

We can't afford the government we want

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Plugging a \$20 million budget shortfall is no easy task.

But this is the job that members of the DuPage County Board have before them. They were hoping the Illinois General Assembly would allow them to slap a new tax on cigarettes, but so far that hasn't panned out as an additional revenue source.

Robert Schillerstrom, chairman of the County Board, recently proposed substantial cuts in both personnel and programs. Department heads publicly opposed such cuts, stating residents wouldn't receive the services to which they've grown accustomed.

They're right. Chopping away at county agencies as proposed will alter the structure of this government entity.

But slapping residents with new taxes and user fees isn't a viable option. While we've enjoyed a low rate of inflation for years, wages have been very modest.

Between municipalities, counties, states and the federal government, the financial resources of taxpayers are being strained to the breaking point. Time and again people have told their elected officials that they simply have no more left to offer.

Given this, DuPage County can either engage in deficit spending or proceed with drastic cuts. Both are wrought with consequences, but one is clearly the lesser of two evils.

Officials must make some painful decisions about what to eliminate to balance their budget. We won't end up with the government we want, but we'll have to make do with the one we can afford.