



## Wisconsin's Budget Process: Timing Is Everything!

Key Dates and Ways for Advocates to Help  
Shape Our State Budget

### **Fall 2010 – State agencies submit their budget requests to the Governor and the Department of Administration (DOA)**

Meet with agency reps to discuss problems that might be solved by the state's budget. Once the agency proposals have been submitted, you can also contact the Governor to let him know of your early support or opposition to items in the agency budgets. Check WCCF's website for helpful summaries of agency budget requests.

### **November 2010: Gubernatorial & Legislative elections**

Ask questions about what candidates will do for kids if elected, raise the issues you're concerned about as part of candidate forums and debates, make sure you vote and get others to vote as well!

### **October-December 2010: Governor and DOA craft the Governor's budget**

You can influence what's ultimately included in the Governor's budget. Contact the Governor's office to urge him to support the programs/initiatives you're most concerned about in his budget proposal. Organize a meeting with several other advocates or coalition partners with the Governor's office to ensure that they're aware of your issues as they craft their budget. Look for talking points from WCCF in early January 2007!

### **Late January-Early February 2011: Governor introduces his budget**

Write letters to the editor, contact your legislators, and contact the Governor's office to comment on pieces of the proposed budget that you hope will be supported or that you hope will be changed/removed. If there are items in the Governor's budget that you really support or really oppose, think about a more coordinated effort at this point to call attention to those items.

### **February & March 2011: Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) members educate themselves on the Governor's budget**

Use the information available on the legislature and JFC's websites to get up to speed on the details of the budget. Use this time to start talking to and writing your own legislators (even if they're not on JFC) to make sure they know your budget priorities and the issues that are important to you. Set up meetings with your legislators and/or their staff so that you and other advocates (and, ideally, people who benefit from certain programs or who would be negatively impacted by cuts) can talk face to face about the budget issues that are most important to you. Contact us for more advocacy tips and information about how to make your meetings with legislators as useful and productive as possible.

**March & April 2011: JFC holds public hearings throughout the state on the budget**

Make it your priority to ensure that at least one advocate is able to go to the hearing in your part of the state to testify on your issue(s). Work to find constituents impacted by budget provisions who can also come to these hearings to testify. These public hearings generally have good press coverage so it's a great opportunity to help raise the visibility of your issue. You can also submit written testimony at these hearings and this is a great time in the process to write letters to the editor.

**April/May 2011: Joint Committee on Finance spends several weeks in executive session discussing the budget and amending it**

Before the executive session starts, you should write letters to JFC members (especially if your legislator is on the committee) explaining your position on the budget provisions that are important to you. Keep the letters short – one page is ideal – and think about the Urge them to vote for/against those provisions and organize at least 3-5 others in your district to do the same. If you have enough people available, asking for a meeting with a JFC legislator before executive session is also very effective.

**April/May 2011: Members of each political party in the Assembly and Senate meet to consider the JFC budget and agree on any amendments**

You have to keep up the pressure here! Make sure you're still talking to legislators about the issues that are important to you. If your issue is included in the JFC budget, you want it to stay in there and you need to convince other legislators to support it being there. If it was left out of the JFC budget, you need to advocate that other legislators include it.

**May/June 2011: Assembly & Senate each debate (one at a time) and amend the budget. Differences between the Assembly & Senate's budget bills are worked out by a conference committee made up of members from each house**

Contact your legislators again to make sure they know your position on issues that are important to you. Once the conference committee members are selected, check to see if any of them are your legislators or ones you have relationships with and, if so, make sure to contact them. Organize numerous others to clearly communicate with legislators about pieces of the budget that you want them to keep, expand or remove.

**June 2011: "Conference Report" (compromise version of the budget from both Assembly & Senate) bill is voted on both by houses – it cannot be amended. After passing both houses, the bill goes to the Governor for his signature or veto(es)**

Call or write the Governor and organize others to do the same to urge him to veto or sign the budget.

**July 2011: Legislature can override Governor's veto(es) with a 2/3 vote**

Continue to contact your legislators!