



Members of the County Board, Elected Officials, staff, members of the press, and the citizens of DuPage County.

Today, I present our Fiscal Year 2008 budget.

In order to ensure we meet and fulfill our constitutionally mandated duties, as well as provide critical public safety and human service programs, we need a new revenue source.

Unfortunately, without one, this budget is our only choice.

For well over a year, we have held budget hearings, met with and educated lawmakers, spent innumerable days in Springfield, informed the public, sat down with editorial boards and debated amongst ourselves what a budget would look like in the absence of a new revenue source. This budget won't come as a surprise, but it will shock those who care.

This is not a budget I want. It is not a budget you want. It is not a budget our Elected Officials want or will probably accept. It is not a budget that will meet the needs of DuPage County or our constituents.

Sadly, Springfield has failed to act and this budget will harm our quality of life.

Natural revenue growth is not sufficient to meet our needs. Furthermore, economic indicators suggest that even this insufficient source is slowing down.

This budget includes significant layoffs, drastic cuts to services, and elimination of programs.

These are not cosmetic cuts; they are deep, they are real, and they will affect every department and service across our county.

The Fiscal Year 2008 budget proposal I lay out today is over \$50 million below this year's already reduced budget. The budget levels under this proposal will be at FY99 levels and aggregate headcount will be below 1997 levels.

We have been fiscally responsible – our FY07 budget was reduced over \$20 million from requests – and FY 2007 was cut below where we were in FY 2006.

Even if we could just reintroduce last year's budget without any cuts, we would not be providing the services we are asked to provide by the Legislature, our Elected Officials and our constituents.

I agree with each of our Elected Officials when they say they cannot do the jobs they were elected to do without more revenue. Yet, without a new revenue source, not only can we not give them more money -- we must cut more.

We are the leanest county in the Nation. Our ratio of employees to population is near the lowest in the country.

Government should cut fat -- we have.

Government shouldn't cut muscle -- we must.

We have raised fees where possible and instituted efficiencies to address budget constraints.

The absence of a new revenue source most adversely impacts the Corporate Fund, which provides the majority of resources for law enforcement, judicial, public safety and healthcare. The FY 2008 Corporate Fund budget is cut \$10 million below FY 2007 levels.

235 positions – 15 percent of the corporate workforce – will need to be cut. Over 179 of these will come from public safety agencies – 100 from the Sheriff's office alone.

A budget reduced by this magnitude, and including these staffing reductions, will adversely affect our public safety, put critical health and human service programs at risk, close community programs, and stretch an already over-burdened judicial system to the breaking point.

There is no way to sugarcoat the pain that will be felt in this budget.

If passed as presented, this budget will:

- Continue to reduce or eliminate human service programs, cutting off a lifeline to the community;
- Reduce funding for the Convalescent Center beginning the end of the facility as we have known it for over one hundred years.
- Reduce funding for Stormwater management;
- Eliminate environmental programs;
- Close traffic courts, putting more strain on an already over burdened court system
- Increase pressure on an already crowded jail;
- Reduce our capacity to adequately protect the public and our neighborhoods in responding to emergencies;
- Eliminate community and women's health programs;
- Further reduce funding for Access DuPage and the mental health collaborative;
- Eliminate funding for the U of I Extension;
- Close the Historical Museum – a fixture in DuPage County for over 40 years;
- Delay property tax distributions to schools and local governments;
- Delay payments to vendors who do business with the County; and
- Provide no merit or wage increases for remaining employees.

For years DuPage County has had one of the lowest crime rates in the nation. This is one of the primary reasons why families move to DuPage County.

This budget may change people's ideas about our County.

Hardest hit in this budget will be judicial and public safety agencies who guarantee safe communities, and a fair and effective criminal justice system.

The elimination of 100 employees from the Sheriff's office will drastically impact the county's law enforcement arm, meaning less manpower to monitor an already crowded jail, fewer officers on our streets, delays in response times and a greater strain on security levels throughout the county.

Less investment in public safety agencies and programs, including alternative sentencing programs,

increases the strain on our capacity to reduce recidivism among adults and youth as well as manage our growing jail population.

A 20 percent decrease in the number of probation officers – who already handle unduly high case loads – will mean offenders will spend more time unmonitored on our streets.

This budget will also continue to strain our State's Attorney's Office. I agree with their need for more employees and I applaud their efforts to secure more funding. Nevertheless, the general funding situation means his staffing levels will still be reduced.

Kane County, which has half the population we have, will now employ about the same number of prosecutors as us. The same comparison can probably be made in every department and agency across our County.

The inability to fully staff the State's Attorney's and Public Defender's Office will also mean the inability to dispose of cases in a timely and fair manner, and to provide both victims and the accused with adequate representation.

These are the hallmarks of our justice system, which DuPage residents have come to expect and deserve.

In short, this budget will negatively affect the operations of all aspects of our judicial system.

