



A Union of Professionals



**A joint statement from
Illinois AFL-CIO President Michael Carrigan
Illinois Federation of Teachers President Ed Geppert
Illinois Education Association President Ken Swanson
AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Henry Bayer**

Ten years ago the Illinois Legislature considered an income tax increase to help fix the state's broken fiscal system and deal with rising debt. That legislation passed the House on a bipartisan basis but was not considered in the Senate. In the years since that time, our state has sunk deeper and deeper into massive debt and our schools have suffered tremendously as state revenue failed to keep pace with our needs. Our fiscal system is broken and must be repaired.

Various media outlets have reported several revenue-raising proposals are under consideration as a means to break our current budget impasse. These proposals include cigarette taxes, gambling expansion and income taxes. Our organizations strongly believe that any new revenue proposals enacted be based on sustainable and reliable sources that will meet the state's needs into the future. One time fixes and regressive tax proposals that disproportionately impact working families are failed strategies of the past. And they have contributed heavily to the financial problems we face today. We must do better, and we can.

House Speaker Michael Madigan has said that an income tax increase has the greatest level of support of any revenue proposal that has been considered by the House Democratic caucus. We believe strong support for a modest increase in the income tax exists in both the Democratic and Republican caucuses in both chambers. Senate President Emil Jones has said he also supports an increase in the income tax.

The General Assembly should consider any proposal on its merits, and not engage in political posturing. Lawmakers need to find the courage to put forward and vote for a proposal that truly provides education opportunities for children and supports vital state services for the people of Illinois. The General Assembly has the power to make this happen, and they ought to use it.

But time is running out. Our state faces a shutdown that will cut off services. Millions of our citizens and school districts will be thrown into turmoil if a budget is not passed and schools do not receive their general state aid payments on time. Lawmakers must not allow this to happen.

We call on the legislative leaders today to support a plan to increase the Illinois income tax by 1/4 % per year for four years, raising approximately \$800 million per year in new revenue. The funds raised should be earmarked for education and placed in a new special fund from which appropriations could be made only upon a 3/5 vote of both chambers. In providing such dedicated funding for education, the General Assembly should use revenue growth to improve staffing to provide vital state services. Further, we call on the leaders to negotiate a capital plan that will provide revenue for badly needed public infrastructure projects and repairs to our crumbling public schools. The bonds for these plans should be financed by revenue from a reasonable increase in gambling.

Additionally, core Labor issues like adequate transportation funding and affordable health care need to be addressed.

Political infighting is not an excuse to ignore school funding and other public service needs in Illinois. The time for a solution, a budget that meets the needs of our citizens and our schools, is now.