

# Advocates Call for Fair Budget Resolution

By: Ashmar Mandou

In a resounding 'go back to Springfield' anthem, representatives of the Responsible Budget Coalition aimed their discontent over the \$13 billion budget crisis at a news conference Tuesday and suggested Illinois legislators should not return home until they have come to a consensus on a 'responsible' state budget that

would protect vital public services from further cuts. "Kids and families, seniors and the disabled—Illinoisans of all kinds need help surviving this recession and getting back on their feet," said coalition Chairman John Bouman. "But the plans we're hearing about would result in more harmful cuts, avoid paying the bills and fail to solve the state's most fundamental fiscal problems." The

Responsible Budget Coalition expressed their support for HB 174, a tax-reform package that would increase income taxes moderately and modernize the state's sales-tax base. Among one of the organizations that relies heavily on state funding is the Erie Neighborhood House, an organization that assists low-income communities with a range of educational programs. "The



community looks to our organization for help. We provide vital services to them and if our services get cut our community members won't have many options left," said Celena Roldan, executive director for Erie Neighborhood House. Such services include after school programs, childcare, emergency services, and services for youth to develop academically. Approximately, 1,500 participants take advantage of the services provided to them by the Erie Neighborhood House of which are mostly Latino families. "We have seen a growth within the Latino

community and unfortunately their need for services our not being met due to these cuts. We need to be able to support a tax increase in order to keep our services intact." According to a study conducted by the Latino Policy Forum, in 2008, Latinos constituted 15 percent of the population, and since 2000, over ninety percent of the state's growth. However, despite the tremendous growth in the Latino community, the state's investment in the services that directly affect Latino families have not kept pace. "Most of the families who seek our services don't have a plan B.

The Erie Neighborhood House is the only plan they have to survive. So we need to push our legislatures," said Roldan. Starting in June, a supermajority vote would be essential to pass a budget for the fiscal year that begins in July. Coalition members and local activists are wasting no time in insisting legislatures come to a fair solution to the budget crisis. For more information, visit [www.abetterillinois.com](http://www.abetterillinois.com). The Responsible Budget Coalition includes more than 200 diverse organizations that represent and serve millions of Illinois residents.

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