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EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01 A.M. WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22

For more information, contact Laurence Msall at 312-201-9044



CIVIC FEDERATION: QUALIFIED SUPPORT FOR DUPAGE COUNTY'S \$505 MILLION FY2009 BUDGET

(CHICAGO) The Civic Federation offered its qualified support for DuPage County Chairman Robert Schillerstrom's FY2009 budget in a report released today. The Federation's full analysis of the budget can be found at www.civiced.org.

"DuPage County has proposed a reasonable spending plan that freezes property taxes," commented Civic Federation President Laurence Msall. "However, our support is qualified because the budget fails to provide sufficient transparency and to demonstrate that the County is effectively planning for its future financial challenges."

The total FY2009 budget will increase by 2.6% or \$12.9 million over the previous FY2008 amended budget of \$492.1 million. The budget includes new revenues resulting from a 0.25 percentage point increase in the County sales tax rate. On an annual basis this tax will generate as much as \$47 million in new revenues. The legislature authorized the sales tax increase for public safety and infrastructure needs in DuPage County as part of the mass transit bailout bill approved in January 2008. The new revenues have enabled the County to reverse planned budget cuts and layoffs and have greatly improved its financial situation.

"With new revenues come new responsibilities," Msall noted. "New spending should be linked to a rational planning process so that taxpayers have a way to evaluate the quality of new or enhanced programs." Best practice management reforms widely utilized by local governments include long-term financial planning, capital improvement planning, and performance measurement. "We don't see evidence that the members of the DuPage County Board have adopted these types of public planning methods," Msall said. "Without the Board and other elected officials' utilization of an agreed performance measurement system and full public disclosures of both the government's needs and priorities, the public is unable to determine whether the new revenues are being effectively and efficiently utilized in the long-term."

Msall pointed out that governments also have a responsibility to provide maximum transparency in their budget documents and to ensure maximum public participation in the budget process. "Unfortunately, the County lacks a formal public budget hearing process and the budget document is difficult for the average citizen to comprehend."

In its report, the Civic Federation recommends that DuPage explore fundamental structural reforms that would help reduce duplication and improve the County's operations. These reforms include:

- Reducing the number of elected officials to reduce fragmentation of authority;
- Consolidating the County Health Department into the rest of County government; and
- Considering privatization of the County Convalescent Center.

The Civic Federation is an independent, non-partisan government research organization founded in 1894. The Federation's membership includes business and professional leaders from a wide range of Chicago area corporations, professional service firms and institutions.