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## CIVIC FEDERATION OPPOSES COOK COUNTY'S MASSIVE, UNJUSTIFIED TAX HIKES, PERSONNEL INCREASES

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In a blistering report to be released to the public today, the Civic Federation announced its opposition to Cook County President Todd Stroger's proposed \$3.2 billion FY2008 budget. The full study, including comprehensive analysis and recommendations, is available on our website, [www.civicfed.org](http://www.civicfed.org).

The Civic Federation found that the county's FY2008 budget represents a stunning reversal from last year's painful but necessary across-the-board cuts to the county's spending and personnel. It is predicated on the addition of 1,130 new positions, a 267% increase in the county's sales tax, and other tax hikes that could generate as much as \$979.8 million in FY2009. Even more astonishing is the lack of justification for either the tax or personnel increases. "It is inexcusable and irresponsible for a government that has a history of inefficiency, cost overruns, and eye-popping mismanagement to demand millions of additional dollars from taxpayers when it has failed to implement rudimentary efficiencies and cost-saving measures," said Laurence Msall, president of the Civic Federation.

Instead of focusing on new and creative ways to increase taxes, Cook County should redirect those energies to containing spending. Until the Cook County government can demonstrate to taxpayers that it has taken the necessary steps to operate with efficiency and transparency, taxpayers will not have confidence that their dollars are being levied and spent wisely and will certainly not support any new tax increases. The Federation's analysis includes recommendations that would both contain costs and provide much-needed improvements to the county's management of tax dollars.

Approximately 62% of the county's proposed FY2008 spending is earmarked for personnel expenses, which should make curbing employee cost growth a top priority. Instead of increasing next year's payroll by 4.8%, the Civic Federation calls on county management to reassign existing staff to meet court-mandated staffing and critical health fund needs. Cook County should end the practice of giving employees both annual step and cost-of-living increases and limit total annual increases to the lesser of 3% or inflation. The Federation also recommends that the county pursue alternative service delivery and outsourcing as ways to reduce the cost of its operations.

The Civic Federation's recommended management reforms would enable the county to improve the efficiency of its delivery of services. Such reforms include taking immediate steps to transfer the management of the Cook County Health Bureau to health care professionals, as was recommended by a recent blue-ribbon panel study, and implementing an effective performance management system. Cook County must aggressively prioritize the \$3.0 billion it currently spends and it cannot do so without knowing how efficiently (or inefficiently) the different parts of its organization operate. "The county must come to the realization that the resources the taxpayers will provide for its services are finite," Msall added, "and implement