

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Speaker Madigan: "The Fourth Special Session shall come to order. Is there leave to use the Attendance Roll Call of the First Special Session for this Session? Leave is granted. Representative Currie moves that the Fourth Special Session stand in recess. Those in favor say 'aye'; those opposed say 'no'. The 'ayes' have it. The Fourth Special Session stands in recess."

Speaker Madigan: "The Fourth Special Session shall come to order. The Chair recognizes Representative Currie."

Currie: "Thank you, Speaker. I move that the House rise and reconstitute itself as a Committee of the Whole for purposes of testimony in the Fourth Special Session."

Speaker Madigan: "You've all heard the Lady's Motion. Those in favor say 'aye'; those opposed say 'no'. The 'ayes' have it. The House is constituted as a Committee of the Whole. And we want to welcome the Governor's greatest director, Director Miram. Mr. Hannig will serve as the Chair of the Committee of the Whole."

Chairman Hannig: "Director, I think we will begin the Committee of the Whole by allowing you and anyone from the Governor's staff to make a short presentation."

Director Miram: "Thank you, Representative. With me today to my left is Pam Compton Lowry, our administer... Administrator of Child Support. You've been with the program for how many years?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Fifteen (15)."

Director Miram: "Fifteen (15) years, extensive experience. To my right is the Administrator of Budget and Finance, Mike

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Moss of the Department of Healthcare and Family Services. First of all, good afternoon. It's a privilege to be here and I've had the opportunity to engage and work with Representatives throughout this chamber here today for many years and I appreciate it. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the important topic of child support enforcement. The child support program, as you know, is about economic parity for children. All of us here today value children and the hope they provide for our future and their own. And each of us playing a part in making the future of children better through making sure that they have the economic resources they need to thrive. And the Illinois child support program has been about enforcing this economic obligation to children, but it's also about treating parents fairly and strengthening families. We've had a number of successes and we have a challenge that we're bringing to you today, but at... that successes we have have been overwhelming and they could not have been done without the support of the Members of this Legislature and it has been a bipartisan effort and we appreciate that. Several of you have taken a particular interest in the child support program and I'd like to take a moment to thank and acknowledge Representative Soto, Bellock, Hamos, and Rose and that means all others who have been such a part of the success of this program. Since the administration began many changes have been made in the child support program. Because of the great partnership you've had with this Governor and with the people in this agency and throughout State Government, it

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

has been recognized as the most improved program in the nation and that is not a small feat. It's been from an objective standard, the child support... National Child Support Enforcement Association. But we've also won awards from as diverse groups as the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, the Lincoln Foundation for Performance Excellence and again, the National Child Support Award as the most improved program in the nation. In the fiscal year just ended, Illinois collected 1.2 billion dollars (\$1,200,000,000) in child support, 7 percent higher than FY '06 and 66 percent higher than 2001 collections of seven hundred and twenty-nine million (729,000,000). There's no doubt that more than six hundred thousand (600,000) families served by the Illinois child support program are getting better value. However, our program is about treating parents fairly and strengthening families. We have helped mothers establish and fathers establish their parentage. We work with hospitals to help parents establish parentage and provide genetic testing. In January, we began working with low-income fathers who owe support to the state giving them an opportunity to pay that support that in exchange for regular payment of support to their families for debt forgiven. But we have a serious budget crisis and I say that again because this program, which has done incredible things over the last four (4) years, has a serious budget crisis. And it's as a result of what is being proposed, with all due respect out of the House, as compared to what the Governor had asked for. The Deficit Reduction Act of

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

2005, the United States Congress narrowly voted to reduce the federal funding of the child support program. Illinois's loss was approximately sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) and that has now taken effect and that affects families throughout Illinois. Child support knows no barriers, geographic, economic, it knows no barriers. Through careful planning, the Governor's budget was able to mitigate the effect of this federal funding by requesting 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000) in additional General Revenue Funds from thirty-one million (31,000,000) to thirty-eight point nine million (38,900,000). The General Revenue dollars are matched by the Federal Government by 66 percent. That means that this would result in approximately twenty-five million dollars (\$25,000,000) to the program making up the federal gap, as well. By not having those dollars, it is more than the economic term opportunities forgone. It means dollars lost to families and children throughout Illinois and we respectfully look forward to this opportunity to point out the fact that not having it in the budget costs all of us, and it also costs the local counties who are our partners in enforcing the program. I ask that you support the child support program now as you have in the past and approve the child support budget as presented, lead by the Governor and by this department. Again, it was no small feat to take a program with your help that was in many people's minds in previous years devastating. It had made news; it had affected families and communities. In these four (4) years becoming the most improved program was a

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

great success, but we don't wanna lose that opportunity now by going backwards and we're really here to answer any questions."

Chairman Hannig: "Thank you, Director. We appreciate your being here with us this afternoon. We've allotted thirty-seven and a half minutes maximum for each side of the aisle. And Representative Dugan will be collecting requests from the Democratic side and Representative Eddy on the Republican side. So if you wish to speak, please see your respective spokesperson and we'll be able to accommodate I think everyone who wishes to speak. Representative Lou Lang is recognized now for 10 minutes."

Lang: "Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Director, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here, appreciate it very much. As you know, Mr. Director, I've been interested in this issue of child support collections, as well. Let me... and because I'm aware that this is an issue, let me ask you what federal roadblocks are there in the way of the state making changes in our regulations to do a better job collecting child support?"

Director Miram: "Well, I'd like to address that, but first I'd like to say that as a result of the changes we've made over these four (4) years, we have increased.. would you go into the details, Pam?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Good afternoon, Representative Lang. It's good to see you again. You asked about federal roadblocks. The biggest federal roadblock that we have right now is the loss of incentive funding, matched incentive funding, for

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

the program. So, part sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) of our budget is gone, all of the requirements remain. I think our performance speaks for itself in terms of how we've been able to improve over the years. You know from our previous conversations, that our collections improve every year. We're getting better all the time at improving current support collections for families, which is really the important part of child support is regular, economic payments to support children. And in 2001, only 39 percent of those payments were made. As of last year, 53 percent were made."

Lang: "All right. Well, I appreciate that answer, but it didn't get to where I was going with my question. I understand the feds cut your funding, but when... every time... mostly every time there's a Bill out here to try to make some changes in how we do our child support collections, some staffer will come running over to me telling me, well, we can't do that, there's Federal Law that says you can't do that. So, what are those things? What does a Federal Law... where are the federal regulations that keep us from doing all the things we would like to do to collect child support?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "They're in the Code of Federal Regulations Part 45 is an extensive comprehensive set of rules that child support programs across the nation have to subscribe to. If you don't subscribe to the federal rules, you lose the 66 percent match on your expenditures. I would be happy to go over those rules with you in detail at your convenience, but it is quite comprehensive."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Lang: "I would like you to make at least some bullet points available to all the Members of the House so we know what those are, but let me go on to the next point that that raises. And that would be, what efforts have your office made or the Governor's Office made to interface with our Representatives in Washington, our United States Senators, to change those rules?"

Director Miram: "I would like to point out with you, even before Pam points out, that... and we don't have the document here... the federal commissioner indicated that Illinois had been interacting with it considerably and actually wrote that this was a turnaround program because of the continued interface. Pam, why don't you go into details?"

Lang: "Well, I wanna make sure you're answering my question, though."

Director Miram: "Okay."

Lang: "My question was about the changes that we would like to see in Federal Law to enable us to do our job better."

Pam Compton Lowry: "And Representative Lang, I think if you could help us identify those changes that you're talking about we can take those up. Just last year, in February, I spoke to members of the U.S. Congressional Delegation about Federal Law related to child support and specifically about this budget cut and asked for their support in... in trying to mitigate these causes. So, certainly, we're able to speak to the delegation and we participate with the, Office of Child Support Enforcement, regularly in conversations about what's best for the child support program. I guess I'm not

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

understanding what specific proposal that you'd like for me to discuss."

Lang: "Well, let me just move on. So, today you're collecting money in child support, you also have outside collection agencies or lawyers doing some of this. Is that correct?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "There are any number of people who operate in the child support field."

Lang: "Right. Generally speaking, who has a better collection rate, our own state collectors or our outside collectors?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "By outside collectors, do you mean the contracts that we engage in to have people help us with our child support collections?"

Lang: "Yes, everyone that isn't a state employee. Who's doing a better job?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "You know, I'm not really sure how to answer that question. We have people who work in various aspects of child support while we administer the whole program. So, for instance, we have the Attorney Generals and state's attorneys who do legal representation. We work with the State of Rhode Island to match liens, lawsuit claims. You know, we work with the Department of Revenue on certain kinds of special wage levies. There... We work with circuit clerks. There are a number of partners who each play a role in a much bigger whole and I don't think you can adequately compare their performance."

Director Miram: "I think they complement each other."

Lang: "So, we don't have an answer to this question?"

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Director Miram: "I think the answer is to say that one group, to say Cook County state's attorneys do a bad job or downstate state's attorneys do a better job. People work together. We evaluate all those contractors year after year. And..."

Lang: "Are those evaluations in writing?"

Director Miram: "Evaluations are?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "We monitor our intergovernmental contractors monthly and provide them on a series of measures and provide them, their compliance monitoring rate. If they fail three (3) months in a row, we require them to submit a corrective action plan."

Lang: "Let me formally then request a summary of all those evaluations as soon as possible so I can review them."

Director Miram: "Yes, Sir."

Lang: "Let me ask you. In last year or maybe earlier this year, the Department of Health Care and Family Services proposed an Illinois-Iowa joint child support enforcement office. What is happening with that proposal?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "It is in full swing. It's a joint office. It's collected more than seven hundred and seventy thousand dollars (\$770,000)."

