



Budget Address preview: Uncertain cuts, revenue and tone, Mitchell calls for CCAP audit, and Cato blasts Real ID

By Greg Bishop

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Governor's Budget Address preview

It could be the most anticipated speech of the year. Governor Bruce Rauner delivers his budget address at noon Wednesday in Springfield. The speech is expected by all parties to include cuts, but how much is still not known. Democratic State Senator Heather Steans says that she hopes the Governor addresses the need for more revenue as part of the equation, but Republican State Representative Ron Sandack says that's unlikely. Sandack hopes there may be talk about tax modernization, but ultimately there will be an effort to grow the tax base by businesses expanding in Illinois.

"We're a service based economy and some of the sales tax methodology no longer makes sense. So I think there will be some discussion about tax reformation but I think most of the discussion on revenues will be growing the tax base the old fashion way which is frankly reducing some of the regulations on businesses and getting back to being a business friendly state."

Sandack says it will be tough news and also says that there could be significant reorganizations and belt tightening for state departments as part of the proposed budget.

Cuts and revenue on the minds of lawmakers on eve of Budget Address

State Representative Bill Mitchell says the proposed budget won't be pleasant because the state has lived beyond its means for years.

"I don't know any particulars of what the Governor is going to say but I tell my constituents we've lived lavishly for the last twelve years that it's gonna be a frugal couple of years and it'll have to be."

Democratic State Representative Mike Smiddy says he's hopeful there will be priorities for vital services with a call to find more money for state coffers.

"One of the things that we really need to look at is where we can potentially make changes or cuts that won't hurt our vital services and where we can generate new revenues."

Tone of budget address important

How the Governor lays out his budget address will have just as much of an impact on what will be the actual numbers. Democratic Representative Lou Lang says he hopes the Governor addresses the budget problems with a bipartisan tone.

"If Bruce Rauner treats the legislature as his partners in government we can accomplish great things for the people of Illinois. If he chooses not to do that we will accomplish nothing"

Republican Representative Joe Sosnowski says the state's budget has been mismanaged under democratic and republican leadership and he expects the new Governor won't hold back.

"I think he's gonna lay his cards on the table and he's going to be very forthright about what it's gonna take to get bipartisan agreement on issues and what's he's suggesting to do to move forward."

Sosnowski says Rauner hasn't been one to pull any punches and doesn't expect him to do so now. After the budget address, the Governor must get appropriations approval from the legislature before the beginning of the fiscal year which is in July.

CCAP audit, other measures proposed

Meanwhile a state lawmaker wants more oversight over a program that has run out of money with several months left in the current fiscal year. State Representative Bill Mitchell says he will introduce legislation to hold the Child Care Assistance Program more accountable. Several of the proposals includes having the Auditor General perform an audit of the program to find ineligible participants, providing a bill to the father of the child, taking into account total assets of the household and ensuring undocumented children aren't enrolled in the program. Mitchell says the program is too important to allow for waste and mismanagement.

"It's a good program but it's being abused. And so we want to make sure—it shouldn't be a permanent program and it should help people who need it and right now we're broke."

Mitchell says his ideas came primarily from child care providers. C-CAP is short three-hundred million dollars in the current fiscal year with no more funds in their program's budget, but that's not the only program that's run out of money with months before the end of the budget year. Governor Bruce Rauner has been in negotiations with legislative leaders for weeks on getting appropriations authority to ensure vital services are funded for the rest of the fiscal year.

Cato: America does not need Real ID

America does not need a national ID card. That's according to the Cato Institute, who says their opposition to Real ID isn't just about the increased cost from the unfunded federal mandate, it's about the freedom of Americans. Secretary of State spokesman Henry Haupt says that Illinois joins over twenty other states that have waivers from the federal mandate. And, though it's estimated to cost just tens of millions of dollars over several years, Haupt says ultimately compliance lies with state lawmakers.

“At this point in time, one of the things that we need, that the State of Illinois needs, not just the Illinois Secretary of State's office, is approval to implement Real ID from the General Assembly”

The federal law passed in 2005. The Illinois General Assembly passed a resolution opposing Real ID back in 2007. Jim Harper, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute says it's not only about the cost of implementing the unfunded mandate, it's about who, ultimately, has control.

“The national ID infrastructure would be used more and more, information collected about us, more and more by corporations and governments alike. And that's a shift of power. When people know more about you they can do more to affect your life, including accessing your assets, knowing what you've purchases, the list goes on and on and under a national ID that information would be more accessible to government and corporations both.”

The Illinois Secretary of State's office says they plan to unveil an even more secure ID card next year that would provide similar protocol to Real ID. The federal Department of Homeland Security says citizens with noncompliant state IDs will not be able to board commercial aircraft beginning in 2016, but Illinois officials say that means there could be extra screening, but what those measure are is unclear.

ICJIA: Adult Redeploy saved tens of millions

A program to help convicted criminals find their place in the community helped save the state's corrections system over forty-five-million dollars. That's according to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Executive Director John Maki says that Adult Redeploy Illinois program, or ARI, diverted over two-thousand non-violent offenders from prison since it's inception in 2011, which has saved an estimated forty-six-point-eight million dollars in correctional costs. ARI supports eighteen sites with nineteen probation programs in over thirty Illinois counties. A press release touting ARI says there will be a summit in Bloomington March 19th to bring the sites together and share strategies to improve outcomes. Governor Bruce Rauner has touted ARI as a huge success.