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CIVIC FEDERATION SUPPORTS COOK COUNTY'S FY2017 BUDGET *Amid ongoing State-funding uncertainty, County implements prudent measures*

(CHICAGO) In a report released today, the Civic Federation announced its support for Cook County's proposed FY2017 budget of \$4.4 billion, because it is a reasonable, balanced budget that includes expenditure reductions and revenue measures aimed at balancing the County's budgets through FY2019. The full 95-page report is available at www.civicfed.org.

Because the State of Illinois continues to operate without a comprehensive, balanced budget, many of its local governments are forced to function in an atmosphere of uncertainty. This includes Cook County, where officials have made cuts to critical programming such as child support enforcement, vision and hearing screenings for the indigent, auto-theft deterrence and tobacco-cessation programs, among others.

"We applaud President Preckwinkle and her team for realistically moving forward with the County's budget in the midst of ongoing dysfunction at the State level," said Civic Federation President Laurence Msall. "Assuming that the State will not provide additional funding this fiscal year, Cook County implemented prudent spending reductions and revenue enhancements that will balance the budget this year and for the next several."

The FY2017 budget includes a number of initiatives to close a preliminary deficit of \$174.3 million. Anticipated savings include \$31.9 million in personnel-related expenditure reductions, \$41.6 million in non-personnel expenditure reductions and \$16.7 million in management-initiatives savings. The latter includes \$11.7 million in various taxes due to better collections enforcement and \$3.1 million in savings through reducing the number of jury summons sent out by the County.

The County expects a proposed tax on sweetened beverages to generate \$74.6 million in FY2017 after it goes into effect in July 2017. According to Cook County officials, the tax will enable the County to maintain current service levels, and without it, the County would have to eliminate at least 1,300 public safety positions over the next three years.

The full report also discusses Federation support for the realignment of staff positions within the health system, the County's reasonable pension funding plan, reduction of debt, technology investments, a ballot measure that would merge the offices of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds and Cook County Clerk as well as steps taken to improve unincorporated areas.

Concerns expressed by the Federation include declining County tax and fee revenues, growing uncompensated care at the health system, increasing pension payments without statutory approval, providing County Commissioners control over money for transportation projects not connected to the overall budget and the potentially detrimental impact of the "lockbox" amendment on the County's ability to fund operations.

Among the recommendations, the Federation encourages the County to explore opportunities for a partial sales tax rollback and to continue advocating for pension reform legislation.

The Civic Federation is an independent, non-partisan government research organization that promotes efficient delivery of public services and sustainable tax policies in the Chicago region and State of Illinois. For more information, please visit the Federation's website at www.civicfed.org.



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