Lang: "And I assume that the... how would you say, the Iowans are as happy as you are with the response to this?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "You know, we talked with them as a large group quarterly and informally daily. As you know, there's an Iowa staffer actually located in the Rock Island office. I believe that they are happy with it and I... we certainly are."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Lang: "And I would like to see some thumbnail of what's going on with that program as well."

Director Miram: "Yes, Sir."

Lang: "What does your agency do regarding complaints that may come in from parents who are trying to get their child support? How are complaints handled? Are they logged in, do you keep a listing of these? And finally on this subject, is there one particular complaint they have more than any other, other than where's my money? Right. Can you answer those questions?"

Director Miram: "Pam."

Pam Compton Lowry: "We have our customer call center that is... it's multichannel, it's the Web, it's telephone and we have walk-in... the ability to take people on a walk-in basis in our office. We do track those com... concerns and complaints. Although, we actually have on schedule for next year, should the budget go through, a better tracking and monitoring system for customer service. The most frequent complaint, it depends on whether it's the noncustodial parent or the custodial parent. Noncustodial parents typically want answers about custody and visitation, which we aren't authorized to participate in. Custodial parents typically wanna know how do they get money or how do they get more money. And you know, when years ago... cause I have been with this program for a long time... years ago people could get answers to their questions from 8:15 in the morning until 4:45 in the afternoon, Monday through Friday. They could only do that by phone. And if they wanted to talk to a

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

person, they waited a really long time. Sometimes it would take a whole day just to get through and not get a busy signal. Now, we have 24/7 access for our customers. They can do it by phone; they can do it by Web. They can get 70 percent of their questions answered immediately. If they wanna speak to a customer service representative, that is during business hours, they will experience typically a 20 minute wait. We'd like to see that lessened. In our budget request is a request for twelve (12) more people to work in that call center."

Lang: "Thank you. Under the law we passed some years ago, as I understand it, you now have the ability to cause people's driver's licenses to be suspended for nonpayment of child support. How many driver's licenses have you suspended in the last twelve (12) months?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "The courts have the ability right now to suspend driver's licenses for nonpayment of child support, either at the request of the department or at the request of a private attorney. Very few driver's licenses are suspended through court order. As you know, we worked together on a Bill that would allow the administrative suspension of driver's licenses. Since the mid '90s, only about four thousand (4,000) driver's licenses have ever been suspended in Illinois for nonpayment of child support."

Lang: "So, how many deadbeats are there that are not paying their child support that are driv... that have driver's licenses in the State of Illinois?"

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Pam Compton Lowry: "Our estimate is that there could be fifty thousand (50,000) people who would pay their child support in order to keep their driver's license. That's why the Bill that was proposed this year is so important to the department."

Lang: "And you feel if we do it administratively rather than through the courts, it'll be a simpler and easier system?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Correct. And we feel that we'll be able to work with the noncustodial parents so that they can enter into a payment agreement, drive, work, and support their family, which is the goal."

Lang: "And would it be your intent to use this system more often once we... once you... we implement the new law will you be able to move quickly to do this?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes."

Lang: "And it is you plan to do this?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes."

Lang: "How many would you estimate you would be moving to suspend within the first twelve (12) months of the new operation?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Again, the... the intent is to enter into payment agreements with the noncustodial parents. We don't want driver's licenses; we want collections for children. I would expect that we would start with a relatively small pool of debtors who owe more than five thousand dollars (\$5,000), work through our processes and then ramp up from there. It's the same process we used with passport denial. In 2002, we collected two hundred and three thousand dollars

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

(\$203,000). This year we collected... I'm sorry... with asset deni... administrative asset seizure, two hundred and two (202,000)... two hundred and three thousand (203,000) in 2002, 13.5 million (13,500,000) this year."

Lang: "Thank you. One additional question. I know my time is up, Mr. Chairman, but if I might, one additional question. You said your shortfall is... gimme that number again."

Director Miram: "The shortfall to the budget that's proposed at the House was 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000), which thereby lost the opportunity of federal matching funds of twenty-five million (25,000,000), which would help fill the gap of the federal cuts as well."

Lang: "All right. So, you're here arguing for the restoration of that 7.9 nine million dollars (\$7,900,000)?"

Director Miram: "Correct."

Lang: "But you don't really care if it's added to your line item, you don't care where that comes from as long as you get that. Is that right?"

Director Miram: "I think the answer to that would be that we have an opportunity forgone, unless we put 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000) back in this budget. I have a responsibility to all of you. You call me, I wanna work with you, I wanna serve you. When I know we're losing dollars, I gotta find a way to put this in front of you, that it's costing all of Illinois."

Lang: "Thank you all very much."

Director Miram: "Thank you."

Lang: "Thank you, Mr. Chairman."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Pritchard, you're recognized for 4 minutes."

Pritchard: "Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Director, thank you, and ladies and gentlemen. You mentioned today that you're trying to ask and explain the justification for 7.9 million (7,900,000) to leverage the twenty-five (25,000,000). Could you give us a little bit more elaboration into how that money will be used?"

Director Miram: "Certainly. And as we proceed, I am more than prepared to show the worth of the program. I would point out that organizations that weren't likely to automatically give accreditation have... had Illinois's program stand out, but I wanna go into further detail. Please, Pam."

Pam Compton Lowry: "The twenty-five million dollars (\$25,000,000) covers the loss of federal revenue. That covers our standard program operation costs. It covers our contracts with counties, with state's attorneys, with clerks, the cost to run the state disbursement unit, our staff that... to establish child support orders that... to take customer service inquiries. It covers additional staff, twelve (12) additional staff for the call center and eleven (11) additional staff for the field. It covers a new add-on to our customer service call center that will allow us to track our complaints better and allow customers to get automatic calls when they have an appointment scheduled and it covers the collections fee that the Federal Government has imposed upon states also is part of the Deficit Reduction Act."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Pritchard: "So, these functions would not be able to occur if you didn't get the supplemental or the twenty-five million (25,000,000)?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "The 7.9 million (7,900,000) that we can turn into... that we can match to twenty-five million (25,000,000) cover all of these things. Without this money, we won't be able to provide service even at the level that we're providing now. In other words, we'd have to cut services."

Pritchard: "You mentioned six hundred thousand (600,000) families would be affected. How many children are involved in the dollars that we're talking about?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "There are over seven hundred thousand (700,000) children. I think the number is around seven hundred and fifty thousand (750,000) now."

Pritchard: "And how many staff do you have servicing these seven hundred thousand (700,000)?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "The Division of Child Support Enforcement has eight hundred and fifty-four (854) staff in total because we fund many staff also at the county level. In total, there are fifteen hundred (1500) people in the State of Illinois, state and county, who work in the child support program."

Pritchard: "Out of this fifteen hundred (1500), in my district, I've heard that there has been significant staff changeover. What is your experience of staff changing and therefore, having inefficiencies in your people doing their work?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Well, I guess I would say that, you know, people in any business in any course of work will find new

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

opportunities and they will take them. My experience with the division of child support enforcement is been that people are very dedicated to it and tend to stay for very long periods of time, but in any office you will have periods where staff find other opportunities. And I'm sorry, I don't know which office that you represent. I'd be happy to talk with you outside of here."

Pritchard: "So, I would welcome that opportunity."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes."

Pritchard: "But what level of turnover do you have agencywide?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "You know, I have not looked at that recently, it hasn't been, you know, extensive. We continually have people who promote to other positions and new people that come in."

Pritchard: "Mmm mmm. You mentioned one of the tools that you're... that we're looking at is driver's license revocation. Are there other suggestions that you have that would help us be more effective in collecting child support?"

Director Miram: "I'd like to point some of those out. The reason that we altogether have won the national awards is because of the changes and innovations we've been doing. Why don't we go into some of those innovations that we've been doing and the collection increases. I didn't want... yeah... I realize to some degree this is a discussion about the child support program. We welcome that because we think when the Lincoln Foundation chose us as a leader and award winner for business enterprise that we're doing, when the

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

national council described us as most improved program, we welcome this. Please, Pam."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Over the last two (2) years, we... over the last two (2) years, we... we undertook a dramatic and comprehensive business practice reengineering. We literally took every one of our practices apart, found out what was wrong with them, discarded some of them, created some new ones. One of the things that we did was change the way we interview people and the way we take people into our system so that those people who most need to see us are the first ones in the door. We created the customer service call center. Before you could call any place and probably not get an answer, now there's one place to call, one place to look where you always get an answer. We have changed the way we use our locate procedure so that we have a better success locating people. We've added passport denial, administrative seizure of assets, which means bank accounts, we've seized the proceeds from lawsuits, we used the federal tax offset program to collect federal tax money and in... during all of that we've consulted with other states. What tools are you using that the State of Illinois should look at using as well? The overwhelming answer is administrative driver's licenses and so that's our initiative for now."

Pritchard: "Very good. A lot of state agencies have difficulty with their computer system and their ability to share information and talk between agencies. Is this a problem in your agency?"

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Pam Compton Lowry: "Let me just... also to go back to your last question. The Bill that would give administrative driver's license authority to the department is Senate Bill 1035. It... we have many, many interfaces with other agencies. The Department of Employment Security is a huge partner of ours as is the Department of Public Health, the Vital Statistics Department, and Human Services. We have daily interfaces of data with all of those entities. We also interface with federal... the federal parent locator service, the federal new hire directory. In Illinois, the state new hire directory is a collaboration between Employment Security and Health Care and Family Services. We're one of the few programs that has a requirement to have a certified and a review examined in a federally certified computer system. And that certification was received in Illinois in April of 2003."

