



Quinn urges focus on pension, Medicaid reform

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By Jayette Bolinski

SPRINGFIELD — Gov. Pat Quinn refused Monday to discuss the possibility of gambling expansion in Illinois, insisting he wants lawmakers to focus on Medicaid and pension reform.

"Sometimes down here (in the statehouse), shiny objects can distract people. We don't want any of that this week. We want two things this week, real focus on — that's pension reform and Medicaid restructuring," Quinn said during a briefing with reporters at his office in the Capitol.

"This is vital to our state, and the governor has to inform the legislators, as well as the people at large that these are important matters, and we can't allow those who would allow us to be distracted take our attention off these very hard challenges."

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, on Monday filed a 474-page amendment to Senate Bill 2840, outlining proposed cuts and restructuring to the state's Medicaid program. The amendment is called the SMART — "Save Medicaid Access and Resources Together" — Act. Lawmakers are expected to debate the proposal as early as Tuesday afternoon in the House Executive Committee.

Quinn said he has been pleased by lawmakers' progress on the two issues, noting that some people were skeptical the state could get as far as it has.

"If we succeed at pension reform and Medicaid restructuring, our grandchildren and their grandchildren will thank us," Quinn said. "It's that important, so we can't allow anything else to get in the way."