letting special interests manipulate the tax code, Illinois needs to make public investments that benefit everyone.

*For more advocacy tools and tips, including revenue solutions, talking to the media and legislative advocacy guide visit the “Resources” Tab at [www.responsiblebudget.org](http://www.responsiblebudget.org)*

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR YOUR LEGISLATORS

It is important to have questions prepared to ask of the legislator during the meeting. Some suggestions are below.

- Cost-effective programs are closing, families are losing services and workers are losing their jobs. [GIVE SOME EXAMPLES. Some are here.] What are you doing to push for a solution?
- Have you advocated with leadership on our behalf? Will you talk to them and report back to us?
- Have you spoken publically about revenue solutions? Will you say publically that we have had enough cuts, it's time to talk about revenue? [GIVE "AVOID CUTS, CHOOSE REVENUE" 1-PAGE REVENUE "MENU"]
- Who have you spoken to across the aisle about ending the impasse? Who will you speak to?
- **END WITH THIS QUESTION:** When will you report back to us on what you are doing to push for an end to budget impasse and passage of a budget with revenue to fully fund services?

Lawmakers may make certain statements to deflect your advocacy efforts. Don't accept these responses – push back!

**Statement: I support your program.**

*Response:* The only way to show support is by supporting adequate revenue and prioritizing the budget over non-budget issues. Will you support (your program/issue area) by co-sponsoring HR 922?

**Statement: We need some cuts to (your program) or cuts to something else.**

*Response:* We have already had many cuts. There are many options to raise adequate revenue to stop the harm that cuts are causing. [GIVE "AVOID CUTS, CHOOSE REVENUE" 1-PAGE REVENUE "MENU"]

**Statement: We need "reforms" or "turnaround" agenda first before we can pass a budget.**

*Response:* Non-budget items are not relevant. We're here asking you to support a budget that invests in our families and communities. People are hurting right now and our social service infrastructure is falling apart. Let's worry about non-budget items later.

Give example of harm in their district. Isn't it time to give up these non-budget issues? Do you think these issues are worth risking our families and communities and damaging our economy?

**Statement: I have no power - you need to talk to someone else (Rauner, Madigan, democrats, republicans, etc.).**

*Response:* As your constituents we need you to represent us and advocate for us. Will you talk to those leaders and advocate on our behalf?



## Options to Avoid Cuts

### Personal Income Tax

#### REFORMS

#### CUTS AVOIDED

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Restore income tax rate                     | \$1 B for every 0.25% |
| Tax retirement income                       | \$500 M - \$750 M     |
| Cap residential property tax credit         | \$95 M - \$225 M      |
| Reduce personal exemption at higher incomes | \$69 M                |
| Adopt a multi-tiered income tax structure   | Varied                |

### Business Taxes

#### REFORMS

#### CUTS AVOIDED

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Restore corporate income tax rate                                   | \$330 M - \$770 M |
| Limit or eliminate Enterprise Zones and EDGE tax credits            | > \$100 M         |
| Don't give businesses tax breaks for investing in other states      | \$100 M           |
| Limit tax avoidance by capturing income held in offshore tax havens | \$100 M           |
| Capture offshore drilling in corporate taxable income               | \$75 M            |
| Close accounting loophole for corporations avoiding state taxes     | \$25 M            |
| Limit or eliminate the Illinois Film Services Tax Credit            | \$13-20 M         |

### Sales Taxes

#### REFORMS

#### CUTS AVOIDED

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Broaden sales tax by taxing services                 |                         |
| Model Iowa's taxation of services                    | \$4.6 B                 |
| Bruce Rauner's proposal                              | \$600 M                 |
| Raise the general sales tax rate                     | \$410 M for every 0.25% |
| Suspend, reduce, or cap the retailer's discount      | \$125 M                 |
| Close loophole for print news                        | \$32 M                  |
| Suspend, reduce, or cap cost of collection discounts | \$29 M                  |
| Extend sales tax to internet downloads               | \$14 - 18 M             |
| Close hotel tax loophole for long-term rentals       | \$12 M                  |
| Tax full retail value of hotels booked online        | \$6 - 9 M               |

### Alcohol, Nicotine, and Sugary-Beverage Taxes

#### REFORMS

#### CUTS AVOIDED

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| Tax sugar-sweetened beverages by 1 cent per ounce | \$600 M            |
| Raise cigarette tax by \$0.50 per pack            | \$175 M            |
| Tax electronic cigarettes                         | \$800,000 - \$38 M |
| Raise alcohol tax                                 |                    |
| Spirits by \$3 per gallon (3.5 cents per drink)   | \$53 M             |
| Beer by \$0.15 per gallon (1.4 cents per drink)   | \$40 M             |
| Wine by \$0.30 per gallon (1.2 cents per glass)   | \$10 M             |

