

## 2012 Budget Process Looking Smoother

Written by Rich Miller  
Sunday, 04 March 2012 06:39

---

- [239.95\\$ Autodesk Alias Surface 2011 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Presenter 9](#)
- [Buy OEM Microsoft Money 2007 Home & Business](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Creative Suite 6 Design Standard Student and Teacher Edition MAC](#)
- [Buy Cheap Infinite Skills - Learning Sketchup](#)
- [Download Infinite Skills - Video and Animation with Adobe Photoshop](#)
- [29.95\\$ Nero 7 Vision Xtra cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Autodesk AutoCAD Plant 3D 2014 \(32-bit\) \(en,de,fr,ja\)](#)
- [Download Micromat TechTool Pro 6 MAC \(64-bit\)](#)
- [Download Symantec PCAnywhere 12.5](#)
- [Buy OEM Jaksta MAC](#)
- [Download Microsoft Office Professional 2013](#)
- [Buy Autodesk MotionBuilder 2011 \(en\)](#)
- [99.95\\$ Microsoft Office 2007 Enterprise cheap oem](#)

Last year, the House was able to control the Statehouse budget process by releasing low-ball state-revenue estimates early on and then vowing to stick to those numbers no matter what.

The Senate Democrats wanted to spend more money but were eventually stymied by the House's revenue estimates. There was just no way around the problem. Some Senate Democrats thought about forcing the spring session into overtime, but that would've been stupid because then the budget would've required a three-fifths majority to pass – and that would've given the Republicans a seat at the table. And the Republicans wouldn't want to spend more money.

It's too early to tell, but this year might be different. Last week, the House kicked off the budget process by locking in the chamber's new revenue estimates. The estimates are \$221 million below the governor's revenue projections and \$271 million below the projections released by the General Assembly's Commission on Government Forecasting & Accountability.

The main differences are in income-tax projections. The House's estimate for personal-income-tax collections are \$302 million below the governor's, while the corporate-income-tax estimate is about \$50 million above the governor's.

The differences aren't nearly as dramatic as last year's round of budget-making, when the

## 2012 Budget Process Looking Smoother

Written by Rich Miller  
Sunday, 04 March 2012 06:39

---

House's estimates ended up being about a billion dollars below the Senate's. But a difference of \$221 million to \$271 million is still quite significant, particularly in a year when so many popular state programs are facing the budgetary chopping block.

The Senate Democrats basically got rolled last year and had to swallow cuts that many members of that caucus did not want. They were hampered not only by the House's lower revenue projections but also because their two brand-new Appropriations Committee chairs got bogged down in the details of the state's new "Budgeting for Results" law. The hearings on that new law slowed the chamber's budget process down and allowed the House to pass its own appropriations bills first.

Senate President John Cullerton said last week that there would be some changes in the way his chamber deals with the budget this year. He also said he'd spoken with House Speaker Michael Madigan and as a result strongly believed that this year's process would be far more cooperative than last year's.

And, indeed, there have been changes. The new House revenue forecasts were devised in cooperation with the Senate's Revenue Committee.

Even so, reducing expected revenues won't go down well with the more liberal members of Cullerton's caucus, most of whom are already outraged at the cuts proposed by Governor Pat Quinn and have a strong, unified, and powerful voice in that chamber. Finding another quarter-billion dollars in reductions will undoubtedly be seen as a bridge too far.

These estimates also come in the context of the enormous pressure to slash Medicaid spending by \$2.7 billion. The liberal rank-and-file push-back against that demand is enormous, despite the very real and credible evidence that ignoring the problem or even just coming up with a partial solution will lead to a systemic crisis in a matter of just a few years. Doing nothing will create a \$21-billion mountain of overdue Medicaid bills in five years. And the total will keep going up after that. The whole system could crash.

But the people who run the government might also try a bit of old-time Statehouse fudging. We're now going to do a little math, but it isn't hard, so stay with me.

## 2012 Budget Process Looking Smoother

Written by Rich Miller

Sunday, 04 March 2012 06:39

---

Quinn wanted to take \$162 million next fiscal year and pay off past-due bills. Steve Schnorf, a former state budget director himself, suggested late last week that Quinn might wind up putting that \$162 million back into state spending programs. The cuts that would then have to be made would total \$60 million – the House’s \$221-million lower revenue forecast largely offset by the \$162 million put back in the budget. That would be a lot easier to swallow.

Even so, the uproar over Quinn’s proposed budget and Medicaid cuts is so intense now that even if the legislative leaders and the governor do manage a bit of fudging, there are going to be some very furious people in the Statehouse the rest of the spring. Nobody is in for a pleasant experience.

*Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax (a daily political newsletter) and [CapitolFax.com](http://CapitolFax.com).*