

# News...

*...from the Illinois House of Representatives*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

State Representative Sara Feigenholtz

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## Feigenholtz Funds Essential Services as Reduced Budget Passes

**CHICAGO** – State Representative Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) returned home to her 12<sup>th</sup> district constituents Wednesday with a long list of items brought to closure prior to the legislature’s adjournment late Tuesday night. During this legislative session Feigenholtz focused her efforts on crafting a human services budget with over \$1 billion in cuts while maintaining essential services for Illinois’ most vulnerable residents. Feigenholtz chairs the House Human Services Appropriations Committee, which is responsible for nearly half of the state’s general spending, including the program budgets for senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, veterans and the state’s Medicaid and health care services.

“It was important to me that direct services were protected as much as possible,” Feigenholtz said. “We started by cutting administration, travel expenses and communications – the things that every family in Illinois is cutting. We did our best to make the remaining cuts as minimal and as across-the-board as possible to prevent worthy programs from being eliminated. Some of the cuts are painful, but we have to cut in order to bring our debt in line and live within our means. If we do not do this now, we risk being in a worse position down the road.”

Feigenholtz and her Appropriations Committee took a bi-partisan approach in combing through the budgets line by line to identify waste and non-essential line-items that could be reduced or eliminated to preserve as much funding for services people rely on. After substance abuse treatment funding was threatened with a 100% funding cut midway through the current fiscal year, Feigenholtz passed House Resolution 106 urging the Governor and Department of Human Services to restore funding to reduce long-term costs. Feigenholtz also worked closely with the AIDS Foundation of Chicago to prevent drastic cuts to the state’s ADAP program, which would have made hundreds of current enrollees ineligible for the lifesaving drugs needed to maintain healthy and productive lifestyles.

Concentrating on investing resources most efficiently to give the state better results for less money, Feigenholtz passed House Bill 2934 with broad bi-partisan support to speed up Medicaid payments and take advantage of an enhanced federal match that was set to expire on June 30, 2011. The measure will bring in as much as \$100 million extra in federal matching funds to help close the state’s budget gap.

“We had to be careful to avoid cutting services that would result in higher actual costs in the long-run,” said Feigenholtz. “Slashing funding for substance abuse treatment and ADAP does not make any sense. If we take those services away, the state ends up paying ten times more through emergency room visits. We took a results-driven budgeting approach in order to invest taxpayer dollars wisely.”

As the spring legislative session concluded Tuesday, Feigenholtz joined her colleagues in approving landmark education reforms in Senate Bill 7 and follow-up legislation in House Bill 1197. These measures will improve methods for teacher evaluations and retention so that students receive the highest quality education while also addressing the concerns of teachers. Most importantly, these measures ensure that teacher strikes only occur after months of failed contract negotiations to ensure students miss as few classroom instruction days as possible. Feigenholtz will continue to meet with educators and her citizen’s education advisory committee to discuss ways to further improve Illinois public education.

After her spring listening tour of the 12<sup>th</sup> district during the recent session, Feigenholtz will continue to seek input of constituents throughout the summer by visiting coffee shops, hosting citizen advisory committee meetings, organizing informative seminars and going door to door to speak one-on-one with constituents about the issues affecting residents of the 12<sup>th</sup> district. Individuals interested in staying in touch with Feigenholtz by attending these events are encouraged to sign up for her e-newsletter for the latest updates and event announcements, or contact Feigenholtz at [\(773\) 296-4141](tel:7732964141) or [sara@staterepsara.com](mailto:sara@staterepsara.com).

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