Director Miram: "That was... and that was a very substantial accreditation that was celebrated by the Federal Government as well. And I would like to point out that one of the great successes of these innovations that led to our... to the recognized success has been the interface between agencies working together. What Pam was describing was the fact that people leave from job to job and their... no longer can be... their wages don't always get garnished. By working with a very effective computer system with ID... with the Department of Employment Security and working with others, this has been a tremendously successful program."

Pritchard: "One final question. It has come to my attention that we're doing an effective job of collecting child

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

support in Illinois, but if the parent, one of the parents, chooses to move to another state, we lack authority. Is there efforts, federally, that we ought to pursue that would allow us to pursue that individual wherever they may live?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "The interstate child support efforts are covered... interstate child support efforts are covered under that Uniform Interstate Family Support Act of 2001, which Illinois has actually adopted. Typically, when people talk about difficulties across the state, they're talking about extradition and that's more about the fact that child support is civil procedure rather than criminal procedure, so extradition really isn't something that we're able to engage in. I think we have done, over the past few years, a much better job of enforcing child support across state lines than we have in the past and in part that's due to these interfaces that you and I were just talking about."

Pritchard: "So, that's not an issue to pursue an individual and his earning abilities in another state?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "It's an issue based on the facts of the individual case. We have the legal authority to pursue it and we do. We do it regularly, frequently. Interstate cases are almost always more difficult than instate cases and people usually have more trouble, the payments often are less regular and it is a problem around the nation."

Pritchard: "Okay. Thank you."

Director Miram: "Thank you."

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Brady is recognized to make an announcement. Representative Brady."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Brady: "Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would like to announce that the Republicans will have a caucus immediately upon adjournment in Room 118. A Republican Caucus immediately upon adjournment in Room 118. Thank you."

Chairman Hannig: "Thank you, Representative Brady. Representative Soto, you're recognized for 3 minutes."

Soto: "Thank you. Thank you, Speaker... Chairman and thank you Members of this House. Director, I thank you for being here. I thank Pam and Mike and the staff. You... you, know, you've been so wonderful when it comes to child support, so I rise in support of your increase... of your additional increase that you're looking for. It's very important that we keep this funding available for child support. I mean, children don't have the benefit of both parents and this is a big help. So, I hope not to see any... any cuts when it comes to services because we've worked... we've come a long way since you've been there."

Director Miram: "Representative Soto, you've been our partner and our leader and your background in child support knows this area intensely."

Soto: "Thank you, thank you. And I also wanna thank our Members here in the House that you've mentioned and others that were not mentioned. I can't remember anyone who wasn't, but anyway I'd like to thank everyone because they've been so supportive of the issues and Bills that have been before this General Assembly. And I wanna thank the Speaker because he was also involved and now the agenda for child support for this year, so thank you again and thank you for,

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

you know, for bringing us up to the top when it comes to collections and congratulations on your recogni... national recognition."

Director Miram: "And again, that's our national recognition. You know, we don't wanna harp on what was, but what was before this administration and working together with you over these four (4) years was a very difficult, challenging, nightmarish situation in child support. Thanks to efforts here throughout the chamber, it's been succeeding. We just don't wanna go backwards after all this."

Soto: "And keep up the good work when it comes to the advisory board and the commission, it's so... I mean, wonderful people on those boards. Thank you."

Director Miram: "Thank you."

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Jim Meyer, you're recognized for 3 minutes."

Meyer: "Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The FY '08 budget, is that greater than the FY '07 budget?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes."

Meyer: "How much?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Well, the dollars aren't greater, the General Revenue is. Mike, do you wanna?"

Michael Moss: "Representative, the budget request, submitted by the Governor's..."

Meyer: "I'm sorry. I can't hear ya."

Michael Moss: "I'm sorry. In the requested budget submitted by the Governor, we requested thirteen (13)... 38.9 million dollars (\$38,900,000)..."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Meyer: "Well, what is... I don't need the math. I only have 3 minutes. How much greater is your FY '08 budget request than FY '07?"

Michael Moss: "It's greater by 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000)."

Meyer: "It's greater by 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000). Is that the same 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000) that you feel is gonna be cut out?"

Michael Moss: "Yes."

Meyer: "And who's cutting it out?"

Director Maram: "The House proposed budget."

Meyer: "The House proposed budget, okay."

Director Maram: "And I would point out that there has been no in... request for increases through these years, so this isn't a situation where people come to you and ask for a wish list. This is a situation where people tell you Federal Government has cut back, we're gonna lose our opportunity."

Meyer: "Are you asking for additional staffing?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "The budget has eleven (11) additional line field staff, those are line case workers and twelve (12) additional people to answer the phones in the call center."

Meyer: "All related to the 7.9 million (7,900,000)?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "As part of the 7.9 million (7,900,000)."

Meyer: "Are they all related to the 7.9 million (7,900,000)?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "The 7.9 million (7,900,000) because it's federally matchable, yes. I'm not sure..."

Meyer: "But... but that program?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes, yes."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Meyer: "Okay. I want to ask a que... go back to the out-of-state collections. My office has experienced a number of those issues also with lack of cooperation from other states. Now, if you say that you recognize it's a federal issue and other states recognize it's a federal issue, then why can't... why can't all the states get together? We certainly have a state associations. Why can't we all get together and put some pressure on the feds to come up with an idea regardless of what Party's in Congress? It seems like we still have the problem."

Pam Compton Lowry: "You know, we do participate in a multistate conversations about interstate issues. That's one of the reasons why we have the Illinois-Iowa joint office. We just kicked off a new... a partnership with Illinois-Wisconsin where instead of sharing the same office, we're sharing computer systems..."

Meyer: "But those are only..."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yeah, we're..."

Meyer: "...states in the close proximity to Illinois..."

Director Maram: "Representative, I agree."

Meyer: "...but we go all over."

Director Miram: "We will... we do and we will work aggressively to solve any barriers."

Meyer: "Well, I think that this Body certainly would be interested in seeing what you're doing and trying to lend support for it."

Director Miram: "Thank you, Sir."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Meyer: "If you could identify what you are doing and how we can lend support, well, then I think we'd be able to possibly take some action. What do you attribute to the improvement in child support collections to?"

Director Miram: "I think that, and we'll go into great detail here, we have focused on treating this more and more with private industry concerns as well as a commitment of working with our partners throughout the state. We've had to have business reengineering going on throughout the agency. We have standards that we keep ongoing to show what our collections are, our cost ratios. We have a very strong responsive commitment center from all the important departments in the agency to show what they're doing and how the collections are working now. Why don't we go into some of the initiatives that we..."

Meyer: "Well, I don't... I understand that. Let me go on though to the next question. How long has it been since you've been audited, your programs... these programs have been audited by the Auditor General?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "We are... we are regularly..."

Meyer: "What's regularly?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "...and separately audited."

Meyer: "What is..."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Annually by the Auditor General."

Director Miram: "Annually."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Annually by the Federal Government. Annually, as a self-assessment, by the Federal Government, which is a reviewed report."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Meyer: "I'll be honest with ya, I see a lot of the Auditor General's informa... or audits coming through my office and I don't always read all of them, I'd be the first to admit it. If you could forward to me the last..."

Director Miram: "Certainly."

Meyer: "...copy of the last audit you had done on child collect... or on child support collections, I'd appreciate it. I come from a business background, was audited quite often in the accounting department that I worked or that I managed actually and quite often... quite honestly, I liked it because it always made me look better. So if you could forward those, I would appreciate it. Thank you for your answers."

Director Miram: "And I would like to add that our advisory council is bipartisan. The successes are Democrat, there's Republican, they're Governor Blagojevich working together. And this has been... this has been a success for all of us. We just don't wanna go backwards right now."

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Hamos, you're recognized for 3 minutes."

Hamos: "Thank you. Good afternoon. And serving on the advisory committee is a real pleasure. I try to remain active in this, having done this previously in my career and I do wanna congratulate you for really good work that you have done and the national awards and I think a real effort at improving the system. I had been asked some questions though, about your budget need this year because as you know there's many peoples lining up at our door looking for dollars in what's looking like a kind of a bleak budget

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

year. So do I understand this. What is... what is your current appropriations in '07?"

Michael Moss: "The current '07 appropriations were thirty-one million dollars (\$31,000,000)."

Hamos: "Okay. So, that's what I thought I heard you say. So, an eight million dollar (\$8,000,000) increase is over a 20 percent increase, right? So..."

Director Miram: "Well, I think, we'll... first, we have to reflect on the fact that we're being cut at the federal level, as you know. And therefore, what was in '07 wouldn't continue into '08 because of the federal cut. Pam."

Hamos: "So, what... Okay. So, I guess I'm trying to understand though, totality of your budget request. So, you are requesting... you are... you are currently requesting... currently are being appropriated thirty million dollars (\$31,000,000) and is that just GRF or does that include federal?"

Michael Moss: "That is the GRF contribution."

Hamos: "Okay. And how much are you getting for federal match?"

Michael Moss: "We get approximately... we get a 66 percent match."

Hamos: "On that thirty-one million (31,000,000)?"

Michael MOss: "Yes."

Hamos: "So, your total budget is about a hundred million (100,000,000)?"

Michael Moss: "Around there."

Hamos: "A round number is a hundred million (100,000,000)? Well, ninety-one million (91,000,000)... ninety-something, right? Ninety-two million (92,000,000)?"

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Pam Compton Lowry: "I think... I think I can maybe simplify this, after we spoke earlier. Last... last year we had spending authority for a hundred and eighty-one million dollars (\$181,000,000). This year, in the budget that's proposed, we'll have spending authority for a hundred and eighty-four million (184,000,000). Last year, in fiscal year '07, we had sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) in federal match ability that we don't have, that we lose this year."

