

## Skeptics react to Blagojevich's check plan

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Issue date: 3/3/08 Section: [News](#)

♦ Page 1 of 1

Illinois citizens may have to set aside hopes of extra cash from the state heading into the spring and summer months.

While the federal economic stimulus checks could be in circulation by May, the same cannot be said for the proposed Illinois rebates.

Democratic Governor Rod Blagojevich's plan to give families in Illinois \$300 per child could cost the state about \$900 million.

Many experts remain skeptical, saying the effort is too little and too late.

"It is not a very good idea," J. Fred Giertz, interim head of the department of economics at the University of Illinois, said.

"It is too small to have much of an impact," Giertz added. "The state of Illinois cannot afford the \$900 million cost because the state budget is in serious deficit."

According to a Blagojevich budget spokesperson, Kelley Quinn, the state plans to draw funds from securitization.

The state of Illinois receives millions of dollars each year from a settlement with tobacco companies about one decade ago.

With securitization, the state would draw on this settlement and receive the money up front, reducing the total amount received from the tobacco companies in the long run.

Illinois legislators are also voicing their concern with the governor's plan.

"While I am concerned about stimulating the economy, I am certain that the governor's plan will not help Illinois," Roger Eddy, Illinois Representative from the 109th district, said.

"We cannot afford to spend this money," Eddy said. "We simply do not have another \$900 million to throw around."

Blagojevich says his fiscal year 2009 budget will focus on infrastructure investment, relief for families and tax cuts for businesses.

Blagojevich's plan includes \$14.4 billion for road and bridge programs, but would set aside less than \$6 billion for school construction, higher education, housing and economic development combined.

Most college students won't even be eligible to receive the rebate.

In order to qualify, Illinois citizens must have earned between \$3,000 and \$75,000 last year, as well as have one dependent under the age of 18.

Blagojevich insists timely action is necessary to remedy the state's economic situation, but lawmakers remain skeptical.

"I know of no one personally in the General Assembly that sees this as anything more than another irresponsible public relations stunt by the governor," Eddy said.

Page 1 of 1