



## Budget Solutions 2011

### *The impact on K-12 education spending*

During the 2008-09 school year, real inflation-adjusted per pupil spending in Illinois schools was at an all-time high. According to the State Board of Education, combined spending in Illinois public schools totaled \$12,363 per pupil. Surmounting state government debt and tough economic conditions make this level of spending unsustainable.

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn has proposed a significant reduction to state education spending in his FY2011 budget address. On March 17, 2010 the Illinois Policy Institute issued an alternative budget entitled Budget Solutions 2011.

The reductions in state government education spending recommended by Governor Quinn are almost identical to the recommendations of the Illinois Policy Institute, with a few notable exceptions. The Illinois Policy Institute's alternative budget:

- **Dedicates a greater share of state spending to overall education spending** (38 percent vs. Quinn's 33 percent).
- **Dedicates a greater share of state spending to K-12 schooling** (looking only at elementary and secondary education, Budget Solutions dedicates roughly 28 percent whereas Quinn's budget dedicates 23 percent);
- **Dedicates a greater amount of spending towards K-12 education** (\$5.99 billion vs. Quinn's \$5.79 billion). Whereas Gov. Quinn allocates slightly more funding to the State Board of Education, his budget steers \$200 million to preschool programs whereas Budget Solutions 2011

instead allocates that money to elementary and high schools.

- **Dedicates a greater amount of K-12 spending to General State Aid** (\$4.25 billion vs. Quinn's \$3.99 billion). General State Aid is allocated with relatively few strings attached, as opposed to other heavily-regulated education grant programs. The greater the share of state funding that districts receive through General State Aid, the more flexibility they will have to use these resources to meet their unique local challenges.

Governor Quinn's budget reduces K-12 education spending by roughly \$550 per pupil; the Illinois Policy Institute by roughly \$460. These decreases represent per pupil reductions of 4.5 and 3.7 percent, respectively, as compared to total spending for 2008-09 (the most recent year for which federal, state and local spending numbers are available).

It is impossible to yet know how local and federal funding will complement these state funding decreases: some districts will be able to offset decreases in state funding with natural local revenue growth; others will not, and they will have to make tough choices. The simple fact is, however, Budget Solutions 2011 does not represent a gutting of Illinois schools. At worst, it represents a shift to funding levels from earlier in the decade, before Illinois had so dramatically spent beyond its means.

*Learn more at [www.illinoispolicy.org](http://www.illinoispolicy.org).*