Hamos: "Sixteen?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Sixteen million (16,000,000)."

Hamos: "Right."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Which is the value of the in... of the match on our incentive. We're asking for that to be replaced. Additionally, we're asking for 3.5 million (3,500,000) for additional staff, 2.5 million (2,500,000) to cover a new cost imposed by the Federal Government, that's a collection fee and a million dollars (\$1,000,000) to buy software for our call center that will allow us to track calls and dial out calls. Yes, so..."

Hamos: "I... I really did hear you..."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yeah, yeah."

Hamos: "...say that before. But I guess, so, again, the total increase, and I think some of our colleagues were asking this as well, is a hundred eighty-one to a hundred eighty-four (181,000,000 to 184,000,000), is that right? I mean, that doesn't seem right because this... the eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) that you're requesting we'll be able to draw down sixteen million (16,000,000)."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Pam Compton Lowry: "Right."

Hamos: "Right?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Right."

Hamos: "So, it's not that you're really asking for sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) replacement with the eight million (8,000,000), you're actually getting a twenty-four million (24,000,000) replacement, no?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "We're getting the sixteen million dollar (\$16,000,000) replacement and eight dollars... and eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) in additional costs."

Hamos: "Okay."

Director Miram: "And we might point out that with all our successes this has been a program that has not come to you for additional resources and we all know how important the resources are. So, these are... these came not as a wish list, but knowing where we are, that we would go backwards if we can't move with these other items."

Hamos: "Well, again, I think that we support what you're doing, we think you're doing a very good job, the only question is is this the year that we can afford increases not only in your program, of course, but in every other program where there are very worthy and important needs. So, again, let me ask... let me ask a different kind of question. Have you requested increases in the past few years?"

Director Miram: "No."

Hamos: "So, I mean, is it possible that you don't need... necessarily need to go from sixteen million (16,000,000) to

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

twenty-four million (24,000,000) this year when we're having a... kind of a budget shortfall?"

Michael Moss: "Well, respectfully, this is the year that the Federal Government is imposing its cuts and that's what we're experiencing right now which is..."

Hamos: "I under... I understand that they're..."

Director Miram: "Besides... besides losing the sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) as Pam pointed out, we are now incurring a fee from the Federal Government that wasn't there before. So, in addition to really being take away moneys, we are getting moneys to cover that. The other areas are this, we know, and I think most people like yourselves know, that we've made these great successes but when people are concerned about the call center and when we have constituent concerns there is going to be some isolated situations that we don't want to have. And these dollars are being spent to make sure that all the successes we've done, we don't go backwards and we really believe that up to this point, and that's why we haven't asked, up to this point we've been using business engineering. To even stay where we're at, and hopefully make some successes, these dollars are extremely needed, extremely needed. It's not a wish list. If we weren't coming... if we were wish listing, we would have come to you year after year."

Hamos: "Well, Barry, I... I appreciate that, again, because please know that every single person who comes before us..."

Director Miram: "I know and I respect that, Representative."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Hamos: "...says this is not a wish list, this is what's really needed to maintain service, so. Again, one final way to ask this question, I'm just trying to understand this one... I was asked to ask you this one essential point. This is not just a replacement of federal dollars, this is an expansion, correct?"

Director Miram: "Some portion of it. Other than the six... the sixteen million (16,000,000) is a federal replacement. The collection that's imposed on us by the feds, is how much?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Is two point five million (2,500,000)."

Director Miram: "So, all those are all just replacement. So, the additional... the additional sums would be simply to implement what we've been spending these last few years on and so, therefore, the vast majority of this is replacement."

Hamos: "But the eight million (8,000,000) that you're requesting, actually will be able to get matched by sixteen million (16,000,000) so that becomes twenty-four million (24,000,000)."

Director Miram: "Right. And the..."

Hamos: "Sixteen million (16,000,000) becomes twenty-four million (24,000,000). Is that right?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "So, of the... so of the eight million dollar (\$8,000,000) difference, two and a half that covers the collection fees..."

Hamos: "It's an expansion?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yeah. Well, the collection fee I don't think is an..."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Hamos: "We understand that it's well spent."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yeah."

Hamos: "But..."

Director Miram: "But that's monies..."

Pam Compton Lowry: "It's like..."

Director Miram: "...taking away from us. That 2.5 (2,500,000) is not new money."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yeah."

Director Miram: "That's money being taken away."

Pam Compton Lowry: "I would agree that the call center software is an expansion and the... and the headcount... the small number of headcount's an expansion, not the fee, though. But the call center software, you know, we... we get thousands of calls a day. There is... things wear out. You know, you have to invest or it breaks and if you can't answer questions from your constituents, you know, we can't continue to operate with old technology and that's where we're at now. And as far as people to answer the phones, I think, again, we provide a public service that's important to people and 20 minute wait time is pretty long."

Hamos: "Okay."

Director Miram: "And I would like to point out that I think a number of us remember the system before four (4) years ago. And to go from what the system was to today and not have asked for any additional funds, what we're asking for here, I think, is minimal. But I appreciate it, Representative."

Hamos: "Okay. Thank you."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Black, you're recognized for 5 minutes."

Black: "Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here, ladies and gentlemen. You indeed have come a long way. I've been here a long time and it wasn't that many years ago I stood on this House Floor and said we had the worst child support system in the country bar none and that attitude in view of mine was later upheld by most every agency in the Federal and State Governments. We... we were miserable. The State Disbursement Unit was an absolute disaster. I don't know how many million dollars we wrote off on that, ten or eleven million (10,000,000 or 11,000,000), that we finally had to advance people because nobody knew where anything was. Let me ask you a question about that. I still run into that problem. Do you have all, as far as you're concerned, are all of the computer systems now talking with each other, because I'm still having trouble sometimes getting information from the circuit clerk's office that meshes with the state office?"

Ann Compton Lowry: "Our computers talk to each other all the time. Every bit of information that comes into a state computer is recorded. The state sends out every bit of information that comes in. Would... what I say to you about this or any other computer system or people who operate computer systems that there's never ever ever a mistake made, there is, ya know."

Black: "Oh, sure. Well..."

Ann Compton Lowry: "But... but..."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Black: "I don't know that government will ever achieve zero tolerance..."

Ann Compton Lowry: "Yeah."

Black: "...but... but we try."

Ann Compton Lowry: "Do they work? I can tell you that I happened to look at your district this morning, in 2002, which was shortly after the State Disbursement Unit nightmare, about eleven million dollars (\$11,000,000) in child support was... was working your way through... child support cases was working your way through your district. It's seventeen (17,000,000) now, in just four (4) years."

Black: "Yeah. And it continues to be... my legislative aides and caseworkers continue to have an awf... excuse me... an awful lot of child support cases that come in, and of course, people when they come to our office are generally very, very frustrated, some are angry and that might be a kind way of saying it. What kind of cooperation are you getting from judges? I hope you're doing better than I in the case of people who just simply don't pay, ignore court orders, ignore correspondence from your unit. Are you able to contact the judiciary through your legal branch? It seems to me..."

Director Miram: "Sure."

Black: "...that we still have that gulf between what the court order says, what your agency says, but what the judiciary is willing and able or... I shouldn't say able... willing to do."

Director Miram: "Thank you, Representative Black. As a lawyer of over thirty (30) years, I've had the opportunity to work

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

with a number of judges and we've made a very strong effort to actually sit down with the judiciary, as appropriate... as appropriate and express our concerns and I think there's been some movement there. We will continue to do that appropriately because you're right, I picked up on that early, we need to work together as a team appropriately."

Black: "I... I... and I really appreciate that because you can imagine somebody who has an arrearage of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) which isn't unusual in my district and they get very frustrated because they come in and say the judge won't do anything, we contact your office and there's just frustration all the way around. And a lot of times when we get a hold of the judicial... the administrative officer of the 5th Circuit, ya know, we get answers like, well, the judge, ya know, order them to jail, then obviously they can't work and then obviously they'll make no payment. Well, when they haven't made a payment in four (4) or five (5) years, I don't know how sorry I feel for that individual, but I'm... I'm glad that you are working on that because I think until the deadbeats feel that there may be a price to pay over and above the money they're supposed to pay, there is this attitude that, I don't have to."

Director Miram: "As... as you know, Representative, we have to respect, which we do, these sov... the author... the sovereign authority..."

Black: "Oh, yeah."

Director Miram: "...of the judicial system."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Black: "Yeah."

Director Miram: "But it goes both ways. I think a number of the judges hadn't realized all the changes that have been going on. And they were appreciative when we sat down with them, so it goes both ways and the meetings have been fruitful."

Black: "Well... and I know due process is also involved and there are often more than two sides of some of the stories that my caseworkers hear. The blended family situation always brings a little bit of mystery and excitement to the process. One thing I wish that you would do for me, I... I was and of course there's so many things that we get involved in and I have to rely on my legislative staff back in the district office. But I was not aware of this 24/7 number and if you could get me that and one thing that we're always anxious in my district office is a list of people that are caseworkers and our legislative aides can call. You have some excellent people and I commend you for that. It's a great improvement over what we used to deal with and we can't thank you enough for the people that you have that try to respond quickly and efficiently, because I think they know that sometimes when people come into a Legislator's office, there's no food in the refrigerator, there's no way to get to work, the kids are literally going hungry and without and we need to... we need that cooperation and we need all due haste in trying to remedy that situation. And there are times, and I know this is hard for you to work on, but there are times we need a better line of communication, not only with you but with public aid, because sometimes we need

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

to get them some temporary assistance, be it food stamps or whatever. But those caseworkers are saying, well, we have to count your child support and when we call and say but they aren't getting child support then that takes an extra ten (10), eleven (11), twelve (12) working days when we often encounter people who are in dire emergencies. But again, the people that we deal with, it's a pleasure. Not every state agency has some of the quality people that you do and some of the people who work with our district staff and I know on behalf of Judy and Kaye, I wanna thank you for that."

