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For more information, contact  
Elizabeth Austin, 708-912-2247  
Elizabeth@phelonstrategies.com

## **RESPONSIBLE BUDGET COALITION MEMBERS UNITE TO DEMAND A BUDGET**

*Advocates bring #OneInAMillionIL campaign to Springfield to tell legislators that it's time for a fully funded, yearlong budget that works for all the people of Illinois*

**SPRINGFIELD** – As legislators returned to Springfield for veto session, members of the Responsible Budget Coalition brought their #OneInAMillionIL campaign to the State Capitol on Tuesday, to remind state leaders that we are “One Illinois” and to demand a fully funded, yearlong budget now.

“The State of Illinois has been lurching along without a real budget for a year and a half, with devastating results for the people of our state,” said William McNary, Co-Director for Citizen Action/Illinois, the state’s largest public interest organization and a member of the RBC Executive Committee. “Our leaders’ failure to pass a fully funded, responsible budget with adequate revenue sources has deprived more than a million people of services they need and deserve – mental health services, substance abuse treatment, child care, senior care, HIV prevention, and even food programs. Thousands more have lost their jobs because well-respected, long-established organizations across Illinois have been forced to cut back or shut down entirely. This fiscal ‘hostage situation’ has to end, or our state may never recover.”

Earlier this year, the General Assembly passed a “stopgap” spending bill that took the budget crisis off the front pages – but the damage to vital services continued. In response, the RBC launched the #OneInAMillionIL social media campaign, featuring brief videos of Coalition members talking about the pervasive, ongoing impacts of the budget standoff.

With the “stopgap” expiring on Dec. 31, the RBC is now using the #OneInAMillionIL campaign to refocus Springfield’s attention on the pressing need to pass a responsible, fully funded budget with adequate revenue for vital needs and smart investments. Pushing back against divisive political rhetoric, RBC members are joining together to remind legislators that all of us are harmed when our state government fails to fulfill its fundamental responsibilities.

“The past year and a half have been a nightmare for organizations that work with women who have been sexually assaulted,” said Polly Poskin, Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault. “I stood at this very podium last January, just before Governor Rauner gave his State of the State message, and reported that Illinois’ network of 29 rape crisis centers had been operating at bare bones for half a year. At that time, I wouldn’t have believed that we would go almost another year without a state budget. It’s ridiculous.”

John Miller, an associate professor at Western Illinois University in Macomb and President of the University Professionals of Illinois, IFT Local 4100, warned that thousands of talented students are fleeing Illinois to attend college in other states, where their educations will not be threatened by massive public funding cuts. “This is their one chance for an education,” Miller said. “We are losing our talented young people, and they may never return.”

“We are seeing permanent damage done to the network of top-quality agencies and organizations – a network that took decades to build,” McNary said. “We need a real budget that includes new revenue sources. That may not be what our politicians want to hear, but it’s reality.”

**(more)**

All of the speakers at the news conference stressed the need for Illinois organizations and advocates to stand united against “divide and conquer” tactics.

“This budget crisis is not about Chicago vs. downstate, or human services vs. education,” McNary said. “Every person we serve is one in a million – but together, we are One Illinois, and we are here today to demand a real, thoughtful, responsible, fully funded budget that works for all of us.”

The RBC’s #OneInAMillionIL hashtag refers to a study published earlier this year by the United Way of Illinois, which found that the budget stalemate resulted in lost services for nearly one million people. Another poll, by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, found that one-third percent of respondents – including 38% of downstate households – said they were personally affected by the budget crisis.

The Responsible Budget Coalition (RBC) is a large, diverse non-partisan coalition of more than 300 organizations unified in our support for adequate revenue to pay for vital state services and make smart investments. The Coalition includes organizations that serve children, families, veterans, seniors, immigrant and refugee families and people with disabilities; education groups concerned about early learning, K-12 and higher education; labor unions, and faith-based and civic groups.

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