

# **CUTTING MADISON COUNTY BUDGET** **IS THE RESPONSIBLE ACTION**

by  
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**Madison County Board Chairman**

At the June 17 meeting of the Madison County Board, I presented a revised budget for the 2009 fiscal year that effectively addresses a projected revenue shortfall of \$2.2 million. The revised budget, which was approved by the county board, calls for an immediate reduction of more than \$1.2 million in spending between now and November 30, which is the end of the county's fiscal year.

Employee expenses -- payroll and benefits -- are the largest county expense and some of these cuts will result in reducing the county workforce. As of now, we anticipate more than 20 employees being laid off. I know these layoffs come at a difficult time and I regret they are necessary, but it is my responsibility, and that of each elected official, to effectively address the county's revenue deficit and maintain a balanced budget."

Because Madison County elected officials have employed sound, conservative financial management of the taxpayers' monies, the county is able to use \$1 million from its financial reserves to make up the difference in the revenue shortfall.

Everyone knows these are difficult economic times that require tough decisions. County officials were faced with the option of making significant budget cuts or identifying other sources of revenue. Deficit spending or borrowing

money would only put Madison County in the same financial position as the state governments in Illinois, California and other states.

When families throughout Madison County are trying to figure out how to make ends meet, when some have been laid off and don't know when they will be called back to work, and others are looking for jobs, the worst possible decision would have been to utilize tax increases to raise revenue.

The responsible decision is to make budget cuts, to ensure that Madison County Government operates within its means while remaining in position to serve the people of Madison County.

As anticipated, the response from the people of Madison County has ranged from strong support for the proposed cuts to calls for deeper cuts, and some have attempted to drum up public and political support for not cutting their respective department or program budgets.

The fact is that for the last six years, Madison County Government has been operating efficiently. The total number of employees has been significantly reduced as county leaders have utilized technology and other efficiencies. Employees who have retired or left for other opportunities have not been replaced. Strict purchasing policies have resulted in savings, and county leaders adopted financial management policies that eliminated debt and ensured the county would be in position to address hardships like we are now experiencing with minimal disruption and slight -- if any -- reductions in the services provided to county residents.

In light of the economic problems the county is now experiencing, the closing of the Shelter Care Home was the right decision. Not only is the county annually saving the approximately \$1 million it would have cost to support the facility, but as we continue to look after the former residents of the home we have found they are happy and more than satisfied with their new accommodations.

Unfortunately, the new budget just passed only addresses the current fiscal year. As we begin work on the 2010 budget the projected revenue shortfall for 2010 could be greater than this year, especially with an anticipated increase of \$1.4 million in required payments to the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund. Additional cuts will have to be made. But the budget cuts are unavoidable, and learning how to get by on less is what every household in the county is doing these days. Madison County Government -- your elected leaders -- must, and will, do the same.

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