The cuts in this budget will not be confined to our public safety agencies – our human services community will feel these cuts as well.

It is well known that as the State and Federal governments have withdrawn from their health and human services responsibilities, urbanized counties like ours have become the safety net. We have welcomed that responsibility, but the lack of a new revenue source to address these responsibilities makes it impossible to do correctly.

Despite the efforts of our health and human service providers – who have been our allies in Springfield – this budget will not be able to restore the cuts made to human services in FY 2007. They will be cut further and will hurt the people who count on us the most.

The need for health and human service safety programs will grow in our county, not diminish. Reductions in these programs not only affect people and families in need, but also result in the loss of jobs within the community.

Reducing our support for health care and the safety net only ensures higher health care cost for all of us in the future.

With this budget we are reducing the Health Department levy by \$600,000. This is in addition to eliminating another \$2 million in other financial support that the county has historically provided to the Health Department.

This will result in the closure of community health programs, which provide emergency dental care for children, and women's health care including cervical and breast cancer screenings.

The Convalescent Center, which has been an oasis of care and community for over a century, will feel the pain of cuts.

By reducing the county's financial support – which is already the lowest subsidy among county nursing

facilities in the region – we are beginning the process of ending the county's operational support for this long-serving home.

We cannot put at risk patient care and support. Either we provide it correctly, or we don't provide it at all.

We must take an in-depth look at long-term options for our Convalescent Center, including the market feasibility of public or private partnerships that will allow the Convalescent Center to continue to be a valued resource in the community.

Therefore, I will be appointing a blue ribbon panel to consider the role of the Convalescent Center in providing long-term care and its place within a constellation of health service providers that must address the impacts of an expanding senior population.

Aside from caring for our residents and those in need, DuPage County has a proud history of caring for our environment and our open spaces. As we urbanize, this is an area that we should be increasing our investment in, not making cuts. But if we don't have the money, we cannot spend it. We cannot do the job we were elected to do.

The Household Hazardous Waste program, the regional recycling center in Naperville, and SCARCE – a model of environmental education – will no longer receive funding from the county.

Funding for water quality programs – mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency – will be compromised.

It should not go unnoticed that DuPage County avoided massive flooding that our neighbors endured during those violent storms that passed through our region this past August.

That wasn't just luck. It was because the county -- for over 20 years -- has invested hundreds of millions of dollars and developed and implemented comprehensive long-range plans to eliminate flooding.

That investment paid off, and pays off when we don't flood. Because of our investment, we have saved hundreds of millions of dollars that we would have suffered in flood damage. But with this budget, we will not have enough dollars to maintain our investment.

Unfortunately, water does not recognize borders or budget constraints. Without a new revenue source, we will flood again with all the attendant damages.

Cuts of this magnitude are not confined to county government alone; there will be a ripple effect throughout our entire community. It will impair our ability to attract and retain businesses; it will impose inconveniences on customer services throughout the county; and it will place greater financial burdens on other local units of government.

Layoffs in other departments, no matter how minute, will also affect the services they provide to the public, which will result in delays and inconveniences.

I also want to stress to our staff – the hard working men and women who make our county run and who have made it a special place to live, work and raise a family – that this budget and the layoffs it contains are not a reflection of the work you have done and the services you provide.

Unfortunately, this budget may force our loyal and dedicated staff to look for employment elsewhere.

These layoffs, and the loss of the institutional knowledge and experience of our staff, will hurt us for years to come. These reductions in staff and expenditures will also deplete our cash balance by \$10 million as we pay out accrued benefits and unemployment costs.

Some say we should just spend down our cash reserves, do a deficit budget and continue to look for a revenue source. But as you can see, even cutting programs and reducing staff costs us money and reduces our reserves.

This is not the budget I want. This is not the budget our Elected Officials want – and it certainly is not the budget the people of DuPage County want.

For eighteen months, we have worked tirelessly with our Legislative leaders and DuPage delegation to convince Springfield of our need for a new revenue source, specifically a local option cigarette tax. The Legislature has yet to give us this remedy.

We have met with lawmakers from Mattoon to Moline, from Clarendon Hills to Carbondale, in order to stress the crisis facing our county if we are unable to secure a substantial and permanent revenue source.

No one could have predicted that the political gridlock in Springfield would have lasted this long, nor could they have envisioned that we would be caught in the posturing taking place there. And since we have not had legislative action on a new revenue source, we must raise the property levy this year.

We are not the only county or government entity in this position, but as leaders, we must proceed.

What has been most frustrating throughout this entire process has been our inability to control our own destiny.

Our county has immense responsibilities to almost one-million people. It is absurd that we cannot control our own destiny and that we must continually wait for Springfield to act.

The cuts I am proposing today should leave all of us ill at ease if not ill. We must work together to see that this county maintains its quality of life, and that will be difficult.

To that end, I will continue to work with the Legislature and all of you over the next few weeks as the county debates this budget.

There is much work to be done.