

Daily Herald

State lawmakers getting raises despite move to block

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SPRINGFIELD - State lawmakers are still in line to get a pay raise July 1, after Democrats in the Illinois House on Wednesday blocked a Republican plan that would have canceled the scheduled pay hike.

"We can go one year without a cost-of-living raise. It will not balance the budget. It will not significantly reduce the billions of dollars in debt, but it says we're willing to make that sacrifice that the working men and women of the state of Illinois have been asked to make," said state Rep. Bill Black, a Danville Republican.

The proposal would have required state lawmakers and other high-level state employees to forgo a scheduled 2.8 percent cost-of-living pay increase.

"This is an outrage that we're even having this debate about an increase in our pay at a time of 9.1 percent unemployment. It's an absolute outrage," said state Rep. Ed Sullivan, Jr., a Mundelein Republican.

State lawmakers get an automatic cost-of-living pay increase every year unless they vote to specifically refuse the raise. An independent state panel sets the size of the annual adjustments.

"To ask for an automatic cost-of-living increase for anybody is pathetic if you look at how many people are out of work. We've lost over 200,000 jobs in the past year," said state Rep. Darlene Senger, a Naperville Republican.

Black's proposal to refuse the increase failed on a procedural move. House Democratic leader Barbara Flynn Currie, a Chicago Democrat, blocked Black's motion calling for immediate consideration of the plan. A vote to consider the plan anyway failed, 50-64.

Three Democrats crossed party lines to join with all of the House Republicans supporting a vote on rejecting the pay raise. Those Democrats were state Rep. Jack Franks of Marengo, state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz of Chicago, and state Rep. Lisa Dugan of Kankakee.