Director Miram: "We thank you very much for that statement because it's the people working day-to-day in the agency who make these successes."

Black: "Well, the people in the trenches, bless their heart, because they... they're under a lot of pressure every single day. Let me ask you one last question. In the budget, I heard you say that one of the budgets cut you by almost eight million dollars (\$8,000,000). What budget is that?"

Director Miram: "The House budget."

Black: "Okay. The budget that had passed..."

Director Miram: "The budget that you as a House had proposed and that's why we make this such a pertinent issue. Even as we speak, by not coming to a budget that was proposed to you on... from Governor Blagojevich and the department, we are losing matching funds as we speak right now. (Inaudible)... families."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Black: "I see... You're talking about the budget that has passed the House and is in the Senate, correct?"

Director Miram: "I am talking about the House budget that was proposed which is a shortfall compared to what we asked for, and the Governor asked for, by 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000), which again is costing families right now."

Black: "Okay. And I think following up on Representative Hamos and I realize this puts you in a bad spot. What... what could we cut from the other... from other budgets? What... what recommendation could you give us in the Governor's recommended budget? Where could we possibly cut eight million (8,000,000) that it wouldn't hurt as badly to put in your budget? But, I think, you're a very intelligent man and you realize that times are tough and to put a million (1,000,000) or so here is going to require that we perhaps take a million (1,000,000) or so out of somewhere else."

Director Miram: "Well, first I'd like to point out that I do believe that the proposed budget that was brought to you was effective and there... and it was satisfactory in terms of having the revenues, but I'm gonna go one step further. We keep focusing such as saying, well, this is new money. You're losing money in child support right now as you speak because there hasn't been a budget passed and the budget that you proposed, a number of you, takes away. It isn't a question, only right now, of saying new money because the Federal Government has cut you by sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) and cut us, we are losing funds right now. And if we had the 7.8 (7,800,000) that would not only fill

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

the gap that the Federal Government has cut back, but also we've been imposed by the Federal Government to do other collections. So, I would point out that this isn't a question of take from one and give to the other, I believe there is sufficient backup for the budget that was put out to you, but I implore you in terms of child support right now not to lose dollars to families as we speak. And that's what's going on."

Black: "Would... The sufficient budget you're talking about, is that with the revenue that the Governor suggested?"

Director Miram: "I am going to obviously defer most of the budget talk to my colleagues at the Governor's Office of Management and Budget, but I've been part of this process for awhile and have been part of this process in prior years. I have worked in State Government '85 to '89. I believe that when we look at these revenues... when we look at this budget request, it is more than ample to support the budget that was proposed."

Black: "Well, we... we may have a slight disagreement here."

Director Miram: "understand... I understand, Representative Black..."

Black: "But... but I appreciate that. One... one last question. I read in the paper today the State of Pennsylvania is in the same situation we are, they have not reached a budget and twenty-four thousand (24,000) state workers were furloughed. In other words, don't show up because we don't have the money to pay you. We're three (3) weeks away from a very similar situation. Would you expect people in your

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

department to work if you told them I don't know when you will get paid or we'll pay you in script, which is an IOU, we'll make arrangements to take it to the bank where they will discount it 5 percent and you'll get your check minus 5 percent. In other words, I... in your best judgment, are we heading towards a meltdown in four (4) weeks if we don't get a budget?"

Director Miram: "I think you're asking me to be Barry, right now. And I believe that people of goodwill, studying the facts, will realize just like I... we pointed out today that the budget that you proposed was failing, with due respect, in terms of child support and getting opportunities. I believe, hopefully, that when people focus and hopefully, this sitting down with you and explaining the facts can help us working together towards that goal that people of goodwill will focus on these issues and realize there are these budget shortfalls that are proposed, respectfully, by the House budget and work together, hopefully, in support of the budget we proposed through the Governor."

Black: "And... and I appreciate that and I hope you're right. I think all of us know where we want to be and we need to be there in three (3) or four (4) weeks. We have divergent opinions on how we get there and how much we have to spend. My fear is we are running out of time and I'm not sure just what kind of impact that will have on the people of Illinois. It won't be good and it won't be pleasant and it won't be pleasant on your staff, it won't be pleasant on the people you serve. So, I hope you're right. I hope we... I

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

can't even afford sinus pills, excuse me... I hope and pray that we will recognize the fact, we have a great deal of work to do, we're running out of time, it will be a tough budget year, but given that fact, we need to do something in the next three (3) or four (4) weeks or we are headed toward a very serious situation."

Director Miram: "I can speak from the Department of Health Care and Family Services. Year to year we come to you with a budget, that budget is not a wish list. You heard that child support never even had a request during these years that we're making our leaps and bounds. Our medical programs have been right on target of what we told you basically. So, therefore, we come to you with solid numbers. Therefore, we would hope, with due respect, that you would appreciate where we've been together and see that these numbers are real and they're in need for that and give us what we request, with due respect."

Black: "Thank you very much."

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Dunkin, you're recognized for 3 minutes. Representative... Representative Gordon, you're recognized for 3 minutes."

Gordon: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Maram, how are you? Where's the first place that you... if you did get this funding that you're requesting... where's the first place that you would put it?"

Director Miram: "Why don't we go through that, Pam, you tell."

Pam Compton Lowry: "The funding request first and foremost will go to ensure that all of the current obligations, all of the

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

obligations for this year, are covered. In other words, that we can keep going with all of our county staff and state staff. The next priority would be funding the collections fee. Next, adding staff to the call center and adding the eleven (11) staff to the field. Finally, buying the new telephone software that would allow the telephone system to continue to operate."

Gordon: "Okay. And you said you're losing how much from the feds?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "We lose sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) in match from the Federal Government."

Gordon: "This year?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "This year."

Gordon: "For fiscal year '08?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes."

Gordon: "Sixteen (16)?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Sixteen million (16,000,000) plus we have a pressure to fund 2.5 million (2,500,000) in collection fees."

Gordon: "Okay. And has the administration gone out of its way to lobby our federal Legislators..."

Director Miram: "Always."

Gordon: "...for that sixteen million (16,000,000)?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes."

Director Miram: "Always. In fact, that's something we are always aggressive about."

Gordon: "And is there documentation to that effect?"

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes. In fact, there... ya know, we've worked... and Senator Obama is a cosponsor of a Bill in the House now that's trying to restore this funding. Ya know, we... we worked long and hard and have lobbied..."

Director Miram: "But there's no ex..."

Pam Compton Lowry: "...but... but there's... but there's no expectation it's actually gonna happen. The United States Congress does not repeal funding cuts. You know, they... the vote in Congress was 1 vote in the Senate, 6 votes in the House for this... for this cut. And there isn't any real expectation that Congress is gonna put it back no matter how long and hard we lobby and we have."

Gordon: "Okay. And you're saying that with the House budget that was passed that that cuts... it cuts... that's your word... eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) from your agency. Is that correct?"

Director Miram: "The House budget would cut approximately eight million dollars (\$8,000,000), which becomes twenty-five million (25,000,000) with federal match."

Gordon: "Okay. But from a proposal, how can you say that you're cutting something that you've never, ever had?"

Director Miram: "Because it..."

Gordon: "It is a proposal. You can't cut a proposal. And if this Governor and this administration says one more time that I have cut money from children and education and health care and child support when I have been one of your frontline people getting child support from those deadbeat parents. I am sick of it. So, I will tell you, not one

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

dime, not one dime in the House budget has been cut from your budget, because it is money that you have never, ever had. Thank you, Mr. Speaker."

Director Miram: "Thank you. I would just like to point out that, with due respect, there is a proposal from the.. on the House budget that would have 7.9 million (7,900,000). I appreciate the opportunity to explain how serious this is. I believe that's the purpose of this and I appreciate the opportunity."

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Rose, you're recognized for 2 minutes."

Rose: "Thank you. Just one minute. Hi, Pam."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Hi."

Rose: "Thanks for all your good work this year on our Bill earlier. As I'm sitting here listening to this, it occurs to me why are the taxpayers paying to chase people who don't pay their debts? Obviously, if two (2) people get divorced and they enter into the custodial/noncustodial parent payment arrangement, by law they end up in the State Disbursement Unit and then all that goes on sort of whether they want it to or not. But for the nonpayers, the non... the noncustodial, nonpayers of support that as Careen Gordon and Julie Hamos and myself when I was in the Child Enforcement Unit in Champaign County have done, why don't we charge the nonpayers for the services of your agency? I've never understood that. Is there any constitutional problem with that? I mean, why do the taxpayers have to front the

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

salaries of the state's attorneys of Illinois to chase down a bunch of idiots who don't pay their child support?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Representative Rose, you know I always appreciate your perspective and it's always unique and in many ways you're right. But the... but the fact of the matter is that State Governments and Federal Governments avoid many, many costs of poor children through enforcing child support programs and that's what this is really about. Children who get child support have better health outcomes, better education..."

Rose: "I'm not... I agree. What I'm saying is, there's a... child support gets the shaft by the statute of fine rate. One (1) kid is 'x' percent, two (2) kid is 'y' percent, three (3) kids is 'z' percent. Why can't we put on a collection fee of 5 percent that goes directly to fund your agency? Or I mean, I... is it already authorized that they can... that you can go to Circuit Court and demand that that nonpayer pay the state back for its time in court, for your time to sit here today?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "You know, I'd have to look at the law before I could fully answer your question. And the only thing I would say is this..."

Rose: "Whatever... I only have one minute."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yeah."

