

# ReviewAtlas.com

## Lawmakers reprieve facilities targeted for closure

By **DOUG FINKE**

**GateHouse News Service**

Posted Nov 29, 2011 @ 08:51 PM

SPRINGFIELD -- Illinois lawmakers approved budget fixes Tuesday that will avert employee layoffs and allow state facilities to remain open.

The reprieves could be short-lived, though. The deal is good only through June 30. In the meantime, Gov. Pat Quinn's administration will be looking for state mental health facilities that can be closed in the future.

"What the administration is looking to do is rebalance some of our human service facilities that provide for the developmentally disabled and acute care on mental illness," said David Vaught, budget director for Gov. Pat Quinn. "That will be a matter of discussion in (next year's) budget."

While avoiding layoffs, the reallocation bill does not provide money for union pay increases that were cancelled earlier this year by Quinn.

Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, said she was "delighted" the budget agreement did not set aside money for the raises.

"We want to drive money into services," she said.

### **\$202 million for facilities**

The House approved Senate Bill 2412 on a 92-20 vote. The Senate then approved the bill, without debate, on a vote of 50-5.

Quinn had targeted seven state facilities for closure, including the Jacksonville Developmental Center and the Logan Correctional Center in Lincoln, and nearly 2,000 state employees were to be laid off. Quinn said the General Assembly's original budget had not provided enough money keep the facilities open for the entire year.

The reallocation plan provides \$202 million to keep the facilities open until June 30, the end of the current budget year. However, Vaught said some jobs will be lost through attrition.

"It's unfortunate, but that's the price of compromise," Vaught said.

Some layoffs have already taken place, but Vaught said the bill will allow those employees to be recalled.

The plan also provides an additional \$30 million for community mental health services. Rep. Patricia Bellock, R-Hinsdale, said that money is important if the administration is going to follow through on its plans to gradually move the developmentally disabled out of state institutions.

### **Community settings**

The administration wants to move 600 people from state-operated developmental disabilities facilities into residential, community-based settings over the next 2½ years. That will allow the closure of up to four facilities over that period.

Additional money is in the plan for grants to homeless programs, to pay for burial of the indigent and for alcohol and substance abuse programs. About \$140 million will be used to leverage additional federal reimbursements for medical services.

Money to pay for most of the reallocations will come from funds Quinn vetoed from the budget last summer. That included \$276 million for hospital Medicaid reimbursements, \$11 million for regional school superintendent salaries and \$89 million for school transportation.

Other budget shifts made to free up reallocation money included the redirection of \$4.5 million in tourism promotion funds. A surge in unclaimed property also allowed the state to spend general fund money that had been earmarked for pensions.

Doug Finke can be reached at (217) 788-1527.

### **More money**

Budget areas that got more money under the reallocation bill approved Tuesday:

- \*Avoiding layoffs and keeping facilities open, \$202 million.
- \*Special fund for hospitals to secure more federal health care reimbursements, \$140 million.
- \*Community mental health programs, \$30 million.
- \*Alcoholism and substance abuse programs, \$28 million.
- \*Indigent burial expenses, \$8 million.
- \*Homeless grants, \$4.7 million.