



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 18, 2016

## Illinois Comptroller: State Is Out of Money, Legislators' Paychecks Delayed

Illinois Comptroller Leslie Munger [announced](#) at a press conference in Chicago on Sunday that she was delaying paying the state's legislators until there are sufficient funds available to cover the checks. She said that the practice of prioritizing those paychecks ahead of other agencies waiting for their money was over:



Our social service network is being dismantled, mass layoffs are occurring and small businesses across Illinois are awaiting payments for services they've already provided.

As our cash crunch grows in the coming months, it is only appropriate that the unfair prioritization of payments to elected leaders ends.

We are all in this together. We will all wait in line.

She also expressed hope that this would galvanize those legislators waiting for their paychecks into passing a budget. The state has been operating without one for more than 300 days. Said Munger:

[This] is the right thing to do. And if this action helps bring all sides together to pass a balanced budget and end this unnecessary and devastating hardship to our state, that is an added benefit.

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The amount involved, about \$1.3 million a month in a state with nearly \$30 billion in annual revenues, is minuscule but vitally important to the thousands of businesses providing services to the state. In remarks that sounded as if the services rendered by politicians were less important than those provided by those businesses, Munger said:

If we run a payroll with \$1.3 million in it and prioritize that above others, it means we cannot make a payment to a social service organization asking for payment. It means that we are slower in making payments to vendors ... who have provided services to the state.

Politicians in Illinois have long availed themselves of illegal and fraudulent opportunities to make sure that they do get paid. Dennis Hastert, who is presently in trouble for trying to evade financial reporting requirements because he was paying off a man who accused Hastert of sexually abusing him as a boy, championed an earmark back in 2006 that put nearly \$2 million into his pocket. The earmark, which provided impetus for the Prairie Parkway, a proposed expressway that would run close to land that he bought two years earlier. He resigned from Congress in 2007.

Daniel Rostenkowski, one of the most powerful representatives in the House, went to jail in 1996 following a two-year investigation into various fraudulent activities, which included jury tampering, influence peddling, and misuse of public funds.



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Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr. admitted in 2013 to violating federal campaign laws by using campaign funds to fund his personal lavish lifestyle and was sentenced to 30 months in jail in August 2013. Jackson is now under supervised release.

Otto Kerner, Illinois' 33rd governor, was convicted in 1973 on 17 counts of mail fraud, conspiracy, perjury, and other related charges, and was sentenced to three years in prison. Daniel Walker, the state's 36th governor, pled guilty to bank fraud and perjury and spent a year and a half in federal prison. George Ryan, Illinois' 39th governor, was found guilty of corruption and was sentenced in 2006 to six and a half years in prison. Rod Blagojevich, Illinois' 40th governor, was found guilty of corruption and was sentenced to 14 years in prison where he presently resides.

The corruption in Illinois isn't limited to federal officials or the state's governors either. In 2015, the head of Chicago's public schools, Barbara Byrd-Bennett, was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison for steering no-bid contracts with the CPS to a former employer who agreed to pay her 10 percent of those contracts.

While corruption has been a problem in Illinois for years, so has political impasse. In 2013, the Illinois Supreme Court threw out a budget compromise that took 16 months and six separate votes to pass. Today, the Republican governor and the Democrat-controlled legislature can't agree on what day of the week it is. Last July Governor Bruce Rauner, a Republican, spelled out a plan to deal with Illinois' overwhelming pension shortfalls, but never bothered to present it to the legislature knowing it was dead on arrival.

Munger's efforts to force the budget issue aren't the first time the tactic has been tried. In July 2013, Democratic Governor Pat Quinn used his veto powers to eliminate lawmakers' pay from the state's budget in order to force them to the budgetary compromise table. The lawmakers sued and a judge ruled in their favor, forcing the state's comptroller to issue the checks.

As one close observer of the current scene unfolding in Illinois, Mish Shedlock, said: "Illinois is terminal. [The] cancer is too deep and has spread too far to save the patient. The state is bankrupt morally, politically and monetarily."

*A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at [badelmann@thenewamerican.com](mailto:badelmann@thenewamerican.com).*



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