Rose: "I'm gonna sit down 'cause everybody wants to move on, but whatever happens here we should make the nonpayers reimburse the state taxpayers for what goes on to collect child support, period."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Monique Davis, you're recognized for 3 minutes."

Davis, M.: "Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly wanna thank all of you for being here today and asking... I mean, answering the questions. I remember a number of years ago an African-American woman was running this department. Her name was Diane... something... McCloud. Do you remember her?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "I do."

Davis, M.: "And I remember us having a Committee of the Whole as we're having today and the purpose was because they wanted to change the way the department was being run. And I remember Diane saying many times, the way it's run today it is not costing the state any money, we are bringing revenue into the state. So, my question is, how were they able to operate without the budget that you're asking for? How could they operate and be a revenue enhancer?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "That was in the days..."

Davis, M.: "I'm gonna ask the Body to please be quiet, I wanna hear this answer. Thank you."

Pam Compton Lowry: "That was in the days of the TANF program or the AFDC program prior to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. In those days, and I worked in the program then too, in those days most of the people that the child support program served were welfare families, and by Federal Law the state keeps any child support collected for welfare families. So, the state served almost exclusively families who received assistance and any collections that came in the state kept half of, the

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Federal Government got half of. All of that changed in 1996. Now, only 11 percent of cases are assistance and 90 per... 94 percent of the money that comes in goes out the door to families. So, why can't we fund our program in the same way anymore, because now the money goes to the families."

Davis, M.: "Okay. All right. And you feel that you need what amount did you state?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Seven point nine million (7,900,000) is our request."

Davis, M.: "So, when a... when a person owes child support and they fail to pay it, and you collect it, every single dime goes to that family."

Pam Compton Lowry: "The only exception is if the family is currently on TANF that portion that's collected for the TANF family is... is withheld by the state, it's assigned to the state under Federal Law and the state keeps half of it and that is part of our overall program funding. That's figured into our budget."

Davis, M.: "So you don't... if you collect from a person who or a family not on TANF, you don't keep any of their dollars."

Pam Compton Lowry: "No. That goes straight to the family."

Davis, M.: "So there is no way that that parent can be made to pay a fee to the state for the state having to go after them for those dollars. Because we are really, as I think Representative Rose stated, we're acting as the attorney for that family."

Pam Compton Lowry: "You know, again, I'd have to look at the law and more about fees. I think it's a... I think it's a very

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

interesting policy issue. I think it has lots of facets that would require a lot more discussion, because remember when you're talking about a pool of money for a family the... when you take out for the state, you're taking from the family, so."

Davis, M.: "No, we wouldn't want you to take anything in reference to their award."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Uh huh."

Davis, M.: "We wouldn't want you to take anything from that."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Uh huh."

Davis, M.: "Do you think that... Well, sometimes when a person is not paying child support, they don't have employment and then they're still expected to pay even though they were... were unemployed, right? So, once they are employed they have to make up for the time they were unemployed. Is that correct?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Unless they got a court order abating their child support."

Davis, M.: "So, you go after them for... for all of that?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Mmm mmm."

Davis, M.: "So, I'd... I'd like a suggestion from you, too, on what we could do perhaps to reduce the cost that you are charged with in carrying out your required function. Yes, Sir."

Director Miram: "Understood."

Davis, M.: "I was asking for a suggestion."

Director Miram: "First... Suggestions? Well, the things we've been doing over these last four (4) years have accomplished

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

greater collections, greater efficiencies. At the same time, we've tried to be fairer to noncustodial parents, because you have to respect both... both parents, some people are trying hard. What we've done whether it be with the information systems that we've done, with passports, passport program's been incredible. We get, as a population, those cases. We don't get the cases that go to attorneys. We get the cases that either been to attorneys or the people don't... can't afford to go to an attorney. We get some challenging cases but we've still had these major successes in doing them. If we wanna go into some of the areas that we've made these improvements again, why don't you go through it?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "One of the things that we've done is work with employers so that as people change jobs we quickly know about the new job and we can start again withholding from the new employer. That has increased collections from on average of 1.5 million (1,500,000) a month to 3.8 million (3,800,000) a month for families on its own. But, you know, the other side of that coin is low-income noncustodial parents are often struggling with trying to meet their obligations to their previous families, to their current families, stay in the workforce. So, in January, we began a project that's called Project Clean Slate. It allows low-income noncustodial parents to come to us, get forgiveness for that old state debt because they're making payments to their families now. And, you know, there's a real public policy issue here on... about families and money. Primarily,

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

we deal with lower income families, lower to middle-income families and many of our families have the family that they're paying support for, the family that they have living in their household now and maybe there's somebody else in this family who owes support to another family. So, when you're talking about collecting money from families and collection fees, you have to think about is somebody a deadbeat or are they dead broke and adjust your policies accordingly."

Davis, M.: "Thank you very much. Thank you for your answers very much."

Director Miram: "Thank you."

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Lang, I'm advised you wish to do some additional follow-up."

Lang: "Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of areas for follow-up. First, as I understand the law, there's currently a mandatory parental fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25) from parents that are not on TANF. Is that correct?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "There... there was the ability... there is the ability by law to charge that fee. It was reduced by rule to zero (0) five (5) years or more ago."

Lang: "And why did we do that?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Because it actually cost more money. It's based on in... the income of the custodial parent. The fee could be zero(\$0), fifteen (\$15) or twenty-five (\$25) dollars based on the family income. Most of the... more than two-thirds of the families that came to us for service were zero-fee families under the income guides. It cost more

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

money to administer the fee than it... than it was collected. Keep in mind, too, that any time you collect a fee from a child support family, the Federal Government demands two-thirds of it. It's considered program income. If you collect a dollar (\$1), sixty-six (\$.66) cents of it goes to the Federal Government."

Lang: "So, there... you have empirical evidence, which I don't need to see, that shows that collecting the fee costs you more than... than raising the fee."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yeah. We have... The cost benefit analysis was part of the rule change."

Lang: "All right. One other area. Was it your agency, Mr. Maram... Director Miram, that during this fiscal year, even though it wasn't appropriated directly, you found twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) for the stem cell program?"

Michael Moss: "Five million dollars (\$5,000,000) was used for the stem cell program."

Lang: "I'm sorry."

Director Miram: "Five million (5,000,000), five million (5,000,000)."

Lang: "Five million (5,000,000), but there was some money that was not in a direct line item in your agency that was found to help the stem cell program move forward. Is that correct?"

Director Miram: "There was some dollars, I'd have to go into the details, that was there for stem cell."

Lang: "All right. And so, I'm... I'm not attacking that nor am I, actually I'm a big supporter of that, but then I have to ask

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

this question. If you could find unappropriated line items in your budget to help fund the Governor's stem cell initiative, why can you not find money to shift around in your budget to fund this program?"

Director Miram: "Because, again, I don't come to you and say, oh, I need some... we need some extra dollars. You've got a serious situation here where the Federal Government has made the cut already and we're losing dollars every day. It isn't saying, here's a wish list, I'd like to do something else. It's putting the money back to what we had last year so that we don't lose federal dollars. If we're talking wish list things, I'd come to you, but we don't. When we come to you, it's knowing what we've got and what we need. Again, this is not... these are dollars so we don't have opportunities if they're gone for federal match that have... need to be replaced and the additional things I believe we pointed out. So, again, it's not transferring from one item to another. If that were, ya know, it's simply the fact of letting you know, with this privilege of being in front of you, that the proposed budget, or wherever the House budget is with this, does some serious reductions that affect us."

Lang: "Serious reductions in what, Sir, your current line item?"

Director Miram: "Serious reductions in the fact that by reducing the funding by 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000)..."

Lang: "But reducing from what? What are you reducing 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000)?"

Director Miram: "From the Governor's proposed budget which took a..."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Lang: "All right. So, let me stop you there. Let me stop you there. That's exactly what Representative Gordon was talking about. What changes in your current budget in this line item does the House budget make?"

Director Miram: "What... If one takes in consideration the fact that we've been cut sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) by the Federal Government, we are losing dollars right now based on the proposed House budget."

Lang: "All right. So, Director, you're my friend and I don't want to get into a battle with you, but you didn't answer my question. You started... you started this last paragraph by telling us, telling me, telling all of us here, telling everyone who's listening on the squawk boxes back in their office and your bosses on the second floor, that the House budget cuts a line item. Now, did the House budget cut a line item?"

Director Miram: "It reduces the Governor's proposed budget..."

Lang: "Did the House budget cut a line item from your '07 budget that you're living under now?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "What happens is the revenue doesn't..."

Lang: "It's a simp... it's a simple question requiring a simple answer and I'm gonna stand here 'til I get the answer to the question."

Director Miram: "I'm gonna give you an answer. We're talking facts, otherwise I wouldn't be sitting here trying to explain. There is 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000) reduced from the proposed Governor's budget that, in effect, loses

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

dollars daily because it doesn't have the 7.9 million (7,900,000) in there."

Lang: "I'm going to ask the question again; I know my colleagues will all indulge me because I am certain they all want the answer to this question. So I will ask the question again. For this part of the budget for this line item, is the budget, as passed by the House, a cut from your '07 line item?"

Director Miram: "I can only say this, Representative. Because of a sixteen million dollar (\$16,000,000) reduction from the Federal Government, it definitely represents a cut for us."

Lang: "I'm gonna ask the question again, Director. What... let me ask it in a different way, maybe we'll get a better answer. What is the dollar amount in the line item for this project that you're concerned about in the '07 budget?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Representative Lang, I'm trying to understand your question and I just don't. We have to..."

Lang: "Everyone else here under... Is there anyone here that doesn't understand my question?"

