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Protestors: Budget cuts threaten vital services

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June 30, 2009 (CHICAGO) (WLS) -- Protestors have been out in force for weeks now fighting to get out their messages about the impact of government cuts on services for some of the state's most vulnerable people.

Demonstrators were watching the budget clock at the Thompson Center on Tuesday night.

Most of the protestors were looking not for someone to blame but rather for someone to be their hero in Springfield and do whatever it takes to save the hundreds of human services programs they say will face drastic cuts under the current budget proposal.

"What we are begging our fellow citizens to do tonight is to stand up and be a voice for the voiceless and be power for the powerless," said Maria Whelan, Illinois Action for Children.

The powerless include children, the elderly and the physically and mentally challenged and others who face the possibility of seeing programs that advocates say help them live normal lives.

"A lot of people really depend on these services and without them basically a lot of them are going to be thrown in the streets," said Matt Jones, mental health therapist.

"In domestic violence, we know that people will die because services will no longer be there. So if that's the risk they're willing to take, I think that's a sad statement," said Dawn Dalton, Battered Women's Network.

Many of those at the protest said that while no one likes to pay more taxes they would be happy to if it would keep these programs around.

Ralph Martine of the non-partisan Center for Tax and Budget Responsibility said Illinois residents pay among the lowest taxes in the country.

"We're an incredibly low spending state. We've been cutting spending on essential service for over a decade. We can't solve our problems without more revenue," said Martine.

More revenue would keep places like the Seguin agency in Cicero operating. They provide care for children and adults with disabilities, offering a quality of life they would likely never experience otherwise.

"You're talking about a child's life here, where he could develop into a proper citizen. If he doesn't have any type of help, how is he going to make it in life?" said Collins.

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