## Legislative Advocacy Guide

Responsible  
Budget  
Coalition

### DEFINITION OF A SUCCESSFUL MEETING WITH YOUR LAWMAKER

1. **You delivered your message.** Your message should include the following:
  - the specific harm the budget impasse is causing (or will cause), and
  - the solution (put non-budget items aside and choose revenue over more cuts)
2. **You made a concrete ask.** Examples:
  - "Will you co-sponsor HR 922, The Responsible Budget Resolution?"
  - "Will you take this local impact summary we made about the harm we're seeing in our community and give it to Leader [NAME] and the Governor?"
3. **You held your lawmaker accountable in a constructive way.** Example:
  - "Will you let us know by next Friday if you are going to co-sponsor HR 922?"
  - "Will you let us know by next Friday the response from Leader [NAME] and the Governor when you delivered our impact sheet?"

### TIPS FOR AN EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY MEETING

- **Know what you want your 2-3 main points to be.** Don't let the conversation get derailed. Know how much time you have and be sure to deliver your message.
- **Give specific examples of how people are being impacted in the legislator's district.** Use examples such as personal stories and data. Be specific and concrete.
- **Be prepared to answer tough questions.** Think of questions the legislator may ask and how to answer them. It is okay to get the information to them later if you don't know.
- **Be ready to ask tough questions (see opposite page).** This is your chance to advocate for your program and the cause that you believe in. Be prepared to push back and put tension in the room – tension creates movement.

### BEFORE THE MEETING

1. Decide each person's role: Impact statement, making the "ask," follow-up, etc.
2. Schedule the meeting – Be flexible and persistent. Ask how much time you will have.
3. Have a pre-meeting to review roles and practice what each person will say.

### DURING THE MEETING

1. Introduce yourself - Say your name and what organization you represent.
2. Tell them the reason you are speaking with them right away.
3. Give them examples of specific impact in their district.
4. Make an ask – Will you speak to leadership, across the aisle, to the press/in public supporting adequate revenue to fully fund services and prioritize a budget over non-budget items? When will you give us a report back?

### AFTER THE MEETING

1. Send a thank you to the legislator and provide any materials or answer questions that you said you would.
2. Follow-up with them as agreed in the meeting for them to report back on your ask. Be persistent until you get a report back.



## **Guest Column: Lawmakers need to enact a balanced state budget**

**Sunday**

Posted Jan 8, 2017 at 8:00 PM

Jan. 1 marked the beginning of the 19th month in which Illinois has operated without a comprehensive, balanced budget. To be clear, recently expired "stopgap" measures should not be considered a budget, because they did not limit the state's known spending obligations with available revenue for any period of time.

For more than a year and a half, our elected officials have asked social service agencies, institutions of higher education, local governments and state vendors to continue providing services to millions of Illinoisans without adequate funding. The result has been disastrous.

Consider:

- \* Because Cook County was owed tens of millions of dollars by the state, officials made cuts to critical programming, such as child support enforcement, as well as vision and hearing screenings for the needy.
- \* Many Illinois universities that floated grants for low-income students in the fall will not or cannot commit to do so for the spring.
- \* Redeploy Illinois, which diverts non-violent juvenile offenders from the Department of Juvenile Justice into community programs (saving taxpayers millions of dollars), has been forced to cut service and reduce enrollments.
- \* Domestic violence shelters throughout the state found out just weeks ago that they were not included at all in the stopgap package.

\* Illinois' backlog of health insurance claims for state workers, for which there has not been an appropriation since the end of fiscal year 2015, stands at approximately \$4 billion.

\* Chicago Public Schools, having received some increased funding for fiscal year 2017, remains on the brink of insolvency, as do school districts across the state.

While the governor and all members of the General Assembly continue to bear responsibility for the ongoing impasse, Illinois' reputation, attractiveness for business, higher education and social services infrastructure and its safety net have been shredded, leaving some well-established organizations hanging by a thread. It is time for our state lawmakers to perform their constitutional duty and enact a comprehensive, balanced state budget.

There are no politically easy decisions left. The governor and leaders of both parties must identify which line items they would cut and what new revenue sources they would employ, and present a full budget. Cost-effective supports for at-risk populations, opportunities to get ahead for working families, and the predictability to plan and grow for businesses all rely on a complete budget. Our elected officials must put aside political agendas and do the difficult work before them.

The success of our state depends on it.

*- John Bouman is president of the Chicago-based Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, which provides national leadership in advancing laws and policies that secure justice to improve the lives and opportunities of people living in poverty. Laurence Msall is president of the Chicago-based Civic Federation, an independent, non-partisan government research organization that provides analysis and recommendations on government finance issues for the Chicago region and State of Illinois.*