House - et al: "No."

Director Miram: "I think what you're trying to say, Sir, is this. I think what you're trying to say, with due respect, is that the budget from last year as compared with what's being considered now, what are the numbers? And I'm saying to you this, that the budget from last year is, in effect, reduced automatically by sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) by the... based on the federal cut. Thereby, when the House proposes a budget that doesn't take that into

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

consideration, we're losing dollars. We can... I can... I understand we can phrase another..."

Lang: "What... what you're saying to me is that if we give you the same line item we gave you in '07, it's, in effect, a cut not of state dollars but of federal dollars. Is that what you're telling me?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "We don't have the revenue to cover the appropriation, yes. The revenue isn't there so it can't be spent."

Lang: "All right. So, what you're saying is, you need more money to cover cuts that the Federal Government is giving us. Is that correct?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes."

Director Miram: "And..."

Lang: "So, but there is no cut on this line item in the '08 budget as passed by this House. Is that correct?"

Director Miram: "What it is, again, is that when we put out the budget, we took this in consideration that this gap is there. We're asking for that gap to be filled and the additional dollars for the program. That is the clear statement. The budget that you propose does not take that in... in reflec... you don't reflect on that in the budget."

Lang: "I'm gonna try this again. I don't think anybody cares how long I try this. Is anybody bored with my questioning?"

House - et al: "No."

Lang: "I'm gonna try this aga... Then you can leave. I'm gonna try this again. You guys handle the budget of your agency,

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

right? What is the line item that we're talking about in your budget today? What is that called?"

Michael Moss: "That's the... that's the General Revenue contribution to the Child Support Administrative Fund."

Lang: "Good. What is that line item in the '07 budget?"

Michael Moss: "Thirty-one million dollars (\$31,000,000)."

Lang: "And what is that line item in the '08 budget as passed by the House of Representatives?"

Michael Moss: "Thirty-one million dollars (\$31,000,000)."

Lang: "Thank you very much. Was that a hard question to answer?"

Director Miram: "No, it's not, but out of due respect, the fact is we can play with words, but it's a cut. It's a cut of 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000) because we will not have the same dollars we had last year and that will affect families, children..."

Lang: "Sir, Sir, with all due respect, it's not a cut. If you're telling us that the effect of the federal action is your 7.9 million (7,900,000) in the hole and you would like us to give you 7.9 million (7,900,000) more, then say that."

Director Miram: "And that's what..."

Lang: "But to come here... Barry, you're my friend... but I have to be honest. It's insulting to me and to this chamber that you continue the same spin that's coming off of the second floor. You do not have a cut in the budget as passed by the House. What you have is a hole in your budget of 7.9 million dollars (\$7,900,000) caused by Federal Government changes. If you need more money, ask for it."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Director Miram: "We..."

Lang: "But don't... I'm not finished... but don't come to this chamber and try to tell us because it's child support because you think we have bleeding hearts, which we do for those children and those... those single mothers, don't try to tell us it's a cut that we have to somehow restore. The fact is, as answered by Mr. Moss in a very simple way in a very straightforward way, is that there is no cut passed by this House on that line item. Is that correct?"

Director Miram: "I'm gonna respond and that... you said it yourself, Representative, and I respect you. You said if, in fact, this is a cut because of the federal cuts, ask for it and that's exactly what the Governor's budget... the department's bud..."

Lang: "So, it's a federal... it's a federal cut..."

Director Miram: "We asked for it."

Lang: "...not a state cut. Is that correct, Sir?"

Director Miram: "It's a federal cut that affects state dollars."

Pam Compton Lowry: "We have a shortfall and we're asking you to replace that."

Director Miram: "And that's exactly what... you said it, Sir. You said if it's a gap that's... we're missing because of it, come and ask for it. That's exactly what the department's budget did and the Governor's budget did."

Lang: "One last question. Maybe I have this wrong, but I'm told that the Federal Budget Reduction Act requires the states to charge a twenty-five dollar (\$25) fee to the non-TANF parents. Do you have a comment on this?"

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Pam Compton Lowry: "The federal... the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 requires that states impose a collection fee and offers several options to do so. States may charge custodial parents, they may charge noncustodial parents, they may do both or they may absorb the cost of the collection of the fee for their own budget. If the state charges the fee to the parent, 66 percent goes to the Federal Government. We did a cost benefit analysis because of the caseload composition in Illinois, most of the federal revenue that we depend upon to continue to not have to ask for more state money, we did a cost benefit analysis, what happens if we pass this money on custodial parents. We found out it would take two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) and more than a year to change our computer system. And that if as few as 10 percent of our best paying customers left the program to avoid the fee, we would lose more money in federal revenue than we would by the state paying the share of the fee."

Lang: "So, are we in violation of Federal Law?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "We are not."

Lang: "Explain."

Pam Compton Lowry: "We have four (4) options to take to cover the fee. The state paying the fee or reducing its draught from the Federal Government is one of them. That's two point five million dollars (\$2,500,000) is in our... is in the budget that we've requested."

Lang: "Well, speaking for myself, and only for myself, but I'm gonna guess there are other people that agree, I don't

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

appreciate the spin. I don't appreciate the lack of answers to questions. This is a 7.9 million dollar (\$7,900,000) concern that you have. Imagine if we were talking about your entire agency. How long would we be here to get simple answers to simple questions? I don't buy it. I don't buy into it. I don't like the spin and I really think you folks should have come here more prepared. Thank you very much."

Chairman Hannig: "Representative Washington, you're recognized for 2 minutes."

Washington: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Director, I've got a couple of questions I wanna raise with you. We talked about collection and ya know, I think the lady to your left said it right, dead... deadbeat or dead broke. And so, you've got some people that are in the system that are not gainfully employed and you have a lot of them in and out of the institutions of being in jail, so those costs accrue in a mass. Have there been any discussion to network to set up a program where we might could do something with DOC and IDOT where people can have sweat equity that goes toward the actual dollar amount for those who are not just guilty of being deadbeat but in a circumstances that may be beyond their control yet they've shown their ability to pay sometime rather than no time? Have we entertained that?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "We actually... recently this year in 2007 entered into an agreement with the Department of Corrections. We're in twelve (12) correctional facilities now, working individually with inmates to get their child support debt forgiven while they're in prison. In other

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

words, it won't accrue while they're in prison and that's because it's better for families. Many studies have shown, and I know you know this, it's better for families when someone leaves a correctional institution to be able to start fresh with their child support debt. And we are working with offenders in coordination with the Department of Corrections on exactly that."

Washington: "Okay. But you know, on a sidebar, a question, what about those individuals that are not in the institution? I was also thinking out loud to that because there are things when you see crews of people who clean up our highways and people who volunteer for emergency situation that happened through the state..."

Pam Compton Lowry: "Mmm mmm."

Washington: "...can't there be some type of mechanism that even on a volunteer basis that individual put their name on a roster to be able to use a sweat equity that we could measure what that's worth as bringing down their debt even if they don't have the dollar amount to pay it? Can they pay it in work?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "We haven't looked at sweat equity. What we have done is, we started in January this project Clean Slate and what that does is it actually gives noncustodial parents who are low-income the opportunity to have all of the debt they owe to the state forgiven in its entirety forever. If they begin making payments to their family now, if they... if they're not currently employed, then we work with them to get job referrals and training so that when they become employed they can come back and get that debt forgiven."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Washington: "So, you do deal with the job referrals, as well?"

Pam Compton Lowry: "Yes, yes."

Washington: "And I would like to offer to volunteer joining that initiative to look at how we can maybe bring in some other agencies to copartner with that so we won't have the same long list of so-called deadbeat versus dead broke and I'm glad you categorized it like that because that's two different situations we're talkin' about. The other thing I wanna bring attention to, I know of a small business and I'm sure the Director might wanna comment, I'm sure you're not in the business of putting business people out of business. But Gibson Health Service in East St. Louis is one that comes to mind, I have one other in my district. But here is an entity and if you could explain to me why is it that if you provide a service under... under a contract with the department and if you don't get the bills in for whatever glitches that may take place within a year, why is it that the businesses are forced to write that off rather than that's still a debt that is owed? The same thing as we talk about so-called deadbeats, the debt doesn't go away, it's still collectable. And we sell those things to subcontractors to go out, and I think the question was raised earlier, are they doin' a better job of collecting fees from fathers or mothers who are havin' whatever reason to not pay? But I know Gibson, in particular, is a small business in East St. Louis that is almost on the brink of closing because of a number of reasons, but one being the state's inability to pay for glitches that come up in

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

computer problems and then if it goes beyond that twelve (12)-month cycle, then they're not given any money whatsoever. They wind up havin' to write it off."

Director Miram: "Representative..."

Washington: "Would you respond to that?"

Director Miram: "I think you're talkin' about medical programs here, something to do with medical reimbursement, probably under Medicaid and we could look into it. There is a federal regulation that excludes bills that haven't been filed for over a year; it's a federal regulation. But why don't we look into that and get back to you, Sir."

Washington: "I would appreciate that..."

Director Miram: "I'd very much so."

Washington: "...Mr. Director, because I think there needs to be a flexibility. When we look at the number of providers who provide services to the people of the State of Illinois, it's not their fault that we're havin' a problem. But at the same time, we can't let our inability to pay be the reason why business is shutting down and people are doing without access to health or quality health care which Gibson provides. Thank you."

Director Miram: "Thank you."

Washington: "And when you say... but I hope that you really will follow-up on that."

Director Miram: "Representative, you know I've always gotten back to you, Sir."

Washington: "Thank you."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Director Miram: "And if I may just make a statement. What we... we are here on today is about keeping a program whole. It's about keeping a program whole. And we appreciate all the partnership that you've always been to this department and to the program. So, when we're talking about numbers, when we're talking about where they come from, it's all about keeping a program whole and we appreciate your support, hopefully."

