



The Civic Federation

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CIVIC FEDERATION URGES IMMEDIATE SALES TAX CUT, PROPOSES PLAN FOR MORE MODERN AND EFFICIENT COOK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(CHICAGO) Drawing on new ideas and decades of work by reformers of all stripes, the Civic Federation released today a 167-page comprehensive plan to reform Cook County. The Modernization Project provides actionable recommendations that the newly-elected County Board President—with cooperation from other County elected officials—can begin implementing immediately to close a large budget deficit and repeal the full 2008 sales tax hike.

Cook County provides essential public services, including a judicial system and a public health system, but it often provides them inefficiently. In fact, the Civic Federation fears the County's outmoded governance structures may jeopardize its ability to provide such services in the future. The County faces a budget deficit of at least \$285.9 million, duplicative and decentralized operations that drive up costs, and fractured accountability structures that inhibit transparency and reform.

The Civic Federation's Cook County Modernization Project provides recommendations that the incoming County Board President can implement in the first 100 days of the new administration, as well as longer term recommendations to set the County on the path to efficiency and accountability. "There has never been a better or more urgent opportunity to effectively reform and modernize Cook County," said Laurence Msall, president of the Civic Federation. "The problems facing the County are daunting, but a Board President with courage and vision can make a clean break from past practices and give County residents the government they need and can afford."

In the first 100 days in office, the new County Board President must be willing to cut spending significantly and fight to centralize administrative functions in order to balance the budget and provide sales tax relief to overburdened County residents. It is inefficient and duplicative for each elected official at the County to maintain their own staff for finance, human resources, legal and information technology. The new Board President should modernize and centralize those functions by appointing a qualified, professional Chief Administrative Officer to supervise all departments and offices of the Executive Branch. The elected officials' offices would then designate a liaison to represent the elected official in coordinating activities. "The Civic Federation plans to issue a 100-day follow-up report tracking the new administration's progress in implementing our recommendations," said Msall. "We hope citizens and policymakers alike will join us in demanding transparency and accountability."

Longer-term recommendations included in the report will allow the County to streamline its operations, deliver services more efficiently, and reduce the overall cost of government. These recommendations include eliminating the subsidy for unincorporated residents of the County by charging them for municipal services now paid for by all Cook County taxpayers. Procurement at the County must also be reformed and consolidated, a move that could reduce vendor costs by as much as 5-10% or \$50-100 million annually.

The report's full set of recommendations, along with tutorials and background information on the Cook County Modernization Project is available on our website at <http://civicfed.org/civic-federation/cookcountymodernization>.

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. For more information, please visit the Federation's website at www.civicfed.org.

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