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# The Civic Federation

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## CIVIC FEDERATION FINDS CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS TOWARD COOK COUNTY MODERNIZATION

*Concerns Remain about Independence of the Health System, Future Budgets*

(CHICAGO) A new Civic Federation report released today finds that Cook County has made considerable progress toward modernizing its operations, but still faces significant challenges over the next few years. The Cook County Modernization 100-Day Accountability Report is in follow up to the Federation's October 2010 Cook County Modernization Report. The new publication assesses the progress the Preckwinkle administration has made during its first 100 days in office toward implementing the recommendations contained in the October report. The full 55-page Accountability Report is available at [civicfed.org](http://civicfed.org).

The Cook County Modernization Report provided County leaders with ideas for reforming County government. The new Accountability Report evaluates progress on all 36 recommendations contained in the Modernization Report and provides a dashboard rating system for the 100-day recommendations. Of those recommendations, three have been implemented, six have had significant progress, two have had limited progress, three are supported but have no implementation and one is opposed.

The three fully implemented recommendations are the planned roll back of the sales tax increase, reorienting the Cook County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to serve as a public safety task force and the delay of non-essential new hiring until January 1, 2011 to take advantage of a law that reduced pension benefits for most new government hires. The designation "significant progress" was given to initiatives such as closing the \$487 million budget deficit and incorporating performance measurement into the budget process. "We are encouraged by the headway President Preckwinkle and her staff have made on these crucial reforms," said Laurence Msall, president of the Civic Federation, "but we are disappointed by the President's continued opposition to the creation of an independent governing board for the Forest Preserve District."

The Civic Federation report notes when cooperation from the other elected officials at the County is necessary for implementation of a recommendation. For example, the Federation gave a status designation of "limited progress" to the recommendation that the County centralize administrative functions because the Board of Commissioners did not approve an amendment to the FY2011 County budget—due to concerns from the State's Attorney—that would have consolidated the County's many information technology departments. It is critical that all elected officials support the modernization of Cook County operations.

The Federation is concerned about actions taken during the FY2011 budget process that infringe on the budgetary independence of the Health and Hospitals System, such as the County Board involving itself in Health System budget line items. Moreover, a large number of the layoffs originally proposed in the FY2011 budget have been avoided through furlough days and the County's use of additional anticipated Medicaid revenues. In total nearly half of the budget deficit was closed through non-recurring measures such as the furlough days and debt restructuring that will exacerbate the shortfalls the County faces in the coming years. "The job of reforming the County has only just begun," said Msall. "The new administration and elected officials must commit to work to modernize and rationalize County operations for years to come."

*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 [civicfed.org](http://civicfed.org).*



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