Chairman Hannig: "We have one additional speaker then we'll... then we'll wrap it up. Representative Dugan, you're recognized. Okay. The Lady does not wish to speak."

Speaker Madigan: "Representative Washington moves that the House rise from the Committee of the Whole. Those in favor say 'aye'; those opposed say 'no'. The 'ayes' have it. The House does rise from the Committee of the Whole and we are in the Fourth Special Session. Ladies and Gentlemen, we are in the Fourth Special Session. And Representative Currie moves that the House stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:00, 1 p.m., Fourth Special Session. Mr. Dunkin."

Dunkin: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Point of personal privilege, please. Earlier today there was an announcement, well, at least a comparison, whether we should avoid the conversation on the assault bans weapon of Senate Bill 1007. Yes... all of us here are very interested in seeing to it that we come up with a positive resolve as it relates these numbers and running our state effectively for this next fiscal year. But I think it's important for us also since we are here to see to it that we play an active role with engaging law

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

enforcement in equipping them with stronger laws to ban certain weapons. And I think Senate Bill 1007, which my colleague here to the left is sponsoring, is warranted for discussion and a vote, since we're down here. And if we do go into a regular Session, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage that we look at that Bill, we actually bring it here in this chamber, and we place a vote on it. It's quite significant for me and many Members who have a high incidence of crime in our respective district. Just this week alone, just in the last five (5) to seven (7) days there were over seven (7) shootings in my district alone, from the northern end to the southern end. You know, in some of our areas here in the state it's a little different dynamic. But in our County of Cook, certain places in Will County it is... and even some places down here in Sangamon County and other locations here in our state, assault weapons and gun activity in the negative is at an all-time high. And I think it's imperative that we place action on Senate Bill 1007 to at least add some teeth to seeing to it that we help deal with this large capacity ammunition magazine that really has... have no use and can be placed on a handgun to attack people, young kids, young parents, anybody of any age across this state. So it's not just a Chicago issue, it's highlighted in a busy city such as ours in Chicago. And I think again it's something we have to take very, very seriously. I personally am very sick and tired of hearing of all the shooting in our respective city, in our respective county. And just like in some our counties down

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

in Central Illinois here and in Southern Illinois where certain issues are important, this issue right here is just as critically important to some of us in our district. And until you can read or see the anguish on the faces of parents burying their grandkids, burying their sons and their daughters, you'll see the significance of such a legislation. So, again, Mr. Speaker, if we do happen to go into regular Session, I would encourage that we look at Senate Bill 1007 and put a positive vote on it to see to it that we can further equip law enforcement with tougher laws on certain ammunition that's killing our citizens here in the state. Thank you."

Speaker Madigan: "The Chair recognizes the Sponsor of the Bill that was the subject of Mr. Dunkin's remarks and that person would be Mr. Osterman."

Osterman: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Ladies and Gentlemen of House. And I know this issue came up earlier today in a press conference in Chicago and also some comments on the floor today. Our primary focus today, tomorrow, and until we pass a budget is to pass a budget that helps all the people of the State of Illinois. And that is our primary focus. But while we are together in Springfield, our State Capital, we should look to address other issues. It has been and continues to be my hope to pass House Bill... or Senate Bill 1007. But I'm only gonna call the Bill when I've got enough votes to pass the Bill. And part of passing legislation like this is to listen to Legislators, it's to talk to Legislators, it's to hear what their concerns are.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

So, as we spend time together looking to pass a budget for the State of Illinois, which is our primary focus, I will continue to talk to all of you about the importance of this Bill and other gun violence legislation. On a usual year we all go home on May 31 and those of us in some parts of the state have to live every day with the news of the gun violence that plagues our state and takes young lives. So it is my intention as we move forward to again work on talking to Members about the Bill. My hope is that later this week there will be a subject matter hearing in Room 114 that will look at Senate Bill 1007 as well as other issues related to gun violence. But again, I want to stress it is my primary focus, it's the focus of my constituents that all of us, 118 Members and the Senate and the Governor, pass a budget for the State of Illinois that will fund programs like after-school programs that will give alternatives to youth that will keep them from the line of fire. Pass a budget that will help fund the education system in our state that will give young people the options of education that will help improve their lives and keep them safe and healthy. But Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, I think that we have time to focus on different things down here in addition to the budget and we should utilize that time as our constituents would want us to. When we have the time and place of the subject matter hearing, I will let everyone know. And would welcome people on all sides of the issue to come and listen and provide your thoughts. Thank you."

Speaker Madigan: "Representative Monique Davis."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Davis, M.: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support and proud to be a cosponsor of Senate Bill 1007. I rise in support of those who are also proponents of that Bill: the City of Chicago, the Legal Community Against Violence, Cook County State's Attorney, Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, Schwab Rehabilitation and Care Center, Illinois Citizens for Handgun Control, the Illinois State Police, Council Against Handgun Violence, Springfield Community Partnership Against Violence, Cook County, Chicago and Chapter Survivors. I believe that the law of 1960 is definitely in need of reviewing. I commend the Sponsor of this legislation because who needs a clip that will battle off more than ten (10) rounds at one time. In Chicago alone excusing Evanston, excusing Maywood, children are being murdered almost on a daily basis by people who have obtained weapons, weapons that should be limited for the use of hunting animals that are not human. I believe that the Sponsor of this legislation realizes that a Bill that was passed in 1960 knows that society has certainly changed. All almost of Illinois is urban. Most of it is no longer rural. Very few people today earn their living through hunting. I also urge, Mr. Speaker, that we'd be allowed to talk about and vote on this issue. The Senate has passed Senate Bill 1007 and I'd like to say the House should do the same. Thank you."

Speaker Madigan: "Mr. Black."

Speaker Madigan: "Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support the people who send me here who live in a rural

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

district, rural with a capital 'R'. I also rise, I hope, on behalf of most Members of this chamber and share Representative Osterman's concern. We are in... I don't even know what Special Session day. Ad infinitum, ad nauseam. We are four (4) weeks away from a potential shutdown of state and local governments. Your schools may not be able to operate if they don't know what state aid they will expect by the middle of August. There are at least a hundred (100) school districts in the state who can borrow no more money. They have no ability to borrow. They have no ability to get tax anticipation warrants; they are at their debt limit. I also rise on behalf of community-based organizations throughout the State of Illinois who take care of disabled children, our elderly, our mentally ill who don't know if they can take any more cases. They don't know if they should sign up any people. I'm getting calls at the district office and they're faxing them over here to me about people who wonder, are they going to get paid? What do you want me to tell the correctional officers who work at a prison in my district who are beginning to wonder, will we get paid on the first pay date in August? The only thing I can tell them at this point is, I don't know. What emergency provisions are we going to make in case we don't have a budget by the middle of August? I've heard no talk. Are we going to pay them in script? Are we going to go... I was a teacher years ago. I got paid in script. That's an IOU that you take to a bank and then the bank discounts it 4 percent, 5 percent, whatever it is. And the school district

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

agreed to redeem that script at face value. Now, I... you know, there are a hundred (100) things we need to discuss. And I think it is wrong to go to Chicago... yes, you have a crisis in Chicago, but you also have the most strict gun laws of any city in the State of Illinois. What's wrong? Something isn't working. You can't even legally own a handgun in the City of Chicago. And yet, there seems to be more of them in Chicago than I have in my rural area. I will not look favorably upon being here Special Session day after Special Session day after Special Session day to debate substantive legislation that we had all spring, all winter, and all spring to debate. And we could do so in the Veto Session. Our job is to get a budget and if you're going to start allowing votes and discussion on substantive legislation, I have seven (7) Bills on the Discharge Calendar. I'd like those discharged and I wanna debate them. I wanna debate an open primary. Why do I still have to declare my party when I go in to vote in a primary election? That's a holdover from fifty (50) years ago when patronage was alive and well. With what's gone on in Chicago, those days are over. You wanna encourage participation in a primary election, have an open primary. And there are ways to do that and protect the integrity of each party. We have not addressed yet the court decision on what kind of petition requirements independent parties must meet and the courts have ordered us to do that. There's no end to the substantive legislation that we could take up. But for crying out loud, most of us are sacrificing our

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

family life. Some of you have law practices where your partners are getting tired of filling in for you. Some of you work... have the good fortune to work for a company that allows you to do this job and work for them as well. I would think they would want some of your time as they're used to in July and August. I don't know what... what's going on here that some people think that State Government can't shut down. Pennsylvania is shut down. Twenty-four thousand (24,000) state employees furloughed because they have no budget. And we are sitting here blindly and blithely tumbling towards that crisis. And when asked about that crisis I can recite it by rote memory, it's all I've heard Saturday and Sunday. I will not be part of a process that takes foods out of the mouth of children, denies health care to hundreds of thousands of people, and denies education to the students of Illinois. Governor, the budget we're talking about doesn't do that. Now quit making us to be the evil ones. Your budget is not sustainable without your tax increases and where are you? Are you here lobbying for your tax increases? No. You're out doing what you do best, a political press conference and making us out to be the evil ones. No substantive legislation should be discussed until we do our job and that is to create a budget."

Speaker Madigan: "Mr. Brady."

Brady: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder, the Republicans will caucus immediately upon adjournment. Thank you."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

3rd Legislative Day / Comm. of the Whole

7/9/2007

Speaker Madigan: "And we are prepared to do just that. All right. Representative Currie renews her Motion that the Fourth Special Session stand adjourned until 1 p.m. tomorrow afternoon. Those in favor say 'aye'; those opposed say 'no'. The